

**THE NOMAD, THE EXILE, THE IN-BETWEEN: DIASPORA AND IDENTITY IN
KOREAN MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY ART**

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Abstract

This dissertation examines how Korean diasporic artists engaged with the concepts of diaspora—the global dispersion of Korean peoples—and identity during the latter half of the 20th century, with particular emphasis on the period between the 1960s and 1980s. Focusing on the works of artists Son Ah Yoo (1949-2002), Theresa Hak Kyung Cha (1951-82), and Nam June Paik (1932-2006), I discuss how the practices of diasporic artists in different locations intertwined with the development of art and art history in post-liberation South Korea. With an emphasis on the specificities of diverse Korean diasporas, I attempt to reveal the complex artistic situations at play within the socio-political conditions of the period. I examine the place of Son, Cha, and Paik in the larger narrative of South Korean art history in order to understand how such expressions of diasporic experience have been incorporated into the popular discourses of “Koreanness” that continue to permeate narratives of Korean art. Emphasizing a rhetoric of tradition, nationalist narratives during the 1970s and 1980s rendered “Koreanness” a prominent thread linking the different movements of the period. In this text, I question the concept of the “Korean Diaspora” and its absolutizing emphasis on ethnicity and cultural identity, expanding our understanding of Korean art. Using the artists’ work, I present a more nuanced depiction of the “Korean Diaspora,” questioning the conventional view of Korean art as defined through the binary of the self against the Other. I address contemporary Korean art practices and discussions of cultural identity in the context of today’s evolving trends of globalization and transnationalism. I conclude that these discussions can prove useful in comprehending the issues that diasporic artists continue to face today.

Lay Summary

This dissertation examines how Korean diasporic artists engaged with diaspora—the global dispersion of Korean peoples—and identity during the latter half of the twentieth century, with particular emphasis from the 1960s to 80s. Focusing on the works of artists Son Ah Yoo (1949-2002), Theresa Hak Kyung Cha (1951-82), Nam June Paik (1932-2006), I emphasize that their practices have been intertwined with the dynamics of the post-liberation South Korean art world, both influencing and being affected by its developments, and must be accounted for in terms of their complexities. I examine the place of these artists in the narrative of Korean art, in order to understand how such artistic expressions have been incorporated into popular nationalistic discourses that continue to permeate the nation’s art history. My approach allows for a more expansive consideration of the issues that diasporic artists continue to address in the face of globalization and transnationalism.

Preface

This dissertation is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Jean Kyung Choi.

All translations from Korean and Japanese are mine, unless noted.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

On July 20, 1990, a large crowd gathered in the open backyard of Gallery Hyundai in Seoul to witness the spiritual return of a global artist to his homeland. Despite limited invitations, the small venue was packed with spectators who had come from all over South Korea to witness the event. Photographers and cameramen perched on trees to better capture the moment, while audience members squeezed into open spots or climbed brick fences, trees, and other structures. The event celebrated the homecoming of artist Nam June Paik (1932–2006), whose return was promoted nationwide alongside the 1988 Seoul Olympics and subsequent national events that sought to achieve global recognition for the country. The government and major corporations worked together to shape an image of South Korea as a modern and successfully developed country while also promoting its cultural independence. Such attempt was reinforced by a largescale emphasis on the idea of an authentic Korean identity, often referred to as “Koreanness.” With his return coinciding with such efforts, Paik was introduced as an artist whose work had maintained this notion of Koreanness throughout his career abroad as a diasporic artist.¹

While the term “diaspora” (as in Diaspora) originally referred to the historical dispersion of the Jews following the fall of the Second Temple, its usage has gradually been extended across the humanities and social sciences disciplines to account for the different kinds of

¹ The Romanization of Korean in this thesis follows the Revised Romanization of Korean, proclaimed by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism of South Korea in 2000. The Romanization of Japanese in this thesis follows the Revised Hepburn system. Korean and Japanese names are rendered according to the East Asian convention (surname first). The Romanization and ordering of the names of individuals based or active outside South Korea or Japan follow their preferred identification. I also follow the convention of how a particular artist was referred to by art critics and the public.

dispersion of people from their homelands, mainly in the 20th century.² Scholarship on the Korean diasporas usually considers the colonial period under Japanese occupation (1910–45) as a singular moment, although Korean immigration to China, Russia, and Hawai'i began earlier in the 1860s.³ The first half of the twentieth century saw a significant increase in the number of immigrants leaving the Korean peninsula, from farmers and laborers to political refugees, activists, and artists. With the collapse of the Japanese Empire in 1945, Korean immigrants who had moved to Japan, China, Manchuria, Russia, and the United States either returned to the Korean peninsula or remained abroad. The decision to remain abroad was often involuntary; for example, the Korean minority in Sakhalin was unable to return due to the postwar Soviet occupation of the region.⁴ Following the Korean War (1950–53), return to the now-divided peninsula proved to be particularly difficult as North Korea maintained tight control over its borders. Crossing into or out of the Korean peninsula could even result in death; as a result, major diasporic communities began to form in different countries in response to the inability to return to the homeland.⁵

² See Howard Wettstein, "Introduction," in Howard Wettstein, ed., *Diasporas and Exiles: Varieties of Jewish Identity* (Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2002); also see Catherine M. Soussloff, "Portraiture and Assimilation in Vienna: The Case of Hans Tietze," in *ibid.*

³ As anthropologist Sonia Ryang writes, "The demographic map of Koreans residing outside of their homeland reveals the cartographic traces of colonialism, World War II, the Korean War, and the Cold War." Sonia Ryang, "Introduction," in Sonia Ryang and John Lie, eds., *Diaspora without Homeland: Being Korean in Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 1.

⁴ Inbom Choi, "Korean Diaspora in the Making: Its Current Status and Impact on the Korean Economy," in C. Fred Bergsten and Inbom Choi, *The Korean Diaspora in the World Economy* (Washington, DC: Institute for International Economics, 2003), 10.

⁵ Jeong-Sook Lee's study on Korean novels written during this period of liberation provides insight into the complexity of repatriation and the extreme difficulties that followed. Jeong-Sook Lee, "A Study on Aspects of Repatriation in Novels under the Period of Liberation," in *The Journal of Korean Fiction Research*, No. 48 (December 2011).

Further complicating the matter, a significant number of people also left the country as refugees during the Korean War, drawing attention to the immigration system and the rapidly growing group of immigrants. Sociologist In-Jin Yoon has noted that the character of Korean migration changed when the South Korean government established an emigration policy in 1962, encouraging contract immigration to Latin America, Western Europe, the Middle East, and North America for purposes such as population control and foreign exchange of currency and labor. The United States Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 also saw a significant increase in the number of people moving from South Korea to the United States, most notably to Los Angeles.⁶ Although the history of Korean diasporas is relatively short, the recovery of the Korean homeland in the postwar period has proved to be a difficult and complicated project.

Paik was not the first artist to have returned to South Korea since major diasporic communities had formed abroad following Korea's independence in 1945 and the Korean War. Son Ah Yoo (1949–2002), a second-generation Korean in Japan, visited South Korea for the first time in the early summer of 1979. His visit to the royal palace of Gyeongbokgung came to inspire his longstanding approach towards colors as “self-standing.”⁷ The same year, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha (1951–82) also traveled to South Korea for the first time since she and her family had left the country eighteen years earlier. As the number of Koreans immigrating to the United States and European countries rapidly escalated in the 1970s, travel both to and from

⁶ In-Jin Yoon, “Korean Diaspora: Past, Present, and Prospects,” in *The Review of Korean Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (December 2001), 3-5; In-Jin Yoon, “Migration and the Korean Diaspora: A Comparative Description of Five Cases,” in *Korean Development and Migration*, Vol. 38, Issue 3 (2012), 413-5.

⁷ Ah Yoo Son, *The Works of Son Ah-Yoo: Color Undulation / Body·Matter·Cosmos* (Kyoto: Kōrinsha Press, 1997), 10. The site of Gyeongbokgung also holds a complicated history of colonialism, which may have proved as a source of further inspiration for the artist in addressing issues of cultural identity.

South Korea increased significantly. In addition to more artists becoming active overseas, a larger number of diasporic artists were able visit their homeland, although travel to North Korea remained largely forbidden. However, both the artists' and the South Korean art world's responses to such moments of homecoming differed widely; some artists were welcomed with open arms, while others were alienated from the idea of an authentic Korean identity. This dissertation explores the reasons behind such a difference in reception, with an emphasis on three case studies of artists who engaged with the global dispersion of Korean peoples and ideas of diaspora and homeland in diverse ways: Son Ah Yoo, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, and Nam June Paik.

While sharing experiences of displacement during the early years of major diasporic communities, the three artists had experiences that diverged widely due to the particularities of each community's situation. Approaching the three artists in relation to their contemporaries in the post-Asia-Pacific War Korean art field, I examine the particular issues of diaspora and identity for each of them during the latter half of the twentieth century. I focus on Son, Cha, and Paik as their practices present them inhabiting an in-between existence with widely different experiences according to the specific social, cultural, and political conditions within which he or she is positioned. I emphasize the 1970s and 1980s, during which crucial hegemonic ideologies and institutional policies in South Korea were formulated or solidified as the government spearheaded the country's intense economic development. The complicated relationship that these artists have maintained with the nation and with the particularities of their different diasporic trajectories remains critically unaddressed in the literature on Korean art, art history, and East Asian studies, despite the fact that each has contributed in various ways to the understanding of Korean contemporary art and culture. Through an in-depth art historical

analysis of their practices and the multitude of perspectives that they have produced, I argue that each of these artists must be thoroughly accounted for in terms of the complexity of their respective diasporic identity. I emphasize the importance of their works as expressions of hybrid cultural identities.

1.1 Historical Background and Literature Review

One of the reasons for South Korea's significant interest in Paik's return, especially when compared to other artists who had visited previously, was that the Korean government only began to systematically engage with diasporic communities in the late 1980s to early 1990s. Paik's homecoming coincided with the government's newfound interest in the Korean diaspora as a valuable asset for engaging with global society, which made use of the official statistics for overseas Koreans in order to expand the idea of the nation's geographic scope. The Overseas Koreans Foundation (OKF) was established in 1997 to support diasporic Koreans, provide language education opportunities, strengthen the network between members, and enhance their relationship with South Korea by organizing visits to the country.⁸ As Changzoo Song has reported, the OKF's mission centered on fostering an essentially Korean identity amongst all of its diasporic members, renationalizing them over time, and solidifying South Korea's position as the ethnic homeland.⁹ This institutional approach envisioned the nation as the focal point within

⁸ For the various activities organized and conducted by the OKF, see Changzoo Song, "Engaging the Diaspora in an Era of Transnationalism: South Korea's Engagement with its Diaspora can Support the Country's Development," in *IZA World of Labor*, Vol. 64 (May 2014).

⁹ *Ibid.*, 3-5.

the vast network of diasporic communities, embracing them all under the umbrella of the “Korean Diaspora.”¹⁰

In this dissertation, I distinguish the term “Korean Diaspora” with Korean diasporas, in order to emphasize my alternative approach to existing literature in the fields of history, art history, and Asian studies. The former refers to the specific category of a culturally unified diaspora as established mainly through nationalist institutions in South Korea, generated to emphasize a connection between ethnic Koreans regardless of their locations or backgrounds. As discussed above, the OKF sought “to build a new nation of expatriate Koreans, including all ethnic Koreans, wherever they may reside.”¹¹ This mission further emphasized the notion of Koreanness as the unifying connection between all diasporic formations, regardless of their historical specificity. I highlight the alternative consideration of these peoples as Korean diasporas, in plural, to draw attention to their diverse characteristics. I stress that each location may have multiple Korean diasporas, and that each of these diasporic communities must be considered based on their specific social, political, and cultural environments.

In her discussion of Korean art, historian Son Hijoo based her conceptual framework on the formulation of diaspora proposed by Jonathan and Daniel Boyarin, which brought together people from many locations who currently shared the similar predicament of “diasporic life.”¹²

¹⁰ In this dissertation, I distinguish the term “Korean Diaspora” with Korean diasporas, in order to emphasize my alternative approach to existing literature in the fields of history, art history, and Asian studies. The former refers to the specific category of a culturally unified diaspora as established mainly through nationalist institutions in South Korea, generated to emphasize a connection between ethnic Koreans regardless of their locations or backgrounds. I highlight the alternative consideration of these peoples as Korean diasporas, in plural to draw attention to their diverse characteristics. I stress that each location may have multiple Korean diasporas, and that each of these diasporic communities must be considered based on their specific social, political, and cultural environments.

¹¹ Song, “Engaging the Diaspora in an Era of Transnationalism,” 5.

¹² Daniel Boyarin and Jonathan Boyarin, *Powers of Diaspora: Two Essays on the Relevance of Jewish Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

Son also drew her understanding of diaspora from that proposed by Gabriel Sheffer: “ethnic minority groups of migrant origins residing and acting in host countries but maintaining strong sentimental and material links with their countries of origin—their homelands.”¹³ Thus, Son articulated that “Art practices of Korean artists in diaspora constitute part of the sentimental and material connections that recall the past, remember the forgotten, and record migrants’ history from the perspective of those living abroad.”¹⁴ Son also explored William Safran’s articulation of the notion, which is the most frequently cited theory of diaspora in existing scholarship on the Korean Diaspora and its art. Safran emphasized that the “ideal type” of diaspora signifies collective trauma, banishment, and life in exile.¹⁵

Following Safran’s study, based on the Jewish Diaspora, the concept of diaspora gradually expanded to include the Jewish, Greek, and Armenian diasporas, which Brent Hayes Edwards named the three “classic” diasporas.¹⁶ Hayes Edwards located the common origin of these “classic” diasporas in the scattering and uprooting of communities, or rather, in a history of forced and traumatic departure. The result in the uprooted is a sense of a still-present relationship to the homeland that is often maintained and mediated through a politics of return and the collective memory of dispersal.¹⁷ Furthermore, according to Hayes Edwards, “diasporic

¹³ Ibid., 10-1; Gabriel Sheffer, “A New Field of Study: Modern Diasporas in International Politics,” in *Modern Diasporas in International Politics* (London, UK: Croom Helm, 1986), 3, quoted in Hijoo Son, “Casting Diaspora: Cultural Production and Korean Identity Construction,” Ph.D. diss. (Los Angeles: University of California, Los Angeles, 2009), 1.

¹⁴ Son, “Casting Diaspora,” 2.

¹⁵ William Safran, “Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return,” in *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1991), 83-4.

¹⁶ Brent Hayes Edwards, “The Uses of Diaspora,” in Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons, Salah M. Hassan, Cheryl Finley, eds., *Diaspora Memory Place* (London: Prestel Pub, 2008), 86-7.

¹⁷ Ibid.

consciousness,” or the continual production of an orientation towards a real or imagined, unfragmented homeland, is typically the condition of diaspora.¹⁸ In such a case, diaspora achieves a new coherence over divergent characteristics within each person who experienced the same original trauma. A similar phenomenon is observed in the narrative of continuity that is prominent in South Korea’s mainstream literature on the “Korean Diaspora” and its art.

A notable attempt to define the “Korean Diaspora” as such were the special issues of the *Korean and Korean American Studies Bulletin* (Vol. 11, 2000; Vol. 12, 2001), which divided into sections according to the four large diasporic communities in the United States, Japan, China, and Central Asia. The editor, Hesung Chun Koh, defined diasporas as communities formed around different forms of displacement from the homeland while maintaining a strong sense of connection to home, namely South Korea. Koh introduced the “Korean Diaspora” as the fourth largest diaspora in the world, framing it as a unified diaspora under which the diverse diasporic formations became satellite communities of Korea proper.¹⁹ However, such a categorization of dispersed peoples creates certain limitations, particularly in that it assumes an internal coherence that can marginalize those who are not readily assimilated into the supposedly unifying category. It also tends to associate the sociopolitical category of “South Korea,” which was formed after 1945, with the “Korea” that diasporic members speak of. Such identification actively erases North Korea from discussions of homeland and retrospectively depicts a history

¹⁸ Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” in Jonathan Rutherford, ed., *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), 224.

¹⁹ Hesung Chun Koh, “Introduction,” in Hesung Chun Koh, ed., *Korean Diaspora: Central Asia, Northeast Asia and North America* (New Haven, CT: East Rock Institute, 2008), vii. Similar approaches appeared in the project *There, Sites of the Korean Diaspora*, which was exhibited at the fifth Gwangju Biennale held in South Korea in 2002, the *Korean Diaspora and Art Symposium* that was held in Tokyo, Japan in 2004, and the exhibition *Arirang Seeds: Korean Diaspora Artists in Asia* that opened at the National Museum of Contemporary Art, Korea in 2009.

of “Korea” according to South Korea’s post-1945 nationalistic narratives. As a result, a new boundary of “diaspora” is established in order to transgress other social, cultural, and political boundaries. In such cases, the concept of diaspora simultaneously empowers and confines the globally dispersed peoples in the cultural imaginary.

A special exhibition of Korean modern and contemporary art, called *Journey of the Century*, opened at the Daejeon Museum of Art in 2015, to commemorate 70 years since the independence of Korea. Bringing together works from a wide range of public and private collections located throughout South Korea, the exhibition presented a survey of twentieth-century Korean art and its development from the precolonial to the postcolonial periods.²⁰ Five thematically arranged exhibition halls hosted the works of 67 artists, placed in chronological order so that visitors could “journey through” the twentieth century. Exhibition Hall 3, subtitled *Division and Diaspora*, included pieces by the artists Nam June Paik, Quac Insik, Lee Ufan, and Son Ah Yoo, among others. This hall spoke of the Korean art world after independence, during which political collisions and external pressure led to extreme changes in the sociocultural atmosphere. The exhibition highlighted how during this period, artists mainly dealt with the vivid memories of war and the trauma following the peninsula’s division. Such presentation provided meaningful insight into artistic activities in the immediate postwar period.²¹ However, in favor of establishing a coherent, linear narrative of Korean art, the exhibition glossed over the specificities of each diasporic presence who, being located in different countries, were faced with

²⁰ See Bo-Kyoung Lee, “A Special Exhibition of Korean Modern and Contemporary Art: *Journey of the Century*,” in *Kirok-in*, Vol. 32 (Autumn 2015): 71-5. In Korean.

²¹ Ibid.

diverse sociopolitical conditions.²² *Journey of the Century* presented a glimpse of a moment in which nationalist discourses in the postcolonial period rehearse the logic of the earlier imperial and colonial rhetoric.

Emphasizing a clear and coherent idea of Korean art and using the vague and ahistorical notion of Koreanness as a unifying factor, the exhibition organized the heterogeneous moments of diverse diasporas into a linear and progressive narrative moving away from the colonial past. As in the case of *Journey of the Century*, these artists' search for one's roots has brought personal, cultural, and sociopolitical benefits to the South Korean art world and the broader field of art historical writing. However, there are costs of valorizing "diaspora" as a homogeneous unit, an approach that frequently exceeds the boundaries of different countries only to reinforce the borders of the nation-state at home. Within such a narrative, the specific sociopolitical conditions of each artist are consequently homogenized into a common search for "Koreanness," an aesthetic and cultural category that seeks to allow for a stable ethnic and cultural identification amongst dispersed people.

Despite their exilic trajectories, Son, Cha, and Paik remained entangled within the dynamics of the post-liberation South Korean art world, having to negotiate with ethnic

²² The narrative of the exhibition shared a similar dilemma to the "idea of history" that Anne McClintock raised in the book *Imperial Leather* (1995). In the Introduction to *Imperial Leather*, McClintock spoke of a postcolonial exhibit of 1992, *Hybrid State*, in which the audience passed through The Passage to "A Brief Route to Freedom." McClintock commented on "the paradox between the idea of history that shapes The Passage and the quite different idea of history that shapes the Hybrid State exhibit itself...the exhibit's commitment to 'hybrid history'—multiple time—is contracted by the linear logic of The Passage...which, as it turns out, rehearses one of the most tenacious tropes of colonialism." According to McClintock, the exhibit shaped history around two opposing directions of progressing forwards (to enlightenment) and backwards (to anachronistic space). McClintock argued that this paradoxical shaping of history around two opposing directions—those of progressing forwards and backwards—contours the very term "postcolonialism," which is haunted by the imperial idea of linear time that the term itself struggles to dismantle. Anne McClintock, "Introduction: Postcolonialism and The Angel of Progress," in *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), 9-10.

essentialist ideas based on “Koreanness.” Emphasizing a rhetoric of tradition, the idea of Koreanness was solidified through nationalist narratives during the 1970s and 1980s, which rendered it as the prominent thread linking the diverse artistic movements of the period. Historians Hyung Il Pai and Gi-Wook Shin have argued extensively on the process through which Korea was imagined as homogenous in race and culture. Through this process, major institutions forged the national identity as a unified state that held an indigenous culture clearly distinguished from those of China and Japan.²³ According to Pai, the dominant narrative of postwar Korean history was meant to construct a historical framework that would explain the origins of Korea, especially in terms of racial heritage, a mythical past, and the process of state formation.²⁴ This was a manifestation of the institutional emphasis on independence, sovereignty, and national solidarity, with its development paralleling the nationalistic propaganda machine under the successive authoritarian regimes that ruled from 1961 to 1987.²⁵ The national project led by the School of Nationalist Historiography further articulated and promoted concepts such as Koreanness in order to write “a new racial history of Korean independence” that could oppose the imperialist historical framework established by Japan during the colonial period.²⁶

²³ Hyung Il Pai, *Constructing “Korean” Origins: A Critical Review of Archeology, Historiography, and Racial Myth in Korean State-Formation Theory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2000), 1.

²⁴ On this matter, Pai articulated as following: “In order to reconstruct an unbroken national lineage of one’s own distinctive past, frequently ‘historical continuity’ had to be invented by creating an ancient past either by ‘semi-fiction’ or ‘fabrication.’ ...Even invented traditions, served as a legitimation for action or a cement for group cohesion; frequently the act of rewriting of history turned into the actual symbol of struggle. In this way, a people’s past—their tradition of revolutions, heroes, and martyrs—became universal themes for postwar nationalistic historians.... The sense of cultural and racial continuity and national unity as well as reverence for the past is still a powerful motivating force in the formation of contemporary East Asian civilizations.” *Ibid.*, 11-2.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 271.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 1. According to Pai, the School of Nationalist Historiography traced its intellectual heritage to the beginnings of the anti-Japanese independence movement, with its theorists and leaders influenced by late

The dominant narrative of continuity that argued for a solidified Korean identity and history went hand in hand with the discourse of Korean modern art that gained popularity in post-liberation South Korea.²⁷ This institutional discourse argued for a linear progression that began with the institutionalization of Western oil painting through the mediation of colonial Japan.²⁸ Following the end of the Korean War, the South Korean art world quickly expanded and assimilated Euro-American-style oil painting, fueled largely by the re-establishment of diplomatic relations with Japan in 1965.²⁹ According to Joan Kee, the absorption of Euro-American art and the encounter with the international art world led to an increased sense of uneasiness around the “belatedness of Korean art” when compared to the West and Japan. Such anxiety was further accelerated by still-vivid memories of the colonial period under the Empire of Japan.³⁰ Engaging in a search for Koreanness in art history, critics partook in the national quest for modernity and cultural identity. This was both a denial of the modernization process executed under Japan’s colonial rule and an expression of a collective, national fear that was termed the “Red Complex.”³¹ As the art field expanded, more people started to reflect on the

nineteenth-century Euro-American ideals focusing on nationhood and independence. As part of the school, these scholars promoted a narrative in which Korean national identity originated in prehistory (ca. 3000-2000 B.C.), “with the formation of a pure Korean race.” Ibid., 1-9.

²⁷ This narrative of continuity as promoted by the School of Nationalist Historiography traced the roots of Korean identity to a prehistoric Korea. Pai pointed out, however, that this notion of “prehistoric Korea” was a colonial product that originated from Japanese studies in colonial Korea. She argued that this formation of racial identity paralleled the Japanese colonial administrative efforts of *dōka*, which refers to the process of assimilating Korean people through an educational enforcement of Japanese language, history, and culture. Ibid., p. 251.

²⁸ Youngna Kim, “A Brief History of Modern Korean Art,” in *Korean Eye: Contemporary Korean Art* (Milano: Skira Editore S.p.A., 2010), 15-9.

²⁹ Ji-Young Shin, “The Construction of National Identity in South Korea,” in *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 369.

³⁰ Joan Kee, “Contemporaneity as Calculus,” in *Third Text*, Vol. 25, Issue 5 (2011), 564.

³¹ Shin, “The Construction of National Identity in South Korea,” 368-9. Dong-Choon Kim explains the “Red Complex” as following: “The red-complex in Korea’s context meant an attitude of exaggerating North Korea’s threat and their left-wing sympathizers in South Korea, or having excessive horror and sense of humiliation based on

importance of tradition and reassess the identity of Korean art. Under President Park Chung-Hee (1961–79), such an interest was encouraged by the state, which sought to rationalize and justify its control by promoting the idea of a distinctly Korean culture, or what was initially described as “cultural nationalism.”³²

Often dubbed by scholars as the “dark age for democracy” under the successive political regimes of Park and Chun Doo-Hwan, the 1970s and 1980s witnessed the enactment of the Yusin period (1972-1979). Park and his Democratic Republican Party monopolized the nation’s political and military powers, and the authoritarian control was later succeeded by Chun following the coup d’état of May Seventeenth in 1980.³³ Park sought to justify martial law through a construction of an indigenous cultural identity and a sense of tradition. Selected bureaucrats and academic members of the Office of Cultural Properties were granted authority over who and what would be designated as cultural properties in the process of creating, preserving, and promoting national monuments, customs, and heritage.³⁴ The promulgation of The Act for Cultural Property Preservation in 1962, for example, resulted in generating arbitrary systems of value and cultural meaning. This further enabled certain members in the academia and government committees, including the School of Nationalist Historiography, to exercise

distorted images of them.” Kim analyzes that “Those who are obsessed with the red-complex tended to think that North Korea and left-related figures should be removed by any means, which led to a psychology of absolute reliance on the U.S. by which South Korea could resolve its national crisis. The massacres and political violence against leftists and their sympathizers during the Korean War were the result of this anticommunist hysteria.” Dong-Choon Kim, “The Social Grounds of Anticommunism in South Korea—Crisis of the Ruling Class and Anticommunist Reaction,” in *Asian Journal of German and European Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 7 (2017).

³² Joan Kee, *Contemporary Korean Art: Tansaekhwa and the Urgency of Method* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 2.

³³ For more information on the “dark age for democracy” and related studies of South Korea’s democratization, see Paul Chang, *Protest Dialectics: State Repression and South Korea’s Democracy Movement, 1970-1979* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2015).

³⁴ Pai, *Constructing “Korean” Origins*, 4-5.

power over the public's perceptions about what should be considered as authentic, original, and historically valuable to the nation.³⁵ Through such process, the government achieved status as the authority over an “authentic domain of identity.”³⁶

The Korean art field during this period primarily focused on practices that were approved by a handful of critics and institutional competitions, including the Korean Fine Arts Association.³⁷ Such major institutions promoted nationalist narratives that rendered the notion of Koreanness as a prominent thread linking the different art practices in post-liberation South Korea. In line with such a perspective, existing scholarship has often framed Korean migrants and migration history as unified under the category of the Korean Diaspora, highlighting ethnic oneness and a shared history of displacement. As a result, diasporic formations that cannot be readily assimilated into this category have been marginalized and neglected by mainstream discourses. Works by diasporic artists have also been perceived either as a means of depicting memories of events in Korean history or as nostalgic reconstructions of a re-imagined homeland.

This dissertation examines the place of three diasporic artists in South Korean art history in order to understand the specificities of particular artistic expressions that have otherwise been incorporated into the hegemonic narratives that continue to permeate the nation's discourse on

³⁵ Established in 1961, the Cultural Properties Administration, now the Cultural Heritage Administration, first promulgated The Act for Cultural Property Preservation in the following year. Revised several times, the act classified the cultural properties of South Korea into five categories: tangible cultural properties, monuments, intangible cultural properties (artisans with distinct skills such as musicians and ritual specialists), ethnological materials, and natural scenic monuments that included indigenous plants and animals. For a detailed discussion of the act, see *ibid.*, 4-5.

³⁶ Pai explained that the government controlled this “authentic domain of identity” by “encoding symbolic national meanings of the past and future in museum objects, restrictive cultural laws, monuments, and restorations—all of which are influenced by nationalist politics. Therefore, all cultural property is defined, defended, appropriated, and reappropriated to maintain identity.” *Ibid.*, 13.

³⁷ Kyung Suh Kim, *Gamchugi, Deureonaegi, Itgehagi [Hiding, Revealing, and Letting Be]* (Seoul: Davinchi, 2006), 18-9.

art. This study does not seek to provide a comparison between different diasporas based on their location, nor to conduct a wide survey of the many artists who were active during the early years of the formation of Korean diasporas. The purpose for presenting in-depth case studies of three artists who were active in different countries is to examine the specificity of each artistic expression in relation to the social, political, and cultural environment within which each artist was situated. As opposed to the overarching category of the “Korean Diaspora,” my methodological approach to diasporas as multiple heterogeneous communities is inspired by anthropologist James Clifford and his prominent work *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (1997). With an emphasis on diaspora as a decentralized form, Clifford highlights its plural and discursive dimensions, arguing that neither the return to the mother nation nor the creation of a new nation can solve the dilemma of plural diasporas. Aiming to dissolve the assumptions of ethnic absolutism that perceive culture as a homogenous substance, he presents an opposition of routes to roots, that is, a concentration on travel and movement as opposed to fixity and place. Clifford tracks “the worldly, historical routes which both constrain and empower movements across borders and between cultures,” discussing “diverse practices of crossing, tactics of translation, experiences of double or multiple attachment.”³⁸ For him, the term “roots” refers to an original homeland bound by location from which people have been displaced and to which they might wish to return, whereas the term “routes” implies mobility and the transcultural, cross-border, de-territorialized geographies of home. Clifford argues that the concept of diaspora does not include a homogenous, unified entity from which people have been

³⁸ James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 6.

scattered; rather, diasporas define themselves against their borders of both the norms of nation-states and indigenous claims to territorial rights by tribal groups. Diasporas, according to him, are thus born out of social, cultural, and political struggles to define a distinctive community that has historically been displaced.³⁹

My emphasis on multiple Korean diasporas is also in line with recent scholarship in areas such as *zainichi* (lit. “residing in Japan”) Korean studies and Asian American studies, which have increasingly recognized the need to emphasize heterogeneity and fluctuation in diasporic communities instead of focusing on larger categories that include all members within a particular framework, such as the Korean Diaspora. Such an approach recognizes that while the many theories of diaspora each have their possibilities and limits, a single idea of the notion cannot be adopted to understand the different communities while also thoroughly accounting for each of their historical and cultural specificities. Since the pioneering work of Changsoo Lee and George De Vos’ *Koreans in Japan: Ethnic Conflict and Accommodation* (1981), scholarship on *zainichi* Koreans has expanded in response to the rapidly changing sociopolitical situations in both Japan and South Korea. Reacting against the assumption of ethnic homogeneity from both nations, scholars, including Sonia Ryang, have focused on the more recent turn to a concept of diaspora to emphasize *zainichi* exteriority to Japan, seeking to offer an alternative to popular discourses that assert assimilation and naturalization as solutions for improving the group’s status in Japan.⁴⁰ This approach to *zainichi* through the lens of diaspora is discussed further in Chapter 2.

³⁹ See *ibid.*

⁴⁰ Ryang, “Introduction,” in *Diaspora without Homeland*, 2.

In discussing Asian American films and videos, Lisa Lowe argues for a diasporic vision of Asian American identity.⁴¹ Arguing against the idea of an essential cultural identity, she theorizes Asian American differences through concepts such as heterogeneity, hybridity, and multiplicity. Lowe's observation of how old cultures and traditions are gradually being deconstructed with the assimilation of the younger generation emphasizes that the category of Asian American is neither natural nor static.⁴² Within this discussion, the notion of hybridity functions as a counterbalance against the absolutizing tendency that certain theories of diaspora maintain, such as in Safran's position. Although the concept of hybridity does not provide a solution to the problems of diaspora, it does nonetheless contribute to a better understanding of diaspora by implying an unsettling of identities that alerts one to the essential problematic of diaspora as an explanatory frame for complex cultural phenomena.

In addition to inverting hierarchical dualisms, hybridity destabilizes cultural power relations by confronting, although not erasing, the boundaries of established binaries. The concept has been discussed extensively by anthropologists such as Homi K. Bhabha, Néstor García Canclini, Arjun Appadurai, and Robert J.C. Young. In theorizing hybridity, Appadurai also suggests a more nuanced perspective on the notion of globalization. Drawing on the postcolonial notions of hybridity and heterogeneity as proposed in Bhabha's groundbreaking publication *The Location of Culture* (1994), Appadurai's *Modernity at Large* (1996) argues for the end of the era of nation-states that emphasized cultural homogenization and essentialist

⁴¹ Lisa Lowe, "Heterogeneity, Hybridity, Multiplicity: Marking Asian American Differences," in *Diaspora I* (Spring 1991), 242-57; reprinted in Lisa Lowe, ed., *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), 82.

⁴² Ibid.

discourses on ethnic identity. He instead defines the contemporary globalized world based on “disjunctures” caused by multiple cultural flows that interact with each other and resultantly generate heterogeneity and resistance at a local level.⁴³

However, such an emphasis on de-territorialized and cross-border identities across different cultural boundaries is difficult to apply to the context of Korean diasporas that continue to struggle within multiple nations enforcing cultural homogenization. As Yookyong Choi also noted, the specific conditions of each diasporic group are left unrecognized in favor of fluidity and transnationalism in the case of the “Korean Diaspora.”⁴⁴ By examining how artists have engaged with the concept of diaspora in the globalized art world from their specific positions in time and space, this dissertation argues for a redefinition of cultural identity in the context of globalization rather than an invalidation of it. The three artists considered in this dissertation did not negate cultural identity, but rather perceived it as constituting a diasporic existence located in between multiple nations. In exploring how such artistic searches have been absorbed into ethnic nationalist narratives, as well as the reason behind such a writing of art history, this dissertation seeks to formulate an approach that can prove valuable in discussing questions in Korean modern and contemporary art.

⁴³ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 33.

⁴⁴ Yookyong Choi, “Globalization and Ethnic Identity in the Art of Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, Yong Soon Min, and Nikki S. Lee,” Ph.D. diss. (College Park, MD: University of Maryland, College Park, 2012), 15-6.

1.2 Outline of Chapters

Chronologically structured, the dissertation contains three chapters that cover the period from the late 1960s to the 2000s. Each chapter focuses on a Korean diasporic artist and his or her work in order to examine the specificity of the diverse artistic expressions in relation to the social, historical, and political environments within which they were situated. Engaging with the notion of diaspora, Chapter 2 discusses how the artist Son struggled to express his identity as a second-generation *zainichi* Korean artist through bodily engagements. To do so, I examine Japan and South Korea's art worlds from the late 1960s onwards, the period during which Son began his artistic career, and highlight how Son continued to engage with the homogenizing perspectives of both art fields. A central question for this chapter is the formulation and development of the ethnic essentialist concepts of Koreanness and Japaneseness and a discussion of how the two art worlds have responded to and interacted with these notions. I approach Son's practices in relation to his contemporaries, particularly artists associated with the popular readings of Dansaekhwa (Korean monochrome) during the 1970s as an expression of Korean modernism, in order to highlight the significance of Son's explicit emphasis on his diasporic experiences as a *zainichi* artist. Son's self-positioning as an in-between presence has distanced him from institutional writings of Korean art history that often aim to homogenize the complexities of the period's art practices into a unified search for ethnic identity. Through a case study of an artist who, through the medium of painting and bodily engagements, searched for a way to alternatively map out his existence, this chapter seeks to account for the complexity of artists who cannot be placed under a single rubric of the Korean Diaspora or be pinpointed on conventional maps.

As in the case of Koreans in Japan, the global dispersion of Koreans directly relates to the history of Japanese colonialism, the Korean War, and the partition of the peninsula. Chapter 3 examines how the artist Cha connected such history to her experience as a Korean immigrant to the United States through a close reading of *Dictée* (1982) in relation to her artist's books. Building upon studies that examine the relationship between colonial ideologies and language, this chapter traces how Cha navigated the relationship between the mother tongue and motherland by drawing upon the colonial history she was born out of. In regard to Cha's works, particularly *Dictée*, existing scholarship has often focused on her status as a Korean American. However, I highlight how the artist's work spoke of her realization that, although she came from both the United States and South Korea, she was unable to be part of either. Cha's articulation of her diasporic status offered neither a notion of a true home away from an Asian American experience nor a reconstitution of the homeland on American soil. My approach to the artist's practices as expressions of her in-between existence seeks to complicate essentialist narratives of national identity and ethnicity by locating a hybrid space that exists between the self and home, wherein Cha always remained in motion towards a homeland of her memories.

To further discuss how Korean diasporic artists spoke of multiple homelands based on their memories, as opposed to the overarching notion of the Korean Diaspora that argues for a single origin, Chapter 4 examines the work of Paik. Directly following Paik's satellite broadcast of *Good Morning, Mr. Orwell* in 1984, the Korean media began to focus intensively on his nationality, emphasizing the Koreanness of the artist and his work. Such a narrative was promoted at large in 1988 with the nationwide celebration of the Seoul Olympics when Paik held an exhibition in South Korea for the first time. Paik's homecoming to the nation was hailed in the Korean art world as the artist's long-awaited return to his true motherland. Examining the reason behind such

largescale promotion in relation to the 1988 Seoul Olympics and relevant governmental objectives, I discuss Paik's relationship with the Korean art world, within which the artist still maintains an prominent position as the so-called "Father of Korean contemporary art." In doing so, this chapter seeks to resolve the current disjuncture in the scholarship on Paik, which promotes him as either a transnational artist who abandoned any national association or a national artist who finally returned to his motherland. As his return to South Korea marks the point where this disjuncture occurs, I approach Paik as an artist who responded to the specific conditions of his individual diasporic experience, which consisted of nomadic flights repeated throughout different locations.

This dissertation focuses on the process through which artists and their experiences have been written into a narrative of displacement from a single homeland, regardless of each artist's specific conditions. Contrary to how the Korean Diaspora has been categorized, the cases of Son, Cha, and Paik demonstrate that the return to one's homeland proves to be a difficult project when it is an imagined motherland constructed from personal or familial memories. The experience of homecoming differed dramatically for the three artists, according to their social and political situations: Son was unable to fully return due to his status as a Korean in Japan, Cha attempted to return but faced alienation as an outsider, and Paik's return was aligned with the nation's promotion of globalization. A discussion of such diverse experiences thus allows for an expanded understanding of the heterogeneity of the Korean diasporas, which in turn can contribute to a more comprehensive consideration of the boundaries and dynamics of Korean art by recognizing conventional limitations that render certain diasporic groups invisible and categorize others. As Korean diasporas continue to rapidly grow in size and gain presence in new locations, it is crucial to understand what is at stake for contemporary diasporic artists active both within and outside of South Korea. Through a close analysis of the works produced by three

artists, this dissertation also seeks possibilities for a concept of diaspora that can account for experiences beyond yearning and trauma.

Chapter 2: Son Ah Yoo and the Abject Body in Japan

2.1 Introduction

Artistic expressions of diasporic experience have often been incorporated into popular discourses of “Koreanness,” which continue to permeate Korean art history. To better understand such process, I begin with a discussion of the *zainichi* community of Koreans in Japan, with an emphasis on artist Son Ah Yoo (1949–2002). Instead of understanding Son’s work as participating in the search for “Koreanness,” an approach which primarily focuses on Son’s position in relation to his colleagues in Dansaekhwa (often “Korean monochrome painting”), I trace the development of his perspective within the avant-garde art scene of 1960s Japan. My approach attempts to uncover the complex artistic dialogues that Son partook in as a diasporic subject. I aim to redress the imbalance in scholarship that predominantly tries to identify the “Korean” elements within Son’s work by relating his choice of medium and color to the specificity of his self-identification as a Korean in Japan. I attempt to unpack the artist’s specificity as a *zainichi* artist in Japan who was faced with particular questions while navigating the margins of multiple art worlds.⁴⁵ Rather than understanding his work in relation to discussions of “Korean modern art”—which was rigorously argued for in post-liberation South Korea—that perceive Son’s work to be in search of a lost homeland, I highlight his practices as physical markings of his diasporic existence in time and space. Such an understanding will

⁴⁵ Here I refer to Japan, South Korea, and North Korea. However, for the purpose of this chapter which focuses on Son Ah Yoo, who affiliated himself with South Korea in defining his *zainichi* identity, I will be referring primarily to the tensions between the two countries of Japan and South Korea. Unfortunately, I acknowledge that the significance of North Korea and its place within *zainichi* diasporic experience is relatively overlooked in this chapter, as I place more emphasis on the relationship between the art worlds of South Korea and Japan.

contribute to a better interpretation of the complexity of Korean diasporic artists who cannot be placed under a single rubric of the “Korean Diaspora.”

Born in Osaka as a second-generation *zainichi* Korean, Son exhibited widely throughout Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, as well as across Europe. Navigating the complicated history that positioned him at the boundaries of multiple nations, his artistic engagements functioned as a search for his in-between space as a *zainichi* artist. “Where?” is the question that Son asked time after time throughout his extensive series of paintings, collectively titled *Location of Colors (Iro no ichi)* (Fig. 1).⁴⁶ Vivid colors explode out of the center of a painting, with paint smeared or dripped onto the surface; blocks of grey and black are balanced above paint hazardingly scattered across the canvas; one painting radiates in red and orange as if the sun is placed within, while both short and long brushstrokes seem to be hanging from the canvas in another; and a bouquet of vividly colored brushstrokes fill a later work. For Son, color was not a representation; instead, he explored the process by which colors and lines are marked on canvas through repetitive movements of the artist’s body.⁴⁷ As expressed in his title, the artist saw colors as physically occupying a particular place in time and space as what he called an “existence.”⁴⁸ What Son was in search of was not only the position of colors on the surface of the canvas; but rather, what was left on the surface were traces of a larger dialogue at play. Colors and lines

⁴⁶ The record in the National Museum of Art, Osaka renders the title of the series to English as *Position of Colors*. The Japanese word *ichi*, however, not only refers to position, but also place, situation, and location. I therefore translate the title to *Location of Colors* instead, in order to emphasize Son’s emphasis on *locating* himself as a diasporic subject. Independent Administrative Institution (IAI) National Museum of Art, “Position of Colors, OC91-15,” *Son, Ah-Yoo*, accessed December 4, 2018, <http://search.artmuseums.go.jp/records.php?sakuhin=50424>.

⁴⁷ Ah Yoo Son, *Son Ah-Yoo Exhibition: Emergence / Body. Matter. Cosmos*, exhibition catalogue (Fukuoka: Fukuoka Prefectural Museum of Art, 2001), 2.

⁴⁸ This interest is also indicated in the title of the artist monograph *The Works of Son Ah-Yoo: Color Undulation / Body. Matter. Cosmos*, published in 1997 by Kōrinsha Press.

came to function as interactions—between themselves, between the artist and the canvas, and between body and matter.

Son's interest in existence and one's place in time and space can be traced to the sociopolitical situation within which he was positioned as an emerging artist. The decade following the 1960 U.S.-Japan Security Treaty (commonly referred to in Japanese as *Anpo*) was marked by mass demonstrations and student uprisings in Japan that lasted from March 1959 through June 1960. The nationwide movement sought to prevent revision of the treaty, which would allow the U.S. to maintain military presence in the Japanese archipelago.⁴⁹ In line with the worldwide protests of 1968 and against the presence of the American military in Japan because of the Vietnam War (1955–1975), Japan's student-led protests voiced demands for individual autonomy and liberation from the burdens of rapid industrialization, modernization, and material capitalism. The 1960 protest movement also emerged in response to Japan's domestic politics and culture at the time, with many citizens being dissatisfied with the pro-American leadership of prime minister Kishi Nobusuke (1896-1987) and his Liberal Democratic Party.⁵⁰ As a result of the massive protests, Japan's political, social, and cultural foundations were fundamentally

⁴⁹ See Nick Kapur, *Japan at the Crossroads: Conflict and Compromise after Anpo* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018), and William Marotti, *Money, Trains, and Guillotines: Art and Revolution in 1960s Japan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013). Peter Eckersall also presents a detailed account of theatrical practices during this period, accounting for the various sociopolitical conditions that led to the emergence of *angura*. See Peter Eckersall, *Theorizing the Angura Space: Avant-garde Performance and Politics in Japan, 1960-2000* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006).

⁵⁰ Kapur, *Japan at the Crossroads*, 2. The year *Space Totsuka* opened, 1970, saw campus conflicts by student radicals shouting the slogans of “self-denial” and “deny the Modern in oneself”; novelist Mishima Yukio's ritual suicide following the storming of the Japan Self-Defense Force Headquarters in Ichigaya, Tokyo; it also saw the Osaka Expo '70, where Sekine Nobuo recreated *Phase—Mother Earth*, and Mono-ha's “coming of age” panel discussion. Akira Tatehata, “Mono-ha and Japan's Crisis of the Modern,” in *Third Text*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (2002): 235. For a detailed discussion of postwar intellectual life before and after the student protests of 1968-9, see Rikki Kersten, “The Intellectual Culture of Postwar Japan and the 1968-1969 University of Tokyo Struggles: Repositioning the Self in Postwar Thought,” in *Social Science Japan Journal*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (September 2009): 227-45.

transformed, with many artists claiming that their art changed dramatically after 1960. The 1960 protests, however, resulted in rather ambiguous outcomes, as the movement was ultimately unable to prevent the ratification of the Security Treaty.⁵¹

A critical question from which the 1960 protests emerged was the identity of Japan after its defeat in World War II. As Nick Kapur explained, “After decades of escalating state nationalism premised on the notion that Japan was a sacred land ruled by a divine emperor culminated in the disastrous Asia-Pacific War,” Japanese citizens were faced with an identity crisis as their worldview was shattered with the nation’s surrender to the Allied Powers on August 15, 1945.⁵² The preexisting worldview and its certainties were suddenly lost to the people of Japan, resulting in an identity crisis heavily influenced by the Occupation and the dynamics of the Cold War.⁵³ In response to such urgency, artists and critics alike actively engaged in debates on cultural and national identity. Amongst others, one response to the identity of “Japan” came from the ideology of Mono-ha (meaning “School of Things” in Japanese), famously theorized by artist and critic Lee Ufan.⁵⁴ The ideology responded by exploring tensions between objects and between the body and object, seeking to reposition the self in postwar

⁵¹ Kapur, *Japan at the Crossroads*, 4.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 8.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁵⁴ Many art historians have debated how these artists, who later came to be collectively associated under the title of Mono-ha (or School of Things), asserted the particularity of East Asia to confront the question of “Japan’s crisis of the Modern” that had been at play since the Meiji period (1868-1912). Tatehata, “Mono-ha and Japan’s Crisis of the Modern,” 223. For a discussion of Sekine Nobuo’s particular position amidst the complex sociopolitical situation of the period, see Mika Yoshitake, “Mono-ha: Living Structures,” in Mika Yoshitake, Lisa Gabrielle Mark and Jane Hyun, eds., *Requiem for the Sun: The Art of Mono-ha* (Los Angeles: Blum & Poe, c2012).

Japan.⁵⁵ However, amidst the period's extensive debates about what it meant to be Japanese, an important question left unanswered was what it meant to be a diasporic Korean living in postwar Japan. A consideration of the colonial history is thus crucial to understanding what was at stake for Korean artists active in Japan at a time of great sociopolitical turmoil.

One of Son's earliest works, *Landscape of Body* (*Shintai no fūkei*, 1969) (Fig. 2), requires a discussion of this history in order to be better understood. To do so, I begin with a brief discussion of artist Takayama Noboru and the exhibition *Space Totsuka* (1970) that served as the context for Son's work. My interpretation of Son's work focuses on the notion of the abject body, with emphasis on the living presence of one's own physical body in speaking of diasporic experiences within a space in-between multiple art worlds in the postwar period. Son's interest in space developed into practices of mapping space, as well as time, which can be understood as an attempt to subjectively map out the "landscape" within which his "body" was positioned. It can also be perceived as the artist's exploration of the "landscape" of the body, as expressed in the title of the aforementioned 1969 work. With the development of its definition during the latter half of the twentieth century, artists introduced new ways to engage with landscape.⁵⁶ In Japan, this generated a saturated context which involved heated discussions on the body and landscape, with debates intensified through a series of notable events: including the opening of Expo '70 in Osaka, Asia's first world fair, and the Tokyo Biennale '70.

⁵⁵ The artistic phenomenon called Mono-ha was centered in Tokyo, roughly between 1968 and the early 1970s, with artists often working with raw, natural or industrial, and untreated materials in relation to the surrounding environment.

⁵⁶ For a discussion on landscape debate in Japan, see Yuriko Furuhashi, *Cinema of Actuality: Japanese Avant-Garde Filmmaking in the Season of Image Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013). For a different approach to landscape in Japan during the 1960s, reconsidering the nature and function of landscape, see Ignacio Adriasola, "Megalopolis and Wasteland: Peripheral Geographies of Tokyo (1961/1971)," in *positions: asia critique*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (2015).

In consideration of these interests, I approach Son's practice as an attempt to reveal the power structure inherent within the body by understanding his use of the word "landscape" through the discourse of *fūkei* (landscape) that was being actively discussed in the late 1960s when Son began his artistic career. Additionally, Son frequently made use of cartographic terminology in his titles, often incorporating words such as interval, location, distance, position, and survey. Many of his drawings show a visible resemblance to a roughly drawn sketch map or grid, which invites an observation of his practice through the lens of mapmaking. In doing so, I draw attention to the critical scholarship on cartography and ways of seeing that argue for the interpretation of maps as expressions of a dominant desire to impose order and structure upon an environment or territory: "maps cannot reproduce the totality of the landscape or its evolution: when it abstracts, a map falsifies, departs from reality, simplifies and caricatures it."⁵⁷ As a *zainichi* Korean in Japan, a presence that was omitted from the conventional mapping of Japan and its art world, Son required an alternative way of seeing that could speak to his particular existence. Furthermore, the history of Japan's practice of mapping, especially in the Asia-Pacific region up to 1945 when the colonial order broke down, exemplifies a particularly strong relationship between colonialism and cartography that continues to affect the everyday life of diasporic subjects residing in postwar Japan.⁵⁸

In the immediate aftermath of colonialism, two wars, nation-wide separation, and displacement, Korean artists struggled to locate and secure their place in the larger art world.

⁵⁷ Vicenç M. Rosselló i Verger, "Cartography, Landscape and Territory," Mary Black, trans., in *Catalan Social Sciences Review*, Vol. 1 (2012): 46.

⁵⁸ See David A. Fedman, "Japanese Colonial Cartography: Maps, Mapmaking, and the Land Survey in Colonial Korea," in *The Asia-Pacific Journal | Japan Focus*, Vol. 10, Issue 52, No. 4 (December 2012).

This was a particularly urgent matter for *zainichi* artists, as many were physically and psychologically stranded between different countries.⁵⁹ Emerging out of a complicated history of colonialism and imperialism, the term “*zainichi*” has come to refer specifically to ethnic Korean residents of Japan who trace their ancestral roots to Korea under Japanese rule. One’s self-identification as a *zainichi* Korean thus refers to a specific time and place in history. A *zainichi* artist existed in the liminal space between different art worlds, each of which demanded identification—most prominently, as either a “Korean” or “Japanese.” My approach to diaspora is aligned with Clifford’s opposition of *routes* to *roots*, as discussed in the Introduction, which allows us to perceive Koreans in Japan as a diaspora defined against its sociopolitical boundaries.⁶⁰ Through a case study of Son’s self-positioning as a *zainichi* artist, I further consider the complicated position that *zainichi* artists occupied amidst parallel developments of “Japaneseness” and “Koreanness” which dominated the postwar art fields of Japan and South Korea. Through an inquiry of the underlying mechanics of seemingly seamless nationalist narratives, deeply intertwined with the formulation of essentialist notions of “Japaneseness” and

⁵⁹ Naoto Higuchi, for example, has pointed out that Japan’s history of xenophobia is deeply rooted within the geopolitical framework of East Asia: “xenophobic actions are determined by the relationship with neighboring countries and stem from the colonial past and the Cold War.” Naoto Higuchi, *Nihongata haigai-shugi: Zaitokukai, gaikokujin sansei-ken, Higashi Ajia chisei-gaku* [Xenophobia in Contemporary Japan: The Zaitokukai, Voting Rights of Foreigners and Geopolitics in East Asia] (Nagoya: Nagoya University Press, 2014), 6, 204. Sara Park, however, criticized Higuchi’s argument as failing to consider the basic system of immigration control that produces xenophobia in Japan. Park discussed that the growing problem of popular racism in Japan’s society today, arguing how the term “xenophobia” trivializes racism against ethnic minorities and limits it to a discussion of temporary residents in Japan. Instead, Park argued, the immigration control system reinvents racism as “xenophobia,” thereby categorizing ethnic minorities as foreigners instead of permanent members of Japan’s society. See Sara Park, “Inventing Aliens: Immigration Control, ‘Xenophobia’ and Racism in Japan,” in *Race & Class*, Vol. 58, No. 3 (London: Sage, 2017): 64-80.

⁶⁰ Aiming to dissolve assumptions of ethnic absolutism that perceive culture as a homogenous substance, James Clifford presented an opposition of *routes* to *roots*, that is, a concentration on travel and movement as opposed to fixity and place. For Clifford, whereas the term *roots* invokes an original homeland from which people have been displaced and might wish to return, in which home is bounded by location, the term *routes* implies mobility and transcultural, border-crossing, deterritorialized geographies of home. See Clifford, *Routes*.

“Koreanness,” I attempt to determine how diasporic artists were affected by their lived realities, as well as how their artistic expressions can effectively destabilize predetermined categories of cultural and national identity.

2.2 Koreans in Japan: Overview

Japan’s colonial history spans from the late nineteenth century to the end of the Second World War, with the annexation of the Korean Empire in 1910 marking a drastic increase in the migration of Koreans to Japan. Japan’s military expansion and resulting wars with China (The Second Sino-Japanese War, 1937-45) and the United States (The Pacific War, 1941-5) caused labor shortages in its mainland, which it sought to solve by filling in the blanks via its colonies. More than 150,000 Koreans are estimated to have been drafted into the Imperial Japanese Army, mostly following conscription in 1944, and over 700,000 were forcibly relocated to Japan as laborers. By the time Japan surrendered to the Allied Powers, roughly 2 million Koreans were living in mainland Japan, 1.4 million of whom returned to the Korean peninsula by the end of December 1945.⁶¹ For those remaining in Japan, nationality became a complicated matter. Japan passed the Nationality Act in 1950 and the Immigration Control Act in 1951, both of which solidified those who had been relocated from the colonies to mainland Japan as deportable aliens to the nation with no residential rights.⁶² In the aftermath of the San Francisco Treaty of 1952

⁶¹ See Ministry of Justice, ed., *Nyūkoku kanri seisaku no kaiko to tenbō* [Recollections and Prospects of Japan’s Immigration Control Policy] (Tokyo: Hōmu shō insatsu kyoku, 1981), 74-5. Also see Statistics Korea, “Current Status of Overseas Compatriots,” *South Korea: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2017*, accessed November 18, 2018, http://www.index.go.kr/potal/main/EachDtlPageDetail.do?idx_cd=1682.

⁶² For a detailed account on Japan’s immigration policy in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, see Park, “Inventing Aliens,” 68-71.

that followed, the Japanese government relieved themselves of any civil and legal responsibilities towards former colonial populations. Deprived of Japanese citizenship overnight, Koreans in Japan were left completely stateless until the Permanent Residents by Accord of 1965 limitedly recognized certain rights of those who identified themselves as South Korean.

The legal status for Koreans in Japan remained intensely unstable. The political situation of resident aliens in Japan was belatedly addressed in the 1990s, when a special permanent residency was granted in 1991 to those who lost their Japanese nationality as a result of the Peace Treaty with Japan in 1952.⁶³ Yet this mass of stateless people remained deprived of nationality or citizenship, as Japanese nationality could only be obtained by birth or by naturalization—a process that continues to function as a social marker of one’s allegiance and integrity to the nation.⁶⁴ The very term “*zainichi* Korean,” with the word *zainichi* literally meaning “staying in Japan,” implies temporary residency, although it is primarily used to describe permanent ethnic Korean residents of Japan.⁶⁵ With Japan’s immigration control system

⁶³ For a detailed account on how this particular form of permanent residency continued with the alienation of Koreans in Japan, see *ibid.*, 68-78.

⁶⁴ Sonia Ryang, quoted in Young Min Moon, “Citizenship and North Korea in the *Zainichi* Korean Imagination: The Art of Insook Kim,” in *The Asia-Pacific Journal | Japan Focus*, Vol. 13, Issue 5, No. 3 (February 2015): 1-4. For a detailed account of the rise and fall of Chongryun as an organization, from its inception to its decline, see Sonia Ryang, “The Rise and Fall of Chongryun—From Chōsenjin to Zainichi and Beyond,” in *The Asia-Pacific Journal | Japan Focus*, Vol. 14, Issue 15, No. 11 (August 2016). Also see John Lie, “The Nation (and the Family) That Failed: The Past and Future of North Koreans in Japan,” in *The Asia-Pacific Journal | Japan Focus*, Vol. 14, Issue 15, No. 12 (August 2016).

⁶⁵ The temporary status of Koreans in Japan is implied in the very title of *zainichi*, which translates to “resident in Japan” in English, a term that is applicable to any foreigner. The provisional label of “*Zainichi*-Korean” is problematic in its own way as it reinscribes the idea of a centre against the margins, as well as obscuring differences amongst the diverse peoples within the group. A particular political factor that must be considered is the division between North Korea and South Korea, not only in the Korean peninsula but within the *zainichi* community as well. Popular discourses, however, tend to circumvent the problem of the North and South division of Korea as exemplified in scholars’ choice of terms in denoting the group. The traditional term of *zainichi Chōsenjin*, or “Koreans” in Japan, was gradually applied to North Koreans in Japan; a separate term of *zainichi Kankokujin* came to refer to South Koreans in Japan. The shortened version of *zainichi*, meaning simply “in Japan” without a subject, is often employed as a means of avoiding the impression of political bias. The increasingly hostile environment for

labeling its ethnic minorities as “foreign,” despite many of them having been born in Japan during and after imperial rule, *zainichi* artists have been suspended in a constant state of displacement. Within this environment where one was already assigned a powerful but negative, preexisting identity, *zainichi* artists strived to achieve a self-sustaining identity as members of a diaspora.

As opposed to the essentialist and hegemonizing notions of “Koreanness” and “Japaneseness,” based primarily on ethnonationality, the diasporic experience must be recognized for its heterogeneity, diversity, and hybridity. Each category was employed in nationalistic narratives to vehemently argue for ethnic homogeneity and cultural nationalism, against which Clifford’s emphasis on routes offers a way to perceive Koreans in Japan as a diaspora that is defined against those very sociopolitical boundaries.⁶⁶ Youngmi Lim, for example, addressed both the possibilities and limits of diasporic discourses in her work by alluding the between roots and routes. As a theoretical tool enabling resistance to the conventional, teleological scenario of immigration that assumes that all immigrants will sooner or later follow the trajectory of assimilation, diaspora functions as a lens for understanding the in-between nature of *zainichi* members. At the same time, however, Lim highlighted what she refers to as the “invisible diaspora” that is exemplified by naturalized, “*ex-zainichi*” who are less visible and accessible than the more “organized” *zainichi* Koreans.⁶⁷ Her interviews with naturalized Koreans who now hold Japanese nationality demonstrate the extent to which their

Chongryun members in Japan and naturalized Koreans’ inability to feel at home, even after acquiring Japanese citizenship, further complicate diasporic discourses on Koreans in Japan.

⁶⁶ Youngmi Lim, “Reinventing Korean Roots and *Zainichi* Routes: The Invisible Diaspora Among Naturalized Japanese of Korean Descent,” in Ryang and Lie, *Diaspora without Homeland*, 104.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 103.

positions differ from those of *zainichi* Koreans who continue to emphasize a notion of “homeland.” Lim also observed the subconscious bias in scholarship towards these more “organized” *zainichi* Koreans, and she provided a critique of discourses on diaspora that necessitate some notion of “diasporic consciousness.” Such consciousness, according to Lim, is absent in those who “do not imagine themselves part of the *zainichi* diaspora” even though they “have not found a secure ‘homeland’ in their country of birth and residence over generations.”⁶⁸ While diaspora indeed functions as a means of opening up discussions, such a difference in positions simultaneously marks the difficulty in considering diverse groups under a single rubric of diaspora.

In approaching the question of Koreans in Japan, I further understand the notion of diaspora through the writing of Stuart Hall, who argued that diasporas are those that constantly produce and reproduce themselves anew through transformation and difference, thereby producing hybrid cultural phenomena and “new ethnicities.” In this sense, diasporas do not refer to scattered people whose identity can only be solidified by means of a return to their homeland; rather, they are comprised of ever-changing representations that provide an “imaginary coherence” for a set of malleable identities.⁶⁹ Against the hegemonizing notion of ethnicity, the diasporic experience must therefore be recognized by its heterogeneity, diversity, and “conception of identity which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity.”⁷⁰ This chapter understands cultural identity as a means of positioning oneself in the past and future, providing an opportunity to approach the question of Koreans in Japan who are not only

⁶⁸ Ibid., 103.

⁶⁹ Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” 235.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 235.

displaced from their “homeland” but who, in essence, do not have a homeland at all.⁷¹ I argue that *zainichi* artists such as Son strived to position themselves in relation to this specific history of colonialism and war by articulating a diasporic identity through artistic practice.

Another crucial consideration that has been overlooked in the process of formulating the notion of “Koreanness” is the position of North Korea. As Lim observed, popular discourses tend to circumvent the problem of the division of Korea, attempting to avoid the impression of political bias by mainly using the provisional label “*zainichi*” without a subject.⁷² However, the self-identified *zainichi* community was composed largely of two factions during the 1970s and 80s: the pro-South Korean Mindan (or Republic of Korean Residents Union in Japan) and pro-North Korean Chongryun (or Zai-Nihon Chōsenjin Sōrengōkai in Japanese).⁷³ Regardless of one’s position or affiliation, individual experiences are most often considered collectively as *zainichi*, as a result failing to speak for the diversity of each existence. The label “*zainichi*” is thus problematic in its own way because it re-inscribes the idea of a center against its margins, solidifying a category which excludes those who remain at its boundaries while obscuring differences amongst the diverse peoples within the group.⁷⁴

⁷¹ In the particular case of North Koreans in Japan, Ryang emphasized that the “homeland” must always remain as an idea—an unrealized, utopian horizon. Prompted by a sense of urgency in response to the kidnapping of Japanese civilians by North Koreans in 2002, Ryang strongly argued that the diaspora loses its appeal once the notion of “homeland” becomes conflated with an actual, geographical location such as North Korea. She argued that North Koreans in Japan had to confront the enormous gap between their idealized image of the “fatherland” as perpetuated through Chongryun propaganda and the actual reality of the impoverished and hierarchical country. Ryang concluded that the journey back to the “homeland” ironically diminished diasporic authority and led to the decline of Chongryun. Sonia Ryang, “Visible and Vulnerable: The Predicament of Koreans in Japan,” in *Diaspora without Homeland*, 66-79.

⁷² Lim, “Reinventing Korean Roots and *Zainichi* Routes,” 88.

⁷³ Chongryun, or the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan, was founded in 1955. For more, see Moon, “Citizenship and North Korea in the *Zainichi* Korean Imagination,” 6.

⁷⁴ Broadly speaking, *zainichi* members are divided into 1) those who affiliate themselves with South Korea, 2) with North Korea, 3) with neither, 4) with the unified Korea, etc. There are multiple associations with various affiliations that have been formed and deformed throughout the years. Here I speak primarily through Son Ah Yoo’s (and many

Announcing allegiance to North Korea, Chongryun operated its own schools from kindergarten to university. Established in 1946, these Korean ethnic schools, called Joseonhakgyo or Chōsengakkō, were managed by Chongryun independently from the Japanese education system.⁷⁵ However, as the Japanese government negated diplomatic acknowledgement of North Korea, the “North Korean identity” that was taught and promoted to Chongryun members largely came to follow the organization’s political projection.⁷⁶ As a result, a specific diasporic community was formulated: one that referred to a conceptualized homeland. Such specific conditions of the Korean diaspora in Japan, however, have often been flattened to fit into linear narratives of the Korean Diaspora and Korean modern art. The complexity of the postwar art worlds of Japan and South Korea account for the questions that Korean artists in Japan faced from their position in-between multiple fields. Although this chapter focuses only on the art worlds of Japan and South Korea, further consideration of the different “homelands” that are born out of the diasporic imagination holds the potential to complicate the category of *zainichi* itself.

Dansaekhwa artists’) affiliation with *Mindan*, the pro-South *zainichi* organization affiliated with the Republic of Korea (South Korea).

⁷⁵ Min Hye Cho, “Joseonhakgyo, Learning under North Korean Leadership: Transitioning from 1970 to Present,” in *International Journal of Korean Unification Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (2020).

⁷⁶ Ryang, “Introduction,” in *Diaspora without Homeland*, 9. Chongryun members are also recognized by the Japanese government as resident aliens instead of foreign nationals. See Sonia Ryang, *North Koreans in Japan: Language, Ideology, and Identity* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997), 3.

2.3 The Abject Body: Son in Japan

2.3.1 Takayama Noboru and *Space Totsuka 70* (1970)

In 1969, artist Takayama Noboru (1944-) held his first solo exhibition at Tsubaki Kindai Gallery, which featured his first iteration of *Underground Zoo* (1968).⁷⁷ Subtitled *For the Sake of Those in Their Forties*, in this work he propped three railroad ties against the gallery wall, around which he stacked more on the floor, to explore the historical meaning of gallery space and the tension between matters.⁷⁸ This piece invited the audience to physically walk through and over the stacked supports, inviting visitors to navigate the tensions between the railroad ties. There was also no designated perspective, as viewers were simultaneously viewed and surrounded by the work, rather than vice versa. *Underground Zoo* could not be viewed in its whole from a single viewpoint; the audience had to witness it from multiple angles. The object “gave birth to a space to be soaked up,” in Takayama’s own words, “to allow its power to permeate the body. It smelt of coal tar but this was yet another trigger to recall it to mind. In this way, the whole work was constructed to evoke some kind of memory.”⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Enokura Kōji also had his first solo exhibition in the same year at the same gallery, presenting his work *The Ceremony of Walking*. The two had first contemplated holding a group or joint exhibition, but eventually decided on two simultaneous solo exhibitions. The two artists commonly questioned what everyday life meant and what the relationship between the body and space was. Afterwards they moved on to exhibit *Four People and Five Events* at Muramatsu Gallery, which featured Enokura, Mikawa Haruo, Imabori Yoshiharu, and Takayama. Takayama, however, was dissatisfied with this exhibition; he noted that this feeling was what led to the conception of *Space Totsuka* in 1970, in an outdoor venue. See Noboru Takayama, “Space Totsuka ’70,” in Yoshimi Chinzei and Isako Kumagai, eds., *Enokura Koji: A Retrospective* (Tokyo: Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, 2005), 34-43.

⁷⁸ Tsubaki Kindai Gallery was one of the non-profit, rental galleries that provided alternative exhibition spaces for many emerging artists at the time. Artists would typically pay a low and flat fee for a one- or two-week long exhibition. The rental gallery (*kasha garō*) system gained popularity in the 1950s in response to the demand of contemporary avant-garde artists who were lacking in private patronage and commercial value. As an alternative to established commercial galleries, these spaces provided exhibition opportunities for experimental work, a purpose that was later served by alternative spaces. See Nakajima Izumi, “Rental Galleries,” in Doryun Chong, et al., *From Postwar to Postmodern, Art in Japan, 1945-1989: Primary Documents (MoMA Primary Documents)* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).

⁷⁹ Takayama, “Space Totsuka ’70,” 36.

The exhibition marked the beginning of Takayama's longstanding interest in and recurrent use of railroad ties since 1968.⁸⁰ Takayama was born in Tokyo in 1944, a year before the end of the War, with a Korean father and a Japanese mother.⁸¹ Referring to the history he was born into, Takayama's use of the medium intended the supports to function as requiems for the people of Asia who had been sacrificed in Japan's road to modernization.⁸² In writing about his work, Takayama made reference to the forced labor that occurred during Japan's imperial expansion and the deaths of Korean minorities under colonial rule.⁸³ This theme continued in his later works, including his series produced for the exhibition *Space Totsuka* the following year, *Drama Underground Zoo (Chika dōbutsu-en, 1970)* (Fig. 3). This piece consisted of a large rectangular-shaped hole dug into the ground, framed as if it were a painting, with slabs of wood laid horizontally descending into its depths. The hole was twenty meters long and seven meters wide, with railroad ties placed both inside and outside by the surrounding trees (Fig. 4). Here, he treated the railroad ties with creosote and coal tar, a process reminiscent of the Egyptian method of mummification. The artist noted that coal tar would not dry in a uniform manner; the heat

⁸⁰ Takayama's interest in railroad ties was inspired in part by his personal background; his father was a metallurgical technician who moved to Japan during the colonial period. At the age of twenty, when he was a student at the Tokyo University of the Arts, Takayama toured the coalmines of Hokkaido with a schoolmate, spending time with the coalminers. Takayama wrote in an essay the following: "The miner's charred face under the headlight, a huge machine biting away at the veins and devouring coal, pillars coming together to form a massive undersea coal mine...What drew my attention were the railroad ties under the tracks. These dark railroad ties, laid from the underground to the above, allowed for an awakening. What is modernization? What is the nation? What is the relationship between matter and human? What is Asia? What is an ethnic group? What is war? ...As one by one, one after another, questions came to mind, my blood began to boil..." Noboru Takayama, *Noboru Takayama*, exhibition catalogue (Kesenuma, Japan: Rias Ark Museum of Art, 2000), quoted in Kyung-sik Suh, *Diaspora gihaeng: Chubangdanghan jai siseon* [Traveling the Diaspora: Through the Eyes of an Outcast] (Seoul: Dolbaegae, 2006). Original text in Japanese, translated to Korean by Suh, translated to English by author.

⁸¹ He graduated from the Tokyo University of the Arts with a BFA in 1968 and an MFA in 1970.

⁸² Noboru Takayama, "Makuragi ni tsuite [About the Railroad Ties]," in Kokuritsu Kokusai Bijutsukan, Yasuyuki Nakai, and Azumi Sakai, eds., *Mono-ha—saikō* [Reconsidering Mono-ha], exhibition catalogue (Suita, Japan: Kokuritsu Kokusai Bijutsukan, 2005), 121. In Japanese, my translation.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

would leave the surface in a state of instability. Takayama was drawn to this result, feeling a physical sense of gravity, texture, and shape from each and every tie that would come out differently.⁸⁴ Once positioned, the railroad ties would begin to form a relationship with one another, further visualizing a space with gravity and density. According to Takayama, the placement of railroad ties “created a space” (*kūkan o tsukuru*) and “created a place” (*ba o tsukuru*).⁸⁵

Drama Underground Zoo occurred at Totsuka Space, a rundown land that had been sectioned off by concrete walls at Takayama’s boarding house and studio since 1966 when he was a student.⁸⁶ This garden space became the site for the experimental outdoor group exhibition, *Space Totsuka*, which occurred in December 1970 and hosted on-site installations by its organizers: Enokura Kōji⁸⁷ (*Quality of Wetness*, series), Takayama Noboru (*Drama Underground Zoo*, series), Fujii Hiroshi (*Wave*, series), and Habu Makoto (untitled works).⁸⁸

⁸⁴ In “Makuragi ni tsuite [About the Railroad Ties],” Takayama reflected on how he came to the sole usage of railroad ties in producing his work, from his first encounter with railroad ties in 1962 to his later creation of *Underground Zoo* in 1969 and *Drama Underground Zoo* in 1970. He recalls his initial visit to a railroad tie factory to learn the method of production. *Ibid.*, 120-1.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 121. In Japanese, my translation.

⁸⁶ This boarding house was located in Yokohama, Kanagawa Prefecture. Takayama noted that his time at the boarding house allowed for his deep engagement with railroad ties. For a recollection of his time at Totsuka, leading up to the organization of *Space Totsuka* in 1970, see Noboru Takayama, “Makuragi ni tsuite ⑦ [About the Railroad Ties—7],” in *ACT* (Miyagi: Sendai Theatre Research Association, 1999), 6. In Japanese. Also see Takayama, “Space Totsuka ’70.”

⁸⁷ Enokura Kōji (1942-95), one of the organizers for *Space Totsuka*, was Takayama’s senior at the Oil Painting Department at the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music. Enokura also dealt with material such as soil, concrete, felt, fabric, leather, and oil with emphasis on their tactility and visuality. See Tatehata, “Mono-ha and Japan’s Crisis of the Modern.” A notable work during this period is his installation *Wall* at the Septième Biennale de Paris in 1971. Here the artist filled the space between two trees in the Parc Floral with a three-meter-tall and five-meter-wide wall consisting of mortar and concrete blocks. Exploring the tension between the body and material, art for Enokura was an act of self-confirmation, a means to affirm his position in the world. A year earlier, Enokura had exhibited *Place* (1970) at *Tokyo Biennale ’70—Between Man and Matter*, along with artists such as Susumu Koshimizu, Jiro Takamatsu, Luciano Fabro, Richard Serra, Jannis Kounellis, Christo, and Bruce Nauman.

⁸⁸ Documentary photographs and films, recorded by the artists at the time, of the original 1970 *Space Totsuka* were exhibited at *RAUM 2012 Space Totsuka 70: Revision with Photographs*, presented by Tokyo Publishing House in

The four artists all participated in the preparation of the site, plowing and digging into the land for a month, and installed site-specific pieces meant to interact with the natural environment.⁸⁹ They dug out roots and cut down weeds, preparing a ground approximately 4,000 square yards in size. The empty lot was surrounded on three sides by a tall, old concrete wall, with the remaining side opening up to fields and residential houses. Enokura emphasized that the artists engaged with the vacant lot “with no special purpose,” as an alternative to acting “inside of the social system such as a gallery or a museum.”⁹⁰ The physical engagement with the ground site inspired the birth of the exhibited works and allowed for the sense of “creating new space,” which prompted Enokura, among others, to “deny the reproduction of form founded on conscious intention, of trying to give shape to a form (including abstract forms).”⁹¹

The exhibition occurred a week after the ritual suicide (*seppuku*) of the renowned and controversial Japanese author Mishima Yukio.⁹² Recalling the day of November 25 when he first heard the news about Mishima, Takayama noted that the event left a significant impact on him

September 2012 at Shigeru Yokota Gallery. Following his first solo exhibition, *The Ceremony of Walking* (1969), Enokura produced conceptual works exploring the relationships between people, objects, and space. Along with his peers, he participated in the artistic response to the sociopolitical situations of 1968. Enokura often documented his own exhibitions, including *Space Totsuka*, and his snapshots, documentary photographs, and films have been recognized for both their scholarly and artistic importance.

⁸⁹ Another rental gallery, Tamura Gallery, assisted in the development of outside, site-specific projects including *Space Totsuka*, later presenting Takayama’s documentation of the 1970 exhibition, the 8mm film *Totsuka Space*, as part of the exhibition *Film in Tamura 73* (1973). This exhibition also featured Takayama’s 8mm film *Yūsatsu* (*Headless scenery*), which juxtaposed images of coalminers, barren landscapes, and animal carcasses. Takayama also presented *Spy* (1971) in a solo exhibition of the installation piece, which cut into the floor of the space, at Tamura Gallery in 1971.

⁹⁰ Enokura (1989), quoted in Takayama, “Space Totsuka ’70,” 38.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁹² For a discussion of Mishima Yukio, his ritual suicide, and the media response towards it, see Yuriko Furuhashi, “Remediating Journalism: Politics and the Media Event,” in *Cinema of Actuality*.

and his fellow young artists.⁹³ The notion of death loomed in the minds of the four artists who had been preparing for *Space Totsuka*, and the outdoor exhibition subsequently came to contemplate mortality as well in various ways. In particular, *Drama Underground Zoo* expressed Takayama's interest in the relationship between death and landscape, with the work gesturing towards the underground world of the dead as a doorway to the beyond.⁹⁴ The artist's preservation process gains another layer of meaning when we consider the fact that he treated the railroad ties as what he called "human pillars," as stand-ins for actual bodies. His use of railroad ties not only referred to the larger history of mining, but also the forced labor of the colonized under imperial expansion. Japan's systematic laying of railroads across imperial territory was part of its modernization project. Takayama envisioned this history as residing in the material presence of railroad ties that are similar in size (over 2 m tall) and weight (approximately 90 kg) to the coalminers, both saturated in creosote and tar within the tunnels. Exploring the relationship between the body and postwar history, the artist sought to create a space in which this relationship between matter and memory could be explored further.⁹⁵ Resembling an empty grave meant for a body not present, the work functioned as a requiem for the deaths under colonial oppression, with the railroad ties standing in for the bodies that suffered.

⁹³ For Enokura's response to the news and the grounds of the outdoor exhibition, see Enokura (1984), quoted in Takayama, "Space Totsuka '70," 38-40.

⁹⁴ Mika Yoshitake, "Lee Ufan and the Art of Mono-ha in Postwar Japan (1968-1972)," Ph.D. diss. (Los Angeles: University of California, Los Angeles, 2012), 55-6. Takayama's later works *Spy* (1971) and *Village II-Memory Loss* (1972) also reflected upon the political unrest of Japan at the time, especially that the minorities faced. For an account of Takayama's approach, see *ibid.*

⁹⁵ For an analysis of Takayama, in particular his recurrent use of railroad ties, see Jennifer S. Li, "Noboru Takayama," in *Art Asia Pacific*, No. 107 (March/April 2018): 164. Also see Tatehata, "Mono-ha and Japan's Crisis of the Modern," 223-36.

After first moving to Tokyo, Son attended the painting department of the Suidobata Art School at night and studied under Takayama, where he began to fully immerse himself in art practices. Son subsequently studied in Kyoto, Japan, as well as Germany and Scotland, as an independent artist, holding over 40 solo exhibitions and participating in numerous group exhibitions throughout different countries. In South Korea, however, most of his works were exhibited only after he passed away in 2002, largely through the support of *zainichi* Korean art collector Ha Jung Woong (Kawa Masao, 1939-), who was also close to Son. Son produced one of his earliest works, *Landscape of Body (from Totsuka, Kanagawa)* (1969) (Fig. 5), while assisting in the creation of Takayama's *Drama Underground Zoo*. *Landscape of Body* took place in the space of Takayama's work, in which Son photographed his bodily interactions with his teacher's piece to explore the relationship between the mud and the body.⁹⁶ In black-and-white photographs, the artist is seen in the nude entering a muddy hole dug into the ground or snuggled up against a part of *Drama Underground Zoo*, interacting with the environment around him in various ways: standing, laying, sitting, or holding onto trees and other objects. The photographs expressed the artist's interest in the body and its relationship to space, which gradually evolved into the central theme of his oeuvre. It also hints at where his long-standing interest in the relationship between art and memory initially developed.

2.3.2 *Landscape of Body* (1969)

I interpret Son's work within the context of the exhibition *Space Totsuka*, which Enokura identified as presenting site-specific works with 5 characteristics:

⁹⁶ Eshin Shishido, "Emerging Lines and Colors—The World of Son Ah-Yoo," in *The Works of Son Ah-Yoo*, 11.

1) to be aware of reality as an event, 2) to intervene as little as possible in dealing with reality (the impotence of form), 3) to search for the relationship between my own physicality and the qualities of objects and space, 4) to create a fullness of silence and 5) to become a hunter of space.⁹⁷

Adopting Enokura's approach, I interpret the photographs of Son's silenced body as conveying an awareness of and interaction with the reality that he was present within. *Landscape of Body* has been discussed as demonstrating Son's search for the relationship between the body and space—the body and mud. However, in addition to the natural environment, I identify another layer of “space” in Son's *butoh*-inspired happening—that of *Drama Underground Zoo*. The deliberate setting of the piece as physically interacting with Takayama's “human pillars” signals that Son's “reality” included both colonial and imperial history.

Butoh refers to a form of Japanese dance theatre that began to attract attention around 1959 in Japan.⁹⁸ The exhibition *Space Totsuka* incorporated *butoh* practices in its engagement with the notion of death, while also searching for an “encounter between [the] physical body and the surrounding space or landscape.”⁹⁹ The event's happenings were enacted by Takayama, Enokura, and Fujii, *butoh* dancer Tanaka Min, and Son.¹⁰⁰ Both Ohno Kazuo (1906–2010) and Hijikata Tatsumi (1928–86), the co-founders of *butoh*, were well-known for their incorporation of white makeup. Hijikata, whose dance experiments served as the roots for *butoh*'s conception, argued for the body's inherent capacity to address the oppositional binaries that construct the

⁹⁷ Enokura (1989), quoted in Takayama, “Space Totsuka '70,” 38.

⁹⁸ For a detailed analysis of *butoh*, see Paula Marie Orlando, “Cutting the Surface of the Water: *Butoh* as Traumatic Awakening,” in *Social Semiotics*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (2001): 307-24.

⁹⁹ Enokura (1989), quoted in Takayama, “Space Totsuka '70,” 38.

¹⁰⁰ Takayama Noboru, Fujii Hiroshi, Masaki Motoi, eds., *Shashin de miru Space Totsuka-ten (ki, kabe, kusa, tsuchi, ie, ishi, sora, chi, hi, kūki, mizu...): Shiryōshū* (Tokyo: Supēsu 23°C, 2006), 7.

everyday as we perceive it.¹⁰¹ During Hijikata's experimental dance in *Mid-afternoon Secret Ceremony of a Hermaphrodite* (1962), he slathered white plaster of paris over his body. The sculptural skin would dry over time, restraining the body, and as Hijikata began to move, the plaster of paris cracked and left patterns on his body as marks of his movement. *Butoh* dancers also gradually came to incorporate the use of white body paint or plaster of paris as a method of distinguishing their bodies from those of normative society.¹⁰² Through such a method, *butoh* dancers sought to strip themselves of pre-existing identities and embody the perspective of the other, ultimately to achieve a complete transformation.¹⁰³ The presentation of a white body developed into one of *butoh*'s defining characteristics, visually reinforcing the destruction of the individual ego and enhancing the dancers' appearance as decaying, alien bodies. Reminiscent of this approach, Son's photographs capture the ghostly moment of the body's engagement with a doorway to the underworld, to death and decay.¹⁰⁴ The white body in *Landscape of Body*, with

¹⁰¹ For a reading of *butoh*'s "body in crisis" as a process of subjectively engaging with and embodying contradictory chaos and crisis for the purpose of psycho-physiological resolution and/or psycho-social transformation, see Michael Andrew Y. Sakamoto, "An Empty Room: Butoh Performance and the Social Body in Crisis," Ph.D. diss. (Los Angeles: University of California, Los Angeles, 2012).

¹⁰² Bruce Baird and Rosemary Candelario, "Introduction: Dance Experience, Dance of Darkness, Global Butoh: The Evolution of a New Dance Form," in Bruce Baird and Rosemary Candelario, eds., *The Routledge Companion to Butoh Performance* (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), 3.

¹⁰³ Ohno Kazuo, in particular, used makeup to de-identify his body and fabricate any illusion of the fictional body.

¹⁰⁴ Karolina Bieszczad-Roley analyzed the performativity in *butoh* photography, arguing that "the photographer's embodied experience constitutes an 'inner' performance"—"photo performance"—which "manifests itself not only in physically apparent (visually perceived) movements but also within the multi-modal pre-reflective consciousness of the reciprocal interaction between the photo-actor and a *Butoh* dancer." Bieszczad-Roley acknowledged that despite the fact that *butoh* has been widely photographed since 1959 in Japan, with *butoh* photographers such as Nourit Masson-Sekine and Maja Sandberg speaking of the performative experience, tensions permeate between the fields of dance and photography as to whether the "essence" of *butoh* can be captured in photography. Karolina Bieszczad-Roley, "Photo-performance: A Study of the Performativity of *Butoh* Dance Photography," Ph.D. diss. (London: School of Arts, Brunel University, 2009), 2.

its jerky movements and fragmented expressions suspended in an almost sculptural moment, calls to mind the bodies of *butoh* dancers wrapped and covered in white.¹⁰⁵

Part of Japan's avant-garde art scene of the 1950s and 60s, *butoh* was in active motion by the time Son arrived in Tokyo in 1966.¹⁰⁶ As a dance form involving radical and unconventional practices, *butoh* had recently emerged with an emphasis on crisis. Considering that the exhibition *Space Totsuka* was conceived in response to the notion of death, the involvement of *butoh* strengthened the participating artists' approaches. However, whereas *butoh* strived to transform into the other, what I identify in Son's photographs is the presence of an *already othered* body. The white body in Son's photographs—leaning against Takayama's "human pillars" left behind by imperial history—functions as a visible and stark reminder of his abject status against fixed notions of cultural and national identity. As defined by Julia Kristeva, the "abject" describes marginalized members of society who are kept away from, but are also constitutive of, the normative majority.¹⁰⁷ Psychoanalytically explained, the process of formulating a pure, subjective consciousness as the Self requires the abject that is "neither completely self nor

¹⁰⁵ *Butoh* as a dance form originated in Japan during the 1960s, having emerged concurrently with Japan's avant-garde theater of *angura* (underground). *Angura* had earlier developed as a counter-culture movement against the dominant narrative, led by Japanese directors including Terayama Shuji (1936-83) and Kara Jūrō (1940-). *Butoh* artists also gathered around two central figures: Ohno Kazuo (1906-2010) and Hijikata Tatsumi (1928-86). For an account of Ohno Kazuo and his theory on *butoh*, see Kazuo Ohno, *Ohno Kazuo: Keiko no kotoba* [Workshop Words] (Tokyo: Film Art, 1997). For an overview of *butoh*, from its origins in dance experiments to its contemporary practices in the global art scene, see Baird and Candelario, "Introduction," in *Butoh*, 1-22.

¹⁰⁶ Apart from Hijikata Tatsumi (1928-1986), Tanaka Min, Masaki Iwana, and Goi Teru were one of the first artists to describe their dance practices with the term "butoh." See Kazuko Kuniyoshi, *An Overview of the Contemporary Japanese Dance Scene* (Tokyo: Japan Foundation, 1985); Masaki Iwana, *The Dance and Thoughts of Masaki Iwana* (Tokyo: Butō Kenkyū-jo Hakutou-kan, 2002); Jean Viala, *Butoh: Shades of Darkness* (Tokyo: Shufunotomo, 1988); and Félix Guattari, "Body-Assemblage: Félix Guattari and Min Tanaka in Conversation," in Félix Guattari, *Machinic Eros: Writings on Japan* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 45-54.

¹⁰⁷ See Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, Leon S. Roudiez, trans. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

entirely other,”¹⁰⁸ which must be expelled in order to draw a clear boundary between the Self and the Other. Speaking through the visual language of *butoh*, Son presented an abject body sitting in the pits of *Drama Underground Zoo*, an alien body existing in the liminal space between the world above and below. The abject body, however, refuses to be expelled in Son’s photographs as it continues to move and interact with the surrounding environment.

As Japan’s imagined national community based its understanding of nationality on race and lineage, South Korea embarked on a similar search for uniqueness, a nostalgic imaginary of tradition, and a narrative of a homogeneous race following the end of the Korean War. A critical examination of such narratives of continuity that were actively promoted in both countries allows us to reconsider not only the relationship between the ideological categories of “Korea” and “Japan,” but also the contested position of Koreans in Japan. In particular, the emphasis on lineage in defining “Japaneseness” or “Koreanness” remains an ongoing issue for *zainichi* Koreans, whose everyday lives are subject to an unseen but persistent racial construct of imagined homogeneity that intentionally erases any difference. Amidst discussions of ethnic nationalism and the oppositions to it, what occurred for diasporic Koreans in Japan was a “double erasure.”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 1.

¹⁰⁹ W. E. B. Du Bois (1868-1963) coined the term “double consciousness,” in discussing racial hierarchy in American society, referring to the psychological process through which African Americans were forced to perceive themselves through the lens of race prejudice, in accordance with a system established by the dominant culture and language. He wrote as following: “It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.” W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York, Avenel, NJ: Gramercy Books, 1994), 2. Originally published in 1903.

The process of double erasure is explained by John D. Swain in his examination of a particularly significant case that occurred amongst Japanese *angura* (“underground”) theatre practitioners, who adopted the nickname “riverbed beggars” in an attempt to locate their place as outsiders in Japan.¹¹⁰ In his discussion of Kara Jūrō, a key player in 1960s *angura* theatre who sought to overcome the limits of his position in the margins of Japanese theatrical arts, Swain described the process through which *zainichi* members were marginalized and erased from the writing of *angura*.¹¹¹ Kara drew upon the abject status of actors since the Edo period to construct an outcast status for his troupe in order to perform against the nationalist discourses of Japanese theatre that were dominated by nationalist and ethnic essentialist thinkers. However, Kara’s strategy, as Swain observed, unintentionally co-opted the ethnic identification of *zainichi* actress Ri Reisen, who was the lead actress of Kara’s Situation Theatre company (*Jōkyō gekijō*) and also his wife. In strategically performing against nationalist discourses of Japanese theatre that were dominated by theories of “Japaneseness,” the ethnic identification of *zainichi* artists was unintentionally conflated with the category “Korean.” Swain concluded that, in an attempt to make Koreans visible, with Kara legitimizing his position as a spokesperson for Koreans via the ethnicity of his wife, the subject position of *zainichi* Koreans became obscured and further

¹¹⁰ Making use of the mobility of a tent theatre, Kara founded the Situation Theatre in 1967. The nickname “riverbed beggars” draws from the image of kabuki actors, called *kawara kojiki* (“beggards of the riverbed”), in an attempt to associate themselves with an earlier form of Japanese theatre from the Edo period that would evoke nostalgia for the past. For Kara, the calling of him and his troupe as “riverbed beggars” evoked the uncanny and the outcast, since during the Edo period actors were classified as “non-human” outcasts. However, the troupe went beyond the simple reproduction of a lost tradition, aiming to create an alternative form of expression that incorporated new means of theatrical production. For a detailed analysis of *angura*, see John D. Swain, “Nomads Still: *Zainichi*-Koreans and Contemporary Japanese Theatre,” Ph.D. diss. (Los Angeles: University of California, Los Angeles, 2004).

¹¹¹ John D. Swain also discusses how Ri Reisen, who was one of the founders of the Situation Theatre and played most of the major female roles in the Theatre’s productions, was marginalized from the group due to her status as a female *zainichi*-Korean, with Kara Jūrō claiming exclusive credit for leadership. John D. Swain, “The Globalization of ‘Riverbed Beggars,’” in Stratos E. Constantinidis, ed., *Text & Presentation, 2005* (Jefferson, North Carolina, and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2006), 32-4.

marginalized.¹¹² Drawing upon Swain's observation, I argue that a similar situation occurred for *zainichi* artists such as Son who were active amidst the large-scale promotion of cultural nationalism in both countries, resulting in a social atmosphere of erasure within which members of the diaspora were urged to affiliate themselves with either category of ethnic identification.¹¹³ Choosing one would mean the negation of the other, and no in-between space existed.

However, such a condition in which members are at once permanent *and* temporary could also generate alternate possibilities. Swain found this indeterminate and performative space to exist in *zainichi* theatre, allowing its members to define and present their subject positions within Japan's sociocultural environment.¹¹⁴ I identify this space, as well as its potential to resist hegemonic discourses of homogeneity, in Son's attempts to locate himself in-between. I argue that Son's approach allows for an understanding of the larger *zainichi* experience that goes against both myths of mono-ethnicity in postwar South Korea and Japan which took hold in the public imagination.¹¹⁵ The two notions of "Koreanness" and "Japaneseness" were results of the vigorous institutional efforts in both countries to conjure a myth of a homogeneous race and

¹¹² Swain, "Nomads Still," 12.

¹¹³ "Kara is a Japanese insider who co-opts outsider status, using a real outsider to do so. Ri [Reisen] loses her status as *Zainichi*-Korean Other, submerged in the *angura* discourse of theatre as a site and practice of otherness. In this way, Kara and other *angura* leaders who challenged the political, social and cultural status quo, also re-inscribed the hegemonic, neo-colonial Japanese patriarchy. The moment WWII ended, *Zainichi*-Koreanness, that is, residency in Japan as opposed to Korean residency in Korea, was located outside the frame most Japanese had of the world. In the attempt to make *Koreans* visible, Kara and the theatre practitioners of the 1960s re-erased *Zainichi*-Koreans. ...By addressing the unfortunate results of Japanese colonialism, Kara seems to imply that marginalized *Zainichi*-Koreans can (re)claim exclusive cultural territory. However, defining exclusive territory solidifies boundaries, and (re)claiming this cultural territory actually re-inscribed the center and strengthened *Zainichi*-Korean marginalization." Swain, "The Globalization of 'Riverbed Beggars,'" 32.

¹¹⁴ Swain, "Nomads Still," 4.

¹¹⁵ Christina Yi, "Fissured Languages of Empire: Gender, Ethnicity, and Literature in Japan and Korea, 1930s-1950s," Ph.D. diss. (New York: Columbia University, 2013) 14. In her investigation of Japanese-language literature by Korean writers, from those writing under the Japanese colonial empire to the major agents in the postwar rise of the genre of *zainichi* literature, Yi sought to deconstruct the myth of a single "Korean" people. Yi's critical analysis of the individual's position within the uneven grounds of colonialism shifts according to gender and class.

nation.¹¹⁶ As a result, such frameworks glossed over of the social, political, and geographic specificities of *zainichi* artists who partook in the postwar paradigm.

An understanding of the diasporic status of Koreans *in* Japan thus locates Son's body in a liminal space between two ideas of ethnic identification as Korean or Japanese. Regarding the term "postcolonial," Leela Gandhi has asserted that its "moment of arrival—into independence—is predicated upon its ability to successfully imagine and execute a decisive departure from the colonial past."¹¹⁷ However, *zainichi* Koreans were unable to associate themselves with this moment of departure as they geographically and socially remained within imperial territory. For Son, the abject body in his 1969 photographs would not have been about transcendence but the *failure* to transcend ethnic identification. At the same time, however, this was what alternatively allowed him to exist in the in-between as a diasporic subject.

On the one hand, Takayama's *Drama Underground Zoo* explored the relationship between matter and memory in an allegorical way, with railroad ties representing human bodies of the past. Son's *Landscape of Body*, on the other hand, introduced the living presence of the human body in the space that Takayama created, a space wherein object and memory were closely connected. *Drama Underground Zoo* took the form of a stairway leading into the depths of the underground world, and Son's naked body herein stood out as if it were an animated corpse, his presence contained in the "Underground Zoo." Furthermore, Takayama's envisioning

¹¹⁶ Such discourses also emphasized a metaphor of the blood and body, as in the case of *kokutai* ("national identity" or "national sovereignty"), which combines the nation and the body together in its very characters. Such discourses of blood-based affiliation supported the differentiation of Koreans in Japan from "Japan proper," and this method of differentiation—the othering of Koreans as ethnically separate from and alien to Japan as a nation—continued to assert power even after the war. Christina Yi, *Colonizing Language: Cultural Production and Language Politics in Modern Japan and Korea* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 87, 151.

¹¹⁷ Leela Ghandi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 6.

of railroad ties as crystalized forms of Japan's imperial past allowed Son's body to interact with the history that was laid under Japan's colonialist forays into Asia.¹¹⁸ Son's interaction with *Drama Underground Zoo* thus visualized the social, political, and historical orders imposed upon the silenced presence of a direct descendent of this colonial history, whose screaming and shouting remains unheard, silently preserved in black and white. *Landscape of Body* brought the past to the present, marking the body's existence in yet another time and space.

2.3.3 Landscape, Maps, and the *Zainichi* Body

In order to better understand Son's particular presentation of the abject body, I briefly turn to a discussion of how Son's use of the title connotes its meaning as a landscape *of* the body, rather than a body in landscape. The production of *Landscape of Body* occurred in his early career when Son was most actively engaged with film theory and practices. The following year, Son began to produce several movies, including a 16-mm film *Ritual* (1970), *Wave-length* (1971), *Personal and Wrecked Future* (1973), and *La Scène* (1979, Unfinished), and he established the collective Film Zensen (Film Front) in 1972. This was also the time when Japanese film critics and directors became deeply engaged in the questions of *fūkei* (landscape). The word *fūkei* can be translated to landscape or scenery in English, and in the traditional sense generically referred to the natural environment. In the late 1960s, however, the Japanese art

¹¹⁸ Here I understand Son's performing body in terms of one who *is* the body (Leib, or the lived-living body), rather than one who *has* the body (Körper, or the body-object). This distinction was argued by Edmund Husserl and later Maurice Merleau-Ponty. The idea of the body as subject contrasts with Descartes' dualist ontology that distinguishes between the mind and body. My approach agrees with such phenomenological view of the body as subject, in which we *experience* our body as something other than an object. For a detailed account on the body as object, which is "the body that one *has*, rather than the body that one *is*," see Jenny Slatman and Guy Widdershoven, "An Ethics of Embodiment: The Body as Object and Subject," in Darian Meacham, ed., *Medicine and Society, New Perspectives in Continental Philosophy* (Berlin: Springer, 2015), 87-104. Italics in original.

world began to consider the urban environment as well, engaging in a critical discourse known as *fūkeiron* (landscape theory). According to artist Hatakeyama Naoya, during this period the term “landscape” came to connote the social order or its system, and was considered as a means for the conservative power structure to control and censure critical perception. Landscape was no longer to be admired for its natural beauty; it was meant “to be cut up and dissected as much as possible, something to be overcome and to serve as a point of departure.”¹¹⁹

Two notable productions contributed significantly to the development of *fūkeiron*, which was propelled by a small group of filmmakers who began to document urban landscapes in 1969 in the aftermath of the violence resulting from student protests and anti-government demonstrations, as well as the subsequent political unrest. The first is Masao’s experimental documentary film *A.K.A. Serial Killer* (*Ryakushō renzoku shasatsuma*, 1969), which was produced in response to the intense media coverage on serial killer Nagayama Norio. Instead of directly displaying images of violence, this film focused on presenting the urban landscape where Nagayama had lived. The second is Ōshima Nagisa’s complexly self-referential film, *The Man Who Left His Will on Film* (*Tokyo sensō sengo hiwa: Eiga de isho o nokoshite shinda otoko no monogatari*, 1970). Ōshima’s film also focused on portraying the urban landscape—seemingly ordinary and banal ones in particular—as what Furuhata Yuriko called “a critical strategy to counteract and question the codified media representations of violence and activism, and, furthermore, to explore a new way of conceptualizing state power.”¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Naoya Hatakeyama, “Artist Talk: About *Fukei*,” *Focus on Japanese Photography*, September 2017, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, accessed February 18, 2020, <https://www.sfmoma.org/publication/focus-japanese-photography/landscape-situation-about-fukei>.

¹²⁰ Furuhata, “Diagramming the Landscape,” in *Cinema of Actuality*, 116-7.

Fūkeiron revealed “an increasing skepticism towards the centrality of the subject among leftist filmmakers and activists.”¹²¹ According to Furuhata, *A.K.A. Serial Killer* was produced together with cultural theorist Matsuda Masao, who reversed Walter Benjamin’s discussion of how Eugène Atget photographed landscapes as if they were deserted crime scenes to describe the making of *A.K.A. Serial Killer* as a process of filming “crime scenes just like landscape [photographs].”¹²² Discussing the crew’s emphasis on landscapes as evidence that violence has already occurred, Furuhata drew attention to an implicit connection “between the homogenization of landscapes and an accelerated process of urbanization led by the government in the 1960s” that was revealed in discussions of the film. This, she continues, “allows us to approach state power, not in terms of its repressive forces (as exemplified by the iconic image of the riot police), but in terms of its productive forces, which mold and shape the everyday environment in order to maintain order and security.”¹²³

Fūkeiron perceived landscape as a “scene” created by the dominant power structure, “an embodiment of the ‘antagonistic power’ (*tekitai shitekuru ‘kenryoku’*)”¹²⁴ that seeks to enforce a particular order on the urban environment and society in ways unknown and unrecognizable to the public. The “landscape” portrayed in the aforementioned films thus referred to “both the profilmic space as well as the cinematic image of this space.”¹²⁵ This approach to landscape can provide a means to understand the social reality of Koreans in Japan, whose lives are inherently

¹²¹ Ibid., 347.

¹²² Masao Adachi and Gō Hirasawa, *Eiga-Kakumei* (Tokyo: Kawade Shobō Shinsha, 2003), 290, quoted in Furuhata, “Diagramming the Landscape,” 134.

¹²³ Ibid., 134-5.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 135.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 136.

affected by the predetermined category of *zainichi*. Therefore, an important consideration must be how the individual's self-sustaining identity is formed within an environment in which one has already been assigned a powerful but negative, preexisting identity. This issue of a given cultural and national identity, for example, was explored in Ōshima's slightly earlier film, *Death By Hanging* (*Kōshikei*, 1968), in which the director opened up an ambiguous, "anxious space of indeterminacy that derives from the failure of the gaze to fix the ethnic identity of individuals."¹²⁶

Through the voice of a Korean death-row inmate, who is wiped of his memory and conscience, Ōshima launched a critique of the Japanese state as a whole with *Death By Hanging*.¹²⁷ However, as Shota T. Ogawa pointed out, the main character's position as a *zainichi* Korean is often ignored in critical readings of the film,¹²⁸ despite the fact that the story sought to expose the precarious social, political, and legal position that Koreans in Japan occupied in the postwar period.¹²⁹ Ogawa elaborated that: "Rather than 'depicting' how Koreans are in the narrative space, Ōshima's films provided a theatrical *mise-en-scene* for the articulation of

¹²⁶ Shota T. Ogawa, "Reinhabiting the Mock-up Gallows: The Place of Koreans in Ōshima Nagisa's Films in the 1960s," in *Screen*, Vol. 56, Issue 3 (2015): 305.

¹²⁷ Written and directed by Ōshima, the film revolves around a Korean in Japan named "R" who suffered amnesia after surviving a failed execution. The story is loosely based on the actual crime and execution of Ri Chin-u, a Japan-born *zainichi* Korean, in 1958. It integrates the story of the so-called Komatsugawa Incident into what Shota T. Ogawa explained as "a theoretical interrogation of capital punishment as a representative state apparatus and a metonym for the sovereign power." *Ibid.*, 304.

¹²⁸ As discussed by Ogawa, this is most vividly witnessed in those launched during the 1970s, as in the case of Colin McCabe's review from 1976 that focuses on the film's "political modernism." McCabe wrote that "we no longer have our fantasies of Koreans, of executions but only on the condition that we no longer have our fantasy of the cinema." Colin McCabe, "Theory and Film: Principles of Realism and Pleasure," in *Theoretical Essays: Film, Linguistics, Literature* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), 79. See Ogawa, "Reinhabiting the Mock-up Gallows" for a discussion of the quote.

¹²⁹ During this period, the national project of repatriation was instigated based on the idea that Koreans in Japan were exiled foreign nationals, rather than considering them as a minority group within the country. *Ibid.*, 309.

difference. ...Rather than the position of the other, Koreans in Ōshima's films occupied the ambivalent place of uncanny familiarity, hoaxing, and farcical role reversals."¹³⁰ In this sense, Ōshima constantly engaged with the question of Koreans' position in Japanese cinema as well as in the larger cultural history of postwar Japan by exposing the landscape within which they were positioned.

Accordingly, the characters that appear in Ōshima's *Death By Hanging* understand *zainichi* as a collective unit that, either negatively or positively, shares a common trait through which members are unified.¹³¹ The main character R, however, struggles to find a place between the two sides of *zainichi* identity.¹³² In Son's *Landscape of Body*, the body in the photographs is void of physical markers that would commonly allow for individual identification, with the white makeup having erased all defining characteristics that could distinguish one from others. This body could be anyone; it could be Son or someone else, capable of representing a collective rather than a single individual. This allows for a reading of Son's work as referring to the larger category of the *zainichi* body, which is both imposed upon members as a means of alienation

¹³⁰ Ibid., 318.

¹³¹ Ōshima's cinematic representation of Koreans in Japan can be further understood through the work of Stuart Hall. Hall examined the opposition between understanding cultural identity as a collective history, and as unstable and marked by multiple similarities and differences. He argued that identity is neither transparent nor unproblematic, and thus should be understood as a "production": "which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation." For Hall, identity is but a fragmented, fractured, and politicized representation of a given collective. He thus problematized the term 'cultural identity' and its claim on authority and authenticity, opening up in its place a dialogue on the *subject* of cultural identity and representation. Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," 222.

¹³² Hall argued that while the first position significantly contributed to the Negritude movements by creatively representing the true identity of marginalized people, it fails to comprehend the trauma of colonialism. He proposed that the second position better comprehends the colonial experience by focusing on the multiple points of both similarities and differences amongst an imagined cultural group. This position defines cultural identity as unstable, metamorphic, and even contradictory; that is, "a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'." It emphasizes the historical and social contingency of identity, in which difference persists in and alongside continuity; it recognizes that within any apparent points of similarity, there also exist ruptures and discontinuities. Ibid., 225.

through abjection and self-identified to gain subjectivity against assimilation. Despite the lack of ethnic markers that would clearly distinguish *zainichi* Koreans as a minority, the body is burdened with a sociopolitical layer that continuously attempts to mark it as a *zainichi* body, a question that is often addressed in *zainichi* literary discourses through the lens of passing.¹³³ The reading of the title as “Landscape (*fūkei*) of Body” based on such understanding draws attention to the conservative power structure of the nation-state embedded in the seemingly mundane but already othered body.¹³⁴

Early in his career, Son had first experimented with installation, video, and performance pieces, involving his body in a more direct manner. His practices shifted towards prints, drawings, and paintings by the late 1970s, coming to demonstrate a predominant interest in the themes of color and space. The artist visited South Korea for the first time in 1978, after which Son began to rigorously engage with painting. Son established his studio Ypsilon in Nishinomiya, Hyogo in 1980, where he fully immersed himself in the medium of painting. Studio Ypsilon, however, was destroyed completely during the Great Hanshin Earthquake, resulting in the loss of many of the artist’s works and documentations that were produced before 1995. Son moved his studio to Kyoto the following year. Throughout such trajectory, the artist’s emphasis on the body and marking his own presence continued to function as a central aspect of his work. Son’s paintings, in particular, explored the process through which the artist’s body

¹³³ For instance, see Christina Yi and Jonathan Glade, “The Politics of Passing in *Zainichi* Cultural Production,” in *Azalea: Journal of Korean Literature & Culture*, Vol. 12 (2019): 235-56.

¹³⁴ Critics have argued for the concept of landscape as an ideological way of seeing. W. J. T. Mitchell, for instance, argued that landscape is “a medium of cultural expression.” According to Mitchell, “landscape is itself a physical and multisensory medium (earth, stone, vegetation, water, sky, sound and silence, light and darkness, etc.) in which cultural meanings and values are encoded, whether they are put there by the physical transformation of a place in landscape gardening and architecture, or found in a place formed, as we say, ‘by nature.’” W. J. T. Mitchell, “Imperial Landscape,” in *Landscape and Power*, Second Edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 14.

would leave physical marks as colors and lines, and as material presence. What I identify in this practice is not an attempt to free the body from cultural and social heritage, as in *butoh*'s detachment from the everyday body through transformation, but instead an acceptance of the othered body as an inherent part of his in-between existence.¹³⁵ The artist examined space—the space within which the body resides and the space that exists between bodies—as a means of affirming his own space as a diasporic Korean artist amidst the sociopolitical conditions of postwar Japan. By drawing a connection between Son's early work, *Landscape of Body*, and his later paintings, I consider the abject body as a productive site wherein the present and past can continue to interact.

A factor that has never been extensively discussed, but deserves attention, is how Son named his works. The artist's titles reveal his ongoing interest in the space that the body occupies. Regardless of his chosen medium, Son often named his work using spatial terms, including *Location of Distance* (*Kyori no ichi*, 1976), *Interval of White* (*Shiro no mǎi*, 1982), *Interval of Color* (*Iro no mǎi*, 1986), *Location of Memory* (*Kioku no ichi*, 1992), *Interval of Space* (*Kūkan no mǎi*, 1995), *The Inside and Outside of Space* (*Kūkan no hyōri*, 1996), and *Location of Color* (*Iro no ichi*, 1999). These titles were not exclusive to one or two works, but were given to series of paintings that recorded Son's repetitive attempts. When considering these paintings as marks of his experience, they can be understood as having been left behind from the artist's particular movements. Multiple works would be issued the same title as they were *processes*, not products, gesturing towards an ongoing search that never concluded.

¹³⁵ For a discussion of the social body in the practices of *angura* and *butoh*, see Eckersall, *Theorizing the Angura Space*.

In regards to *A.K.A. Serial Killer* and its attention to landscape, Furuhata introduced the fact that “At the time of Nagayama’s arrest, one of the major newspapers published a diagram of the itinerary of Nagayama, who frequently moved from one city to another.”¹³⁶ According to Furuhata’s observations, *A.K.A. Serial Killer* was initially inspired by this diagram,¹³⁷ and Matsuda’s subsequent theorization of landscape came to highlight the cartographic practice of mapping. In his essay “My Archipelago, My Landscape,” Matsuda reflected on how maps shape one’s view of the world, and that by modifying the map, one can inherently affect perception itself. In this sense, the practice of mapping not only depicts the geographical reality but also visualizes geopolitical imaginations.¹³⁸ Here, Furuhata highlighted the significance of Matsuda’s “understanding of cartography as a method of policing vision, which imposes culturally and historically conditioned ways of seeing the world (worldviews).” As Furuhata continued, “These *ways of seeing*—like landscape—are directly linked to colonial and imperial relations of power.”¹³⁹

A.K.A. Serial Killer provided an alternate map to the above-mentioned diagram, following and recording homogeneous landscapes to reveal the power structure inherently laid throughout one’s trajectory through society. Furuhata argued that this was “a countercartographic endeavor that aims to undo habitual ways of seeing the world.”¹⁴⁰ Realizing that the map shapes

¹³⁶ Furuhata, “Diagramming the Landscape,” 140.

¹³⁷ Sasaki Mamoru, “Fūkei ga kawaranakereba ‘kakumei’ wa dekinai [We cannot have a ‘revolution’ unless landscapes are changed],” in Ōshima Nagisa, *Ōshima Nagisa: 1968* (Tokyo: Seidosha, 2004), 297, cited in Furuhata, “Diagramming the Landscape,” 140.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 140.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 141.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 140-1.

not only space but also perception, the crew sought to deconstruct the image of reality formulated by the state's systematic process of organizing space. On this note, Matsuda further questioned the map of Japan as well: "I could not help but wonder whether it is possible for us to discover *another Japan*—another Japan which is expressible as a concrete material map."¹⁴¹ This is the lens through which I approach Son's paintings, particularly *Elimination of Form* (*Keitai no shōkyō*, 1985) (Fig. 6). Despite the change in medium and technique, the practice of visualizing the landscape within which the *zainichi* body resides continued to be a prominent interest for Son.

Part of a series of paintings and drawings all bearing the same title, *Elimination of Form* is a somewhat simple drawing consisting of seemingly arbitrary pencil marks on paper. Random lines and dots meet and depart on the paper's surface, as if recognizable forms are yet to emerge, or on the contrary, as if solid forms are in the process of dissolving, breaking down and losing any sense of solidity. Interestingly, the resulting chaos seems to resemble a bird's eye view map; more specifically, it is reminiscent of the map of Osaka, Son's hometown. Son's body, standing or sitting in front of the paper, moved to leave traces on the surface with a pencil. I perceive these traces as marking the memories of his body moving through the physical space of Osaka, walking down the streets as an inhabitant. Each line and dot recorded his movement through space, physically in the studio and mentally in the city streets, and marked the space that Son's memory and body occupied to function as proof of his existence. However, these marks do not aim to construct a particular shape, as suggestive in the title of *Elimination of Form*. The map

¹⁴¹ Matsuda Masao, "Waga rettō, waga fūkei [My archipelago, my landscape]," in *Fūkei no shimetsu* [Extinction of the landscape] (Tokyo: Tabata Shoten, 1973), 92, quoted in Furuhata, "Diagramming the Landscape," 141.

that emerges from the artist's movements is not a concrete, organized, and functional map; rather, it is a mind map that marks memories instead of form.

This notion of drawing as “marking memories” can be identified as the central concept for another work of pencil on paper, *Traces of Memory* (*Kioku no konseki*, 1984) (Fig. 7). Here, Son also left traces of his movement on the paper surface, which is marked with a rough grid that reinforces the drawing's resemblance to a map. The manner in which the lines are drawn, along with the quality of the paper—slightly worn, grainy, and beige in color—visually resembles a traditional or antique map that one would commonly find in East Asian countries and other regions (Fig. 8).¹⁴² Son also produced works such as *Elimination of Form or Location of Distance* (*Keitai no shōkyo mataha kyori no ichi*, 1976) through woodblock printing, creating an etching of chaotic lines meant to map out space by incorporating a technique that had been employed widely in Korea during the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1897) and before to produce maps.¹⁴³

Maps produced during the Joseon Dynasty were initially created by canvassing the physical space on foot, walking the land on surveying expeditions to memorize the space in order to map it.¹⁴⁴ In doing so, the world was perceived from a human perspective, with the body becoming the referent. Accordingly, scales use the body as the means to measure space and

¹⁴² For examples of eighteenth and nineteenth-century maps, ranging from the late Qing dynasty in China to the Joseon dynasty in Korea to the Edo and Meiji periods in Japan, see Richard A. Pegg, *Cartographic Traditions in East Asian Maps* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2014). Another example would be *Daedongyeo-jido* (“Map of the Great East [Korea]”), a map of the Korean peninsula that was published between 1843 and 1859. For an analysis of the map, see Jin-sook Jang and Ki-hyuk Kim, “A Study on Daedongyeo-jido in the National Library of Korea,” in *Journal of the Korean Research Association of Old Maps*, 6(2) (December 2014): 19-50. In Korean.

¹⁴³ See Kibong Lee, “Study on Cartographic Characteristics of Wood Block ‘Daedongyeo Yeoji Jeondo’,” in *Journal of the Korean Association of Regional Geographers*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (August 2014): 300-14.

¹⁴⁴ For the production of maps in premodern Korea, see Gary Ledyard, “Cartography in Korea,” in *The History of Cartography*, Vol. 2, Part 2 (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994)

make use of feet, steps, hands, and arms. Son's act of drawing a grid in works such as *Elimination of Form*, which maps the space that his body occupied, gains further significance when considering discussions on the colonial grid. In his discussion of a Japanese grid map of Korea from 1921, for example, John Rennie Short demonstrates how the grid came to embody and represent imperial domination.¹⁴⁵ According to him, the imperial order stressed the importance of precise maps as a means of enforcing and strengthening its control, with the process of mapmaking coming to represent the colonial presence itself. The making of maps and decisions regarding land ownership through cartographical means suggested that the imperial power had established control over the given area, marking its presence in new territories of the Empire.¹⁴⁶ Imperial Japan launched a series of cartographic and hydrological surveys to map out its colonial territory, mostly in secret throughout the late nineteenth century and more publicly thereafter, with mapmakers surveying the lands and coasts of the Korean peninsula as well.¹⁴⁷ As Short explained, the straight-line grid is particularly evocative of imperial power and its control over the order imposed upon colonial territories: "It provides the necessary cartographic net to collect and display information as well as the imperial signature that signifies rational

¹⁴⁵ "Korea was mapped as a form of imperial control. The Japanese published maps of Korea at a variety of scales.... Detailed mapping was also an essential part of the nationalization of land and of royal forests. Land was a major source of wealth and status in Korea, since land-ownership was the traditional power base of the *yangban* class and taxes on land were the major source of government revenue. Landownership was unevenly distributed, with a small minority having vast holdings. The Japanese colonial government wanted both to tax land and to control it. The Land Survey Bureau completed major surveys between 1910 and 1918, recording all plots of land and classifying them according to type, productivity, and ownership. The Japanese authorities required every owner to register his land claims. Many of the smaller owners and tenants could not document their ownership, but the large landowners generally kept their land. Almost 40 percent of arable land was taken over by the colonial government, and much of it was assigned to Japanese development companies at low prices." John Rennie Short, *Korea: A Cartographic History* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 119-20.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, 119-20.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 118-9.

order and imperial control.”¹⁴⁸ He continues that “The grid both symbolizes colonial domination and signals Korea’s forced incorporation into the production of global space.”¹⁴⁹ Mapmakers, he concludes, thus stood at the forefront of the imperial project.¹⁵⁰

Considering Son’s longstanding interest in his status as a Korean in Japan, the imposition of a grid upon a space marked by his memories of moving through Japanese territory can be interpreted as an awareness of the lasting effects that colonial rule has had on his existence. Despite having been born and raised in postwar Osaka, his presence continued to be located under the legacy of imperial expansion. Son thus required an alternative map that could account for the in-between status that he occupied. An alternative map emerges from the memories of a space, which is particularly important for those who exist in the margins of marked territories or in-between grid lines.¹⁵¹ In this sense, Son’s drawings were not intended to clarify his location on a preexisting map, but rather to express the impossibility of it. The abject body requires a map of its own, as did the artist in order to mark the memories and movements of his diasporic existence that could not fit into preexisting categories established by the nation-state.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 113.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 113. According to Short, during the Meiji period (1868-1912) “Japan followed a policy of economic modernization and military buildup,” while also embarking on a quest to systematically map nearby states. Ibid., 113.

¹⁵⁰ David Fedman, “Triangulating *Chōsen*: Maps, Mapmaking, and the Land Survey in Colonial Korea,” in *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review*, E-Journal, No. 2 (March 2012): 3.

¹⁵¹ This brings to mind the words of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who wrote that the understanding of the world, of things and others, and of oneself is achieved through one’s body: “Our body is not in space like things; it inhabits or haunts space.” Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “An Unpublished Text,” in *The Primacy of Perception: And Other Essays on Phenomenological Psychology, the Philosophy of Art, History, and Politics* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 5.

2.4 Painting: Between “Koreanness” and “Japaneseness”

In considering this attempt to map the space that the body occupies, I focus on Son’s in-between status *within* the Japanese art world, instead of understanding him *outside* of it. When a marginalized group claims exclusive rights over a territory there remains the danger of solidifying the division between the margin and the center. In this case, as Trinh T. Minh-ha explained in her discussion of the colonial periphery about the importance of displacement, the center can re-inscribe itself by tolerating the margins since the power relations among them persist, thereby further marginalizing the other by leaving little to no room for them to exist *within*.¹⁵² In particular, postwar nationalist narratives on cultural identity left little to no room for othered groups such as *zainichi* artists in the discussion of “Japanese art” and “Japaneseness”; however, writing them into narratives of “Korean art” and “Koreanness” only manages to further marginalize them.¹⁵³ Son and his works, particularly *Landscape of Body*, emphasize the diasporic status of Koreans *in* Japan, through which I highlight the liminal space that *zainichi* artists occupied between the parallel developments of “Japaneseness” and “Koreanness.”

Japan’s project of modernization required the creation of the Other, and painting had long played an important role in visualizing the pursuit to define modern Japan and meeting demands for a national aesthetic. With the end of World War II and the subsequent American occupation,

¹⁵² Trinh T. Minh-ha, “No Master Territories,” in Bill Ashcroft, Garth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, eds., *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* (1995; London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 216.

¹⁵³ Christina Yi also states in her investigation of Japanese-language literature by Korean writers that “The logic of ethnic nationalism, in which ethnic belonging to the nation is privileged over all other identities, was embraced in the immediate postwar period by writers not only in Japan but in Korea as well. The predominance of ethnic nationalism had immediate consequences for the Korean population in Japan, as they were associated with the Korean—and not Japanese—nation.” Yi, *Colonizing Language*, 151.

dialogues between Japanese, American, and European artists intensified.¹⁵⁴ European presence remained strong in the Japanese art field, with the so-called “*Informel* whirlwind” continuing to attract the nation’s avant-garde art scene during the 1960s.¹⁵⁵ Amidst transnational discussions, the role of painting continued to be debated in relation to the development of Japanese art.

Between those criticizing the passive acceptance of what they perceived to be “cultural colonialism” and others actively welcoming new styles and techniques into the art world, the boundaries of Japanese art were debated as part of the national project of defining what the pure essence of “Japan” was, especially to reinforce Japan’s national sovereignty and prestige.¹⁵⁶

Japan’s postwar nationalist theories aimed to construct a myth of “Japaneseness” that was deeply imbricated with nationalism and tradition, with *Nihonjinron* (“Theories about the Japanese”) concepts being born out of mostly postwar efforts. Much of the postwar theorizing of

¹⁵⁴ Japanese artists had begun traveling to Europe since the Meiji period (1868–1912) when the nation opened its borders, participating in an international dialogue with European painters and thinkers. By 1905 when Japan achieved victory in the Russo-Japanese War, a widespread consciousness in its art world came to recognize Japan vis-à-vis Western counterparts. International and intercultural exchanges expanded the creative paradigm for artists, writers, and thinkers in Japan, who were increasingly more exposed to literature and discourses imported throughout the following three decades. For a summarized account of the international and intercultural exchanges between Japan and Europe during the early half of the twentieth century, see Ming Tiampo, “Decentering Originality,” in *Gutai: Decentering Modernism* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2011).

¹⁵⁵ In Japan, the “*Informel* whirlwind” of 1957 was prompted by Michel Tapié (1909-1987), French critic and curator, when he visited Japan with painter Georges Mathieu. Tapié published *Un art autre* (Art of another kind) in 1952, through which he popularized gestural abstraction in France vis-à-vis American Abstract Expressionism. His term “L’art informel” derived from *informe*, which means “unformed” or “formless” in French. Following his five-week stay, Tapié expressed his interest in several artists including the Experimental Workshop (Jikken Kōbō) and the Gutai group, with the latter gaining international attention as a result. However, by 1958 Japanese critics were expressing concerns that the *informel* whirlwind had simply followed after a Western art movement, thus lacking consideration of the locality of Japan. Doryun Chong, “1957-1964: Introduction,” in *From Postwar to Postmodern*, 96.

¹⁵⁶ Tiampo, “Introduction,” in *Gutai: Decentering Modernism*, 7; Tiampo, “Decentering Originality,” in *ibid.*, 14-5. This debate was not a new one: for instance, in “Whither Our Oil Painting?” (1947), painter and art historian Suda Kunitaro questioned how modern Japanese oil painting was importing new styles from the West. Suda’s condemnation partook in the largescale debate between *nihonga* (traditional-style painting) and *yoga* (Western-style painting), the two sides of an artificial dichotomy that was established through the fine arts system in Japan. See Suda Kunitaro, “*Waga Abura-e wa Izuko ni Yuku ka*” (“Whither Our Oil Painting”) (Mizue, Tokyo: November 1947), 19–21, quoted in Tatehata, “Mono-ha and Japan’s Crisis of the Modern,” 223.

Nihonjinron in the 1970s and 80s, which emphasized the uniqueness of Japanese identity, was built on prewar discourses advocating for the uniqueness of the Japanese “race” and cultural practices, including language. As Yoshino Kosaku observed, *Nihonjinron* literature often employed the phrase *tan'itsu minzoku* when describing the Japanese to elide the difference between race and culture. *Tan'itsu* translates to “one” in English, while *minzoku* collectively refers to notions of race, ethnic community, and nation. The phrase was used to refer to the homogeneity of Japanese people without specifying differences between racial and cultural distinctions.¹⁵⁷

Scholars arguing against such nationalistic narratives have sought to demystify the notion of “Japaneseness,” including Kōichi Iwabuchi who described the notion as a rigid idea that Japan is static, homogenous, and closed as a society.¹⁵⁸ In his discussion of *Nihonjinron*, Iwabuchi stated that Japanese self-Orientalism was not a challenge to Western Orientalism, an idea of an exoticized “other” as described by Edward Said. Instead, their relationship could be characterized by a profound complicity. The invention of tradition necessitated the West and rendered the Other obscure; the Other was utilized to essentialize the Self, consequently repressing heterogeneous voices that existed within the nation. Iwabuchi’s perspective allows for a consideration of how the homogenizing discourses that spoke of an imaginary “us” against

¹⁵⁷ Kosaku Yoshino, *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary Japan: A Sociological Enquiry* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 25.

¹⁵⁸ Kōichi Iwabuchi focuses on what Roy Miller called “self-Orientalism” to understand how the geographically and culturally imagined entity of the “West” was discursively and systematically created in Japan. The West here was created to serve for self-definition, with the real West remaining irrelevant to the process. Kōichi Iwabuchi, “Complicit Exoticism: Japan and Its Other,” in *Continuum*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (1994): 42-82.

“them” drew upon power dynamics present both within the nation and between nations.¹⁵⁹ The evolution of Japan’s national identity was thus inherently and inextricably linked to its historical relationship with the West, at once self-defining and self-othering—strategies of both inclusion and exclusion that gained significance once simultaneously in action.¹⁶⁰

The Korean art world also confronted the importation of the so-called West, but was faced with the additional factor of its own complicated relationship with Japan.¹⁶¹ In the history of modern Korean art, the development of painting, specifically oil on canvas, is deeply intertwined with the Japanese art world. Scholars have discussed the emergence of modern art in colonial Korea, exploring how artists realized the experience of modern life and values through painting. This led to an increase in self-portraits and depictions of personal life, experimentation with new techniques and subject matter, the establishment of artist associations, and the organization of art exhibitions.¹⁶² Art historians Youngna Kim and Julie Chun have argued that the popularization of oil paintings occurred specifically as a result of the effort of pioneers such as Ko Hui-dong (1886-1965), the first Western-style painter in Korea who played an instrumental role in the transition from traditional *literati* paintings to modern, “Western” oil painting. A younger generation of artists, active within the context of Japanese colonialism and

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 45. Iwabuchi argued that this discourse sought to appropriate the Western myth of “Japaneseness,” which set diligence (*kinben*), loyalty, devotion, and systematic work as national cultural “traits” of the Japanese, as a means to “repress people’s demands for ‘democracy’ or human rights.” Ibid., 45.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 45.

¹⁶¹ For a reading of Korean abstract painting as a cultural ‘place-holder’ that signaled the South’s post-war alignment with the U.S. and Western democracy, see Simon Morley, “Dansaekhwa,” in *Third Text*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (London and New York: Routledge, 2013).

¹⁶² See Youngna Kim, “Colonial Modernity Contested,” Diana Hinds Evans, trans., in *Tradition, Modernity, and Identity: Modern and Contemporary Art in Korea* (Elizabeth, NJ and Seoul: Hollym, 2005), 6-24. Kim also explains that the increase in public recognition of artists resulted in the emergence of institutional art exhibitions, the most representative of these being the Chosŏn Art Exhibition that was held annually from 1922 to 1944.

amidst the introduction of Western-style oil painting to Korea, sought to train in modern techniques of representation in Japan at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts. The first group of Korean graduates included Ko Hui-dong, Kim Gwan-ho (1890-1959), and Kim Chan-young (1889-1960), who mediated and negotiated the exportation of Western artistic concepts from Japan to Korea despite politicized tensions, through which they contributed to the formation of Korean modern painting. According to Chun, these artists negotiated modernity within the constraints of the aesthetic tradition in Korea, namely, the prevailing artistic standards and practices of the 700 years of traditional ink painting on paper and silk.¹⁶³ Such a process of the Korean adaptation of European oil painting has been understood as more than simply a mimetic process from Japan; as Chun argued, it was “a complex appropriation involving the construction of Korean artistic identity within the pluralistic framework of colonialism, nationalism and modernity.”¹⁶⁴

In Japan, a newfound interest in painting arose in the mid-1970s, a time when, amidst widespread political apathy following the fall of radical student movements, the art world began to regain interest in traditional art forms, such as painting and sculpture.¹⁶⁵ Among others, Lee Ufan began to exhibit his series *From Line* (Fig. 9) and *From Point* (Fig. 10), consisting of paintings composed entirely of points and lines, which came to dominate his oeuvre during the

¹⁶³ Julie Chun, “Formation of Korean Artistic Identity during the Early Years of Japanese Colonialism,” in *Actes du 8e colloque étudiant du Département d’histoire de l’Université Laval* (Québec: Artefact, 2008): 145.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 145. Working through the biography and artistic development of the three Korean artists at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts, she thus discusses how they each utilized self-portraiture as a means of individual and authentic self-expression. See *ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ For an account of the art world’s response to sociopolitical situations in the 1970s, see Kenji Kajiya, “1970-1980: Introduction,” in *From Postwar to Postmodern*, 256.

1970s and 80s.¹⁶⁶ Such heightened interest in painting, however, was not simply a return to a conventional style; rather, artists attempted to rebuild the medium entirely and understand it anew.¹⁶⁷ Art historians and critics including Midori Matsui have argued that this shift should thus be understood in relation to the years that led up to it, including the social activism of the 1960s, rather than as a negation of the past: “The efforts of the Mono-ha and Conceptual artists—who engaged in the negation of pictorial illusion by focusing on a picture’s material surface or by utilizing processes of automatic painting—prompted a rethinking of painting’s fundamental conditions, including its expressive limits and possibilities.”¹⁶⁸

This period coincides with Son’s turn to the medium of painting in the mid-1970s. Son’s previous efforts to realize the space that the body as a subject inhabits—with the artist’s marks functioning as a visualization of experience and existence—persisted in his paintings that focused on the expression of vivid colors.¹⁶⁹ Between 1976 and 1979, Son created a series of oil paintings titled *Emerging Object, Sinking Object* (*Arawareru mono shizumiyuku mono*, 1976-9) (Fig. 11). In one of them, he alternately placed a layer of white dots and another layer of dots in

¹⁶⁶ Lee Ufan’s *From Line* and *From Point* series demonstrated his awareness of the artistic trends, namely abstraction, that shaped the views of his audience. According to Kee, the artist’s abstraction was often identified as “different, unfamiliar, or strange” because it was “based on linkages extrapolated from various formal relationships that work together toward a common set of objectives,” but “with the intention of disclaiming the inheritances to which he might otherwise be entitled by way of previous training or exposure.” Kee, *Contemporary Korean Art*, 151.

¹⁶⁷ For an account of the period’s artistic engagements, see Kajiya, “1970-1980: Introduction,” in *From Postwar to Postmodern*, 256-9.

¹⁶⁸ Midori Matsui, “Beyond Modernism: The ‘Return of Painting’,” in *From Postwar to Postmodern*, 306.

¹⁶⁹ These traces can be marked not only by the artist’s hand, but also by the material itself. As in the example of *Location of Colors* (*Iro no ichi*, 1991), Son would often allow paint to drip downwards by gravity to leave behind a trajectory of color; traces of movement by the paint itself. As Son wrote in a pamphlet for Gallery Suzuki in 1991: “color exists deeply in everything and when its figure is seen as it is, it guides us as the key to everywhere...without limitation.” Ah Yoo Son, “From Position of Colours to Self-standing Colours (Gallery Suzuki, 1991),” originally in Japanese, translations cited in *The Works of Son Ah-Yoo*, 53.

varying colors, one over the other, across the entire material surface. Using a grinder or knife, the artist then “erased” the paint by grinding the layers into the canvas, thereby revealing the colors underneath—the colors beneath emerged, while the colors above sank. A similar technique was employed in another work, in which a vast yet condensed array of colors can be glimpsed beneath a layer of white; the colors are visible through the gaps in the white paint that has been ground into the surface of the canvas. These paintings involved a time-consuming process that often required up to two years for creation. Son had to wait for each layer of color to dry completely before he could apply the next layer of paint. Son’s ongoing interest, here in a different medium, reveals unseen existences that persist even though covered by different layers over time and obscured from view. Colors, which for him held significance as “existences,” remained present under the cover of white paint—hidden yet undeniably there—just as his body existed beneath a coat of white in his earlier 1969 photographs.¹⁷⁰

Son’s paintings are often discussed alongside Dansaekhwa (or “Korean Monochrome”), which was adopted by institutions as a focal point for articulating the notion of “Koreanness.”¹⁷¹ Dansaekhwa was a loose constellation of artists who were mainly active during the 1970s and 80s; they never officially formed an artists’ group, nor did they announce any manifestos. Critics, however, saw allusions to Korean tradition and Korean cultural identity on the artists’ works, arguing for their status as a collective movement that succeeded in representing an

¹⁷⁰ Shishido, “Emerging Lines and Colors,” 8.

¹⁷¹ Joan Kee, for instance, has examined the process through which vigorous institutional promotions of the movement resulted in the de facto establishment of Dansaekhwa as the face of so-called Korean modernism by the 1980s, as well as a polarizing force symbolic of ideological and generational divisions. Kee, *Contemporary Korean Art*, 1.

aesthetic unique to Korea and its people.¹⁷² Such framing of Dansaekhwa was part of a larger project of articulating “Koreanness” that primarily centered around the aesthetics of *huinsaek* (meaning whiteness or the color white in Korean), with prominent Japanese critics including Nakahara Yūsuke (1931-2011) developing this conception into a determinant of Korean modern art.¹⁷³ Weaving through different forms of art, from textile to pottery to painting, scholars formulated the idea of *huinsaek* as a Korean aesthetic deeply rooted in the tradition of ink painting and a narrative of continuity from the premodern to modern.¹⁷⁴ This was a prominent driving force for the exhibition *Korea: Five Artists, Five Hinsek ‘White,’* which opened in 1975 at the Tokyo Gallery, one of Japan’s leading venues at the time for contemporary art (Fig. 12).¹⁷⁵

Curated by the gallery’s owner and director, Yamamoto Takashi, the 1975 group show was meant to highlight a traditional Korean aesthetic that would function as a counterpart to that

¹⁷² “To sum up, the meaning of ‘Koreaness’ [Koreanness] is delivered as a chain of signifiers in the following manner: abstractness = expressive style = monochromatic colour....Against some criticism that Korean abstract painting merely imitates Western style, he [Joon Lee] argued that Korean abstract art achieves originality as the Korean aesthetic is deeply rooted in the ‘Korean soil’ and ‘Eastern thought’. According to Lee, the Eastern thought on which the Korean aesthetic of these arts is based, is essentially different from Western thought. While western abstract arts are governed by the dualistic view of the object and subject, Eastern thought is monolithic and does not separate people and nature but rather perceives them as coexisting in a unity.” Shin, “The Construction of National Identity in South Korea,” 370.

¹⁷³ Lee Ufan, who was a central figure to Dansaekhwa, had also perceived the color white as continuing with the tradition of ink painting, a perspective that contributed to the placement of Dansaekhwa within a narrative of continuity.

¹⁷⁴ This essentialist notion was part of a national effort to define “Korean Art” as its own category, instead of a sub-category of “Asian Art,” by identifying a visual and philosophical aspect that commonly existed throughout works from the premodern to modern. The idea was promoted in response to the urgent demand for a cultural identity that could be distinguished from that of neighboring countries, especially colonial Japan, that would allow for the promotion of “Korean Art” and national subjectivity. This is an incredibly problematic and contested concept that is often associated with ideas of purity; however, it currently persists as a prominent and popular myth in the minds of the public in both South Korea and Japan.

¹⁷⁵ Kee, *Contemporary Korean Art*, 179. Artists exhibited in the show included Lee Dong-yeob, Suh Seung-won, Park Seo-bo, Huh Hwang, and Kwon Young-woo.

of the West.¹⁷⁶ The event served as a pivotal moment in the definition of Dansaekhwa and, as Joan Kee analyzed, functioned as an instance in which Korean monochrome painting was caught at the intersection of two forms of interpretation: the desire to establish a national and cultural identity that would speak to the Korean art world and the will of particular Japanese critics to promote an autonomous “Asian modernity” that would be a match for the West.¹⁷⁷ The purpose of the exhibition was to demonstrate how Korean modern art was thinking through the aesthetics of *huinsaek*. Critic Lee Yil, in the preface to the exhibition catalogue, wrote that, “In sum, to us white is more than simply a color. Before it is a color, it is a sort of mentality. ...For us, white is not accepted as a physical form...our white suggests all possible existences of light. ...We became one with nature in a spiritual space. In a word, white on its own embodies all possible creation.”¹⁷⁸ The exhibition presented two approaches that were occurring simultaneously, affecting each other in the process: first, a search for modernity through the medium of oil painting, and second, an emphasis on tradition by formulating a narrative of continuity within this search.

Lee Ufan, who was a central figure to Dansaekhwa, had also perceived the color white as continuing with the tradition of ink painting, a perspective that contributed to the placement of

¹⁷⁶ For an overview of the scholarly and artistic search for “the Korean aesthetic,” through a chronological assessment that it is characterized by the classical concept of “unification in diversity,” see Young-Pil Kwon, “‘The Aesthetic’ in Traditional Korean Art and Its Influence on Modern Life,” in *Korea Journal*, Vol. 47, No. 3 (Seoul: Korean National Commission for UNESCO, Autumn 2007).

¹⁷⁷ Kee, *Contemporary Korean Art*, 234-5. For an alternative to the dominant narrative of Korean modernity, focusing on the social struggle between values when faced with modernization and industrialization, see Hagen Koo, “Modernity in South Korea: An Alternative Narrative,” in *Thesis Eleven*, Vol. 57 (New York: SAGE Publications, May 1999).

¹⁷⁸ Lee Il, quoted in Kim, “A Brief History of Modern Korean Art,” 50-1.

Dansaekhwa within a narrative of historical continuity.¹⁷⁹ Perceived to have visualized the institutional emphasis on *huinsaek* within the medium of painting, the success of monochrome painting in Korea functioned as a statement of national subjectivity. It announced a refusal of the spatial and temporal gap that had been formed in the minds of the public, who were being rapidly exposed to an increasingly extensive amount of diverse artistic movements.¹⁸⁰ As Harry D. Harootunian described it, the experience of modernity that is “always unsettled by the violence of events” is organized by the everyday: “it is the purpose of tradition to level out and smooth the ragged edges, ease the sudden starts, and naturalize the historical productions.”¹⁸¹ It can be said that the postwar efforts to deal with modernity in South Korea and Japan required tradition as their backbone, as a link that would smooth out the rough and rapid transition. In such process of defining an essentially Korean art through difference, however, there remained the lingering presence of imperialism. Nakahara’s articulation was built upon a narrative of “white aesthetics” (*baeksaek mihak*), for which critic Yanagi Muneyoshi (1889-1961) was the main source. “White aesthetics” contributed to his perception of Korean beauty as the “beauty of sorrow,” which is exemplified in Yanagi’s statement that “by wearing white clothes, [Koreans] are in a continual state of mourning.”¹⁸² Within such framework, as Nanjie Yun analyzed, Korea was positioned as

¹⁷⁹ Youngna Kim, “Constructing Transnational Identities: Paik Nam June and Lee Ufan,” in Jaynie Anderson, ed., *Crossing Cultures: Conflict, Migration and Convergence* (Melbourne: Miegunyah Press, 2009), 913.

¹⁸⁰ Opportunities for travel, however, were not readily available in a still economically weak nation under military dictatorship, and thus access to contemporary Western art primarily occurred through reproductions in newspapers and magazines. Another obstacle was that during this period, passports were not readily issued. Morley, “Dansaekhwa,” 194. For a detailed account of the success of monochrome painting in postwar South Korea, see Kee, *Contemporary Korean Art*.

¹⁸¹ Harry D. Harootunian, *History’s Disquiet: Modernity, Cultural Practice, and the Questions of Everyday Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 18-9.

¹⁸² Muneyoshi Yanagi, quoted in Nanjie Yun, “The Identity of Contemporary Korean Art History,” in *Elastic Taboos: Within the Korean World of Contemporary Art: An Exhibition by Kim Seung-Duk & Franck Gautherot* (Nürnberg: Verlag für moderne Kunst; Wien: Kunsthalle, 2007), 179. From an essentialist viewpoint, scholar

the weak Other that produced art “that was beautiful because of its sadness,” which must be protected by stronger nations, namely Japan.¹⁸³ She argued that the production of “Koreanness” therefore crowned Japan as the Other with the power and authority to impose its own idea of identity on Korean art.¹⁸⁴ According to Yun, “what was once a sign created by the imperialist gaze of Japan was re-asserted as an anti-imperialist sign derived from the search for a Korean identity, an assertion that became an aesthetic theory within which monochrome painting was imbricated.”¹⁸⁵ Similarly, Sang Mi Park also spoke of the irony of Dansaekhwa; its articulation relied heavily on the Japanese art world and was later even used by Japanese art historians as a tool for promoting a pan-Asian aesthetic. According to Park, the postwar South Korean government often utilized Japanese forms of cultural policy as a means of empowering state authority, as a result reproducing the colonial experience in a postcolonial time, through which colonial policies came to be normalized and accepted within society.¹⁸⁶

Zainichi Korean art collector Ha Jung Woong (Kawa Masao, 1939-), who collected and later donated many of Son’s works to major museums and institutions in South Korea and Japan, understood the roots of the artist’s paintings as grounded in the ideology of Mono-ha. This

Hwang-Oak Soh has argued that many studies have been conducted on the reasons behind such “affinities” for whiteness, and why the country has traditionally been called as a “white clothing nation.” According to Soh, the people embraced whiteness as “the most natural and comfortable color. Due to their surroundings and their aesthetic sense, Koreans, regardless of age, gender or class, wore natural achromatic colors or white colors for every occasion, from everyday chores and working to official ritual purposes.” *Ibid.*, 29-30.

¹⁸³ Yanagi, quoted in *ibid.*, 179.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 179.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 179.

¹⁸⁶ See Sang Mi Park, “The Paradox of Postcolonial Korean Nationalism: State-Sponsored Cultural Policy in South Korea, 1965-Present,” in *Journal of Korean Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Washington: Center for Korea Studies, University of Washington, Fall 2010).

interpretation was primarily based on Takayama's affiliation with Mono-ha and its artists.¹⁸⁷ The exhibition *Arirang Seeds: Korean Diaspora Artists in Asia*, which opened in 2009 at the National Museum of Contemporary Art, Korea, also introduced Son alongside artists related to Mono-ha, including Lee Ufan, Quac In-sik, Moon Seung-keun, and Takayama Noboru.¹⁸⁸ The exhibition sought to introduce the history and works of diasporic artists active in Japan, China, and member states of the Commonwealth of Independent States. *Arirang Seeds* functioned as a valuable moment that accounted for the diversity of diasporic artists and their specificities in relation to the social, political, and historical environments within which they were located. However, in the context of *Space Totsuka*, I understand both Takayama and Son as having engaged with objects in a different manner than Mono-ha.¹⁸⁹ Although artists associated with Mono-ha often emphasized the tension between untreated objects and the relationship formulated between them, Takayama's *Drama Underground Zoo* emphasized the specificity of his chosen material and the relationship between the object and the history or memory that it embodies. Furthering this approach, Son's interaction with matter in *Landscape of Body* centered on the presence of the physical, material, human body that definitely exists although unseen and leaves marks by its movement.

¹⁸⁷ See Jung Woong Ha (Masao Kawa), "Haru," in *Inori no bijutsu* (Akita: Izumiya Shuppan, 2006). Available online at the Ha Jung Woong Archives, <https://www.ha-jw.com/literary/%E7%A5%88%E3%82%8A%E3%81%AE%E7%BE%8E%E8%A1%93/%E6%98%A5/>. Ha collected and donated a massive number of works by Korean artists in Japan such as Lee Ufan, Kwak Duck-jun, Quac Insik, Moon Seung-geun, Chun Hwa-hwang, and Son Ah Yoo, symbolic Korean artists such as Park Seo-bo, O Syng-yoon, Kim Tschang-yeul, and Hong Sung-dam, and other notable artists such as Pablo Picasso, Georges Rouault, Andy Warhol, Marc Chagall, Salvador Dali, Joan Miro, and Ben Shahn. Gwangju Museum of Art, "About Ha Jungwoong," *Ha Jung-woong Museum of Art*, accessed February 26, 2019, <http://artmuse.gwangju.go.kr/co/contentsView.php?pageID=engha0300000000>.

¹⁸⁸ National Museum of Contemporary Art, Korea, *Arirang Seeds: Korean Diaspora Artists in Asia*, exhibition catalogue (Seoul: Culture Books, 2009).

¹⁸⁹ Yoshitake, "Mono-ha: Living Structures."

2.5 Conclusion

In celebration of the Third Gwangju Biennale in 2000, the exhibition *Korean Artists in Japan, From 1945 to the Present: Song Young-Ok, Jo Yang-Kyu, and other Korean Artists* was held at the Gwangju Museum of Art (Kwangju City Art Museum at the time).¹⁹⁰ This was the first exhibition to focus extensively on the postwar presentation of works by Korean artists in Japan. Until this point, the specificity of Koreans in Japan and their involvement in the art world had been largely neglected in critical scholarship despite the fact that many players involved in the period's prominent artistic movements, such as Mono-ha and Dansaekhwa, were *zainichi* members: including Son, Quac Insik (1919-88), and Moon Seung-geun (1947-82), among others. These artists continuously struggled with their status as Koreans in Japan, often having to choose between either a Korean or Japanese identity in order to exhibit at major institutions. Takayama, for instance, applied for naturalization when he was invited to participate in the 1973 *Biennale de Paris*, as otherwise he would not have been able to return to his family in Japan as a resident following overseas departure.¹⁹¹ Such complexities, however, were erased by ethnic-essentialist articulations of modern art based on categories of "Korean" and "Japanese" in agreement with narratives of historical continuity. This chapter has thus sought to complicate scholarship on the period's artistic developments by examining the challenges that *zainichi* artists faced in multiple art worlds, questioning what it meant to be the Other amidst parallel formulations of the Self. I

¹⁹⁰ The exhibition was held at the Ha Jung Woong Memorial Hall, named after Ha who had earlier donated an extensive amount of works by Korean artists in Japan to several institutions, including the Gwangju Museum of Art.

¹⁹¹ National Museum of Contemporary Art, Korea, *Arirang Kkotssi: Korean Diaspora Artists in Asia*, exhibition catalogue (Seoul: Culture Books, 2009), 320.

highlight the complexity of such an existence, as artistic explorations of the artist's body's relationship to his works are complicated when the abject body of the *zainichi* artist is involved.

Son's approach to his body interacting with not only material but also the memory and history engraved within, as expressed both in *Landscape of Body* and in his pencil drawings such as *Elimination of Form*, continued to be the primary focus of his later paintings. In *Cobalt Blue* (*Kobaruto burū*, 2000) (Fig. 13), for instance, Son carefully applied plant colors to the surface of thin Japanese papers.¹⁹² Writing about this series, Oguchi Seiko drew particular attention to Son's use of old wastepaper as a medium in his artistic search for his own existence, his being, and his position in space.¹⁹³ The Japanese papers used here were old, with several hundreds of years' worth of time having drained all the oil out of the sheets.¹⁹⁴ Son noted that in the process of painting, he not only considered the composition on the surface but also its depth.¹⁹⁵ The surface bore traces of the centuries that have passed, with the years having thinned out the paper so much that one could easily see through the surface.¹⁹⁶ The old paper itself held records of its time in its worn-out quality, partial stains and discolorations, and extreme thinness. When applied, the colors would bleed into the surface, oftentimes penetrating it to reach the back of the

¹⁹² This repetitive use of cobalt blue was also one of Son's means of visualizing space, as for the artist cobalt blue symbolized the air (*kūki*) that is normally untouchable and unseeable to human hands and eyes. Son referred specifically to "*kūki*," which translates to air in English but also refers to the atmosphere or energy of a space as well as a sense or sensation of space.

¹⁹³ Seiko Oguchi, *Light & Air: Cobalt Blue & Lemon Yellow*, exhibition catalogue (Kyoto: Art Space Niji, 2000), 2. In Japanese.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁹⁶ Son was not alone in his emphasis on the medium of traditional paper in practicing abstraction. Considering abstraction as part of the domain of Western painting, artists such as Kwon Young-woo incorporated traditional paper as a means of turning to a certain kind of gestural abstraction that would reflect a particularly "Korean" aesthetic.

paper. By painting onto this surface, which the artist described as a process of leaving “traces” of his bodily existence and movements, Son wrote himself into the history that the paper holds—marking the present onto the past.¹⁹⁷

Son’s continuous attempt to locate his body in both time and space can be better understood through the writing of Sonia Ryang: “Singular authenticity is a luxury that only people with a secure homeland can afford. ...People without a homeland by contrast are forever in exile, wandering, in search of home, land, and security.”¹⁹⁸ Diaspora, she continued, “is an ongoing search for self, and as such, the journey of self-creation knows no end.”¹⁹⁹ For *zainichi* members, cultural and legal assimilation means a detachment from the “collective diasporic consciousness” of ethnic Koreans in Japan.²⁰⁰ However, such a resistance to assimilation is also complicated by the fact that the imagined homeland of “Korea” no longer exists as a physical location, but remains only in their collective memory. The *zainichi* existence, which Son continuously engaged with throughout his oeuvre, therefore remains in an in-between status, complicated by invisible boundaries of both race and nationality. The case of Son provides insight into the diasporic expressions of *zainichi* artists, allowing one to question the limitations and boundaries of predetermined categories including “Koreanness” and “Japaneseness” through the lens of the body and its location in body art, photography and painting. Also, Son’s practices allow for an examination of where the *zainichi* subject is positioned in relation to

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 2.

¹⁹⁸ Ryang, “Introduction,” in *Diaspora without Homeland*, 15.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 14.

²⁰⁰ Lim, “Reinventing Korean Roots,” 83.

multiple boundaries: social, cultural, and geographical ones that continue to affect the diasporic subject.

Chapter 3: Theresa Hak Kyung Cha—Performing Language

3.1 Introduction

Theresa Hak Kyung Cha (1951-82) was born in 1951 in Busan, South Korea, in the middle of the Korean War. She migrated to the United States with her family in 1962, after which she studied comparative literature, filmmaking, and art theory at the University of California, Berkeley and the Centre d'Etudes Américain in Paris, through the U.C. Education Abroad Program.²⁰¹ Cha increasingly gained attention as a performing and mixed-media artist, until she was murdered in 1982 in New York City. Much of Cha's work references the history of colonialism, war, and partition in Korea, drawing upon the pain and trauma that Korean people continue to experience as a result. Cha connected her experience as a Korean immigrant to the United States with the complicated history of Japanese colonialism in Korea, the United States' role in the Korean War, and the subsequent partition of the peninsula. In this chapter, I discuss how Cha navigated the ideas of mother tongue and motherland using language as her primary medium, producing performative works meant to function as *passages* through which diasporic experiences would be communicated between the artist and audience across time and space. Her focus on language was drawn from her position as a Korean diasporic subject born out of the complex history of colonial Korea and the aftermath of the war, which the artist spoke of throughout her practices.

Cha's critical work recalls the colonial history of her homeland, yet simultaneously refuses the anti-colonialist and nationalist narratives that permeated that history. Contrary to how

²⁰¹ Cha was trained by theorists including Jean-Louis Baudry, Raymond Bellour, Thierry Kuntzel, Monique Wittig, and Christian Metz. Constance M. Lewallen, "Introduction: Theresa Hak Kyung Cha—Her Time and Place," in *The Dream of the Audience: Theresa Hak Kyung Cha (1951-1982)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 3.

popular discourses of the so-called “Korean Diaspora” often argued for the idea of a static and unified homeland, as I discussed in the Introduction, Cha demonstrated that “homeland” is an imaginary construct that one can never truly return to. Further, she did not aim to generate a new “home” in a new land, completely separated from the motherland. Instead, she perceived her diasporic subjectivity to be inherently informed by both the collective history of the Korean people and the personal history of her family and herself. Cha explicitly referenced the colonial and imperial damage that continues to affect the dislocated subject, articulating a voice for those struggling to refuse being assimilated into invented notions of identity.²⁰² Through an emphasis on multiple languages, she explored the complicated relationship that one holds with the ideas of home and motherland, which I unpack through a reading of two works in the genre of “artist’s books:” *Dictée* (1982) (Fig. 14) and *Pomegranate Offering* (1975) (Fig. 15).

Cha’s work bled into her life, as much as her work bloomed from her life. Drawing on a range of materials and sources, from history to film theory to poetry, the artist produced video works, installations, ritualistic performances, poetry, mail art, audio and video documentation of performances, publications, and artist’s books.²⁰³ Cha’s experimental works refused to provide immediate and singular meanings. Her practice often involved methods such as extreme close-ups, imagery devoid of any identifiable social and cultural context, and the gradual dissolution of repetitious yet non-identical black-and-white still images. Never limiting herself to a single form or genre of art, the artist often adopted cinematic and performative approaches in her written

²⁰² Lisa Lowe, “Unfaithful to the Original: The Subject of *Dictée*,” in *Writing Self, Writing Nation: Essays on Theresa Hak Kyung Cha’s Dictée*, eds. Elaine H. Kim and Norma Alarcón (Berkeley: Third Woman Press, 1994), 38.

²⁰³ Cha was also involved in filmmaking and film theoretical scenes—in the San Francisco Bay Area, France, and New York—although her 16mm film *White Dust from Mongolia* began in 1980 but never completed.

work, while also employing literary strategies in her visual work. Blurring the boundaries between text, author, artist, and artwork, each work acts as a performance of her life. Her groundbreaking publication *Dictée*, for example, accounts for Cha's return trip to Korea and the feeling of distance between herself and her motherland:

I am here for the first time in eighteen years, Mother. We left here in this memory still fresh, still new. I speak another tongue, a second tongue. This is how distant I am. From then. From that time.²⁰⁴

This return trip is one of the many in-between “contact zones”²⁰⁵ that Cha spoke of throughout her oeuvre, especially the instances and customs where her legal and cultural identities were challenged. Examples included being on an airplane *en route* to South Korea where she was suspended between two “homes,” and the Korean diasporic community in Longjing, Manchuria—a location of significance for the Korean independence movement—where her mother Hyoung-soon Huo was born and grew up in under the Japanese colonial order. The work is also positioned as a contact zone between different genres—a hybrid mixture of autobiography, history, fiction, ethnography, and translation—as well as diverse media—photographs, quotations, poetry, translations, and language practices. Through this hybrid approach, *Dictée* breaks down a narrative of unity and symmetry, instead presenting a critique of realist aesthetic values, notions of individual and social equivalence, hierarchies of value in society, and existing critical discussions in art history.

²⁰⁴ Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Dictée* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 85. The book was originally published in 1982 by Tanam Press in New York and then in 1994 by Third Woman Press in Berkeley.

²⁰⁵ Here I refer to the term as defined by Mary Louise Pratt: “social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today.” Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 4.

Homi K. Bhabha argued that the process of negotiation between two different cultural groups results in the creation of a hybrid culture, which forms a liminal “in-between” space that exists beyond the two cultures, existing as neither one nor the other.²⁰⁶ Although Cha strived to achieve a sense of postcolonial subjectivity by visualizing her hybrid identity, her work distances itself from the utopian hybridity that Bhabha proposed.²⁰⁷ Cha’s works refer to the specific colonial history of her homeland. The artist alluded to displacement by employing breaks, shifts and ruptures in visual, linguistic and performative forms, aiming to convey the experience of dislocation to her audience rather than speak solely of her own status.²⁰⁸ Cha did not speak about what Edward Said described as “the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home.”²⁰⁹ Nor is her work an example of what Said described as the exile’s “urgent need to reconstitute their broken lives, usually by choosing to see themselves as part of a triumphant ideology or a restored people.”²¹⁰ She offered neither a notion of a true home away from an Asian American experience nor a reconstitution of it on American soil, but instead complicated essentialist narratives of national identity and ethnicity by identifying a composite space that exists between the self, homeland, and home.

²⁰⁶ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 4.

²⁰⁷ R. Radhakrishnan offered a similar critique of hybridity, arguing for a reformulation of hybridity through a consideration of material contexts and the unequal reality of power relations. I will return to the Radhakrishnan critique of neoliberal globalization later in Chapter 3 for a discussion of globalization in relation to diasporic artists. R. Radhakrishnan, “Globalization, Desire, and the Politics of Representation,” in *Comparative Literature*, Vol. 53, No. 4. (Autumn, 2001): 315-32.

²⁰⁸ Lawrence R. Rinder, “The Plurality of Entrances, the Opening of Networks, the Infinity of Languages,” in *The Dream of the Audience*, 15. For a psychoanalytical reading of Cha’s works such as *Vidéoème* (1976) and *Exilée* (1980), drawing upon Cha’s familiarity of the writings of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan and based on Freud’s notions of displacement and condensation, see *ibid.*, 20-1.

²⁰⁹ Edward Said, “Reflections on Exile,” in *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 173.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 177.

Dictée is divided into nine chapters: “Clio,” “Calliope,” “Urania,” “Melpomene,” “Erato,” “Elitere,” “Thalia,” “Terpsichore,” and “Polymnia.” With chapters titled after the nine Greek Muses, *Dictée* is based on Cha’s personal life: her childhood education in French Catholicism, her family history during Japanese colonial occupation, her displaced adulthood as a Korean American immigrant, and her return to a military-ruled South Korea.²¹¹ In particular, she explored the role of language in asserting colonial power, drawing attention to how the imperial order utilized language to establish power over its colonies. I approach Cha’s attention to nationalism, colonialism, and imperialism through a discussion of what Lee Yeounsuk called the ideology of *kokugo* (national language) during Japan’s *kōminka* period (or imperialization period, c.1937-1945).²¹² This ideology bound the metropole and its colonies together through an intricate system involving a wide range of materials, from educational propaganda to publications to visual culture. Christina Yi’s study has explored how imperial and national ideologies canonized the category “Japanese” to control identity formation.²¹³ I build upon studies in history and literature that have examined Japan’s colonial strategies in distinguishing *Nihongo* (the Japanese language) from *kokugo* (the “national language”), which placed colonial subjects under the seemingly all-encompassing and inclusive title of *kōmin* (imperial subject) in

²¹¹ The book is divided into the following sections: “Clio-History,” “Calliope-Epic Poetry,” “Urania-Astronomy,” “Melpomene-Tragedy,” “Erato-Love Poetry,” “Elitere-Lyric Poetry,” “Thalia-Comedy,” “Terpsichore-Choral Dance,” and “Polymnia-Sacred Poetry.”

²¹² The *kōminka* period commonly refers to the eight-year-long period from Japan’s initiation of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937 to its surrender in 1945. During this period, Japan’s colonial government initiated policies to assimilate and “Japanize” its colonies. Japan engaged in an aggressive promotion of the Japanese language, both written and spoken, while also suppressing local languages in Korea and Taiwan. Also see Lee Yeounsuk, “*Kokugo*” to *iu shisō* [The Ideology Called “National Language”] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1996). Also see Christina Yi, “National Language, Imperialization, and the Gendered Aporia of Empire,” in *positions: east asia cultures critique*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (November 2016): 813-37; and Miyako Inoue, *Vicarious Language: Gender and Linguistic Modernity in Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

²¹³ Christina Yi, “Introduction,” in *Colonizing Language*, xviii.

order to mask the colonizer/colonized dichotomy.²¹⁴ Not limited to specific discussions of the ‘national’ and ‘Japanese’ language of *kokugo*, however, I focus on the ideologies of national language more broadly in order to trace how Cha navigated the relationship between mother tongue and motherland.

Cha’s approach drew upon the colonial history that she was born out of. This, however, not only functioned as a means of association and identification; it was also what caused feelings of alienation and dislocation for the diasporic subject. In *Dictée*, Cha wrote of the anxiety she felt upon her return to Korea in 1979:

You return and you are not one of them, they treat you with indifference. All the time you understand what they are saying. But the papers give you away... They ask you identity [*sic*]. They comment upon your inability or ability to speak. Whether you are telling the truth or not about your nationality. They say you look other than you say. As if you didn’t know who you are.²¹⁵

In 1979, South Korea’s totalitarian regime questioned Cha’s national loyalty due to her U.S. passport and lack of fluency in the Korean language. This experience of alienation, which thoroughly disrupted any preconceptions of home that she held, also drove her to realize her in-between status, coming from both the United States and South Korea, yet being part of neither: “One day you raise the right hand and you are American. They give you an American passport. ...Somewhere someone has taken my identity and replaced it with their photograph.”²¹⁶ Cha’s

²¹⁴ Yi argued that the 1910 annexation of Korea employed a rhetoric of sameness that was echoed in, most notably, the propaganda of a “Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere” in 1940. Despite the empire’s assertion that it was liberating Asia from Western imperialism, this process largely appropriated the rhetoric and language of its Western counterparts. Yi, “National Language,” 833.

²¹⁵ Cha, *Dictée*, 56-7.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 56.

abject position allowed her to maintain agency in the face of hegemonic cultures, shaping her diasporic situation as an active and performative site of resistance.

The artist problematized the writing of history from this position. *Dictée* was Cha's attempt to account for the unspoken and unheard in history, exposing disparities between histories as they are recorded and identities left unrepresented. The reader is invited to experience the very process of writing and participate in the liminal space that Cha created, asked not only to simply read but to read *along*, to read *out loud*—to create words and meanings along with the artist. *Dictée* opens with the words of Sappho: “May I write words more naked than flesh, stronger than bone, more resilient than sinew, sensitive than nerve [*sic*].”²¹⁷ Accentuating the relationship between the human body and a textual body, *Dictée* emphasizes an engagement with its own materiality and textuality.²¹⁸ Cha envisioned her practices as kinds of alchemical ritual through which participants could gain recognition of a collective consciousness among them, to generate performative experiences pointing towards a larger shared experience that transcended their individual egos.²¹⁹ In her thesis, titled “Paths,” (1978) for the M.F.A. Art program at University of California, Berkeley, Cha wrote that the artist's path is akin to that of

²¹⁷ Ibid. The book begins with a series of unnumbered pages before entering the first section titled *History*. Sappho's words occupy the first of these successive pages.

²¹⁸ Trinh T. Minh-ha described Cha's corporeal approach to body as “Seeing absent, speaking blind.” Trinh T. Minh-ha, “White Spring,” in *The Dream of the Audience*, 46. A poetic performance that expressed such approach is *Aveugle Voix*, performed in San Francisco in 1975 and only recorded in fragments of ten 9½-by-6¾-inch black-and-white photographs. The photographs show Cha's eyes covered with a white cloth marked with the word *voix* (voice), stenciled in black ink. Her mouth is covered by another strip of cloth with the words *aveugle* (blind). Deprived of both sight and speech, Cha unrolled a large white banner as if unrolling a scroll, which reads in black, block letters: *aveugle / voix / sans / mot / sans / me*. The words can be read either individually or together as a composition; both ways, however, defy linearity. Even the title is written as *Aveugle Voix*, rather than *Voix Aveugle* which would be the usual, grammatically correct phrase. For a detailed reading of the work, see *ibid*.

²¹⁹ Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, “Paths,” Master's thesis (Berkeley: University of California, 1978). The Cha Collection at the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive currently holds a photocopy of the original 6-page typewritten thesis.

alchemy.²²⁰ Through her art, she altered both materials in the world and the audience who perceives these materials:

Alchemical elements used by Alchemists could be most commonplace: water, air, fire, earth, etc. They simply exist, as space, as time exists, almost unnoticeably. ...He enters a covenant with these elements, with the intention not of imposing upon these materials, not so much to transform and shape them according to his will, but during the unfolding of this pact, these elements will be the ones to transform his soul. ...The artist's path is close to that of the alchemist in that his/her path is that of a medium. His/her vision belongs to an altering, of material, and of perception. Through this attempt, the perception of the audience has the possibility of being altered, of being presented a constant change, Re volution [*sic*].²²¹

Cha aspired to act as the “relayer” of materials for a future audience, visualizing and replaying memories that had (dis)appeared in the history of literary, musical, poetic, and cinematic arts through her practices. Understanding how history is perceived through language, she was in search of a conscious and responsive audience that could receive and send new understandings of the past. Along these lines, Cha's works were meant to act as passages between the then and now, and the here and there.

3.2 Cha's Artist's Books

During her years as a graduate student, Cha expressed a deep interest in the work of the French poet Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-98), particularly in his complex use of language. Mallarmé explored the possibilities and limitations of books, which led to his involvement in the establishment of artist's books (*livre d'artiste*), which he distinguished from traditional

²²⁰ Cha studied at the University of California at Berkeley for ten years, receiving four degrees: B.A. in Comparative Literature (1973), B.A. in Art (1975), M.A. in Art (1977), and M.F.A. in Art (1978).

²²¹ Cha, “Paths,” n.p.

illustrated books. Mallarmé's unfinished project, *Le Livre*,²²² was intended to demonstrate the concept of the artist's book, a medium which demands the presence of audience members as active participants, as integral to the establishment of the book's meaning.²²³ Constance Lewallen's discussion with Bertrand Augst, who taught Film Studies when Cha focused on Comparative Literature during her undergraduate years, addressed the artist's interest in Mallarmé's "associative and restrained use of language."²²⁴ According to Augst, Mallarmé's long poem, "Un Coup de Dés," affected the artist's recurrent use of "unconventional typographic design."²²⁵

The artist's book that I discuss refers more specifically to the practice of the genre that emerged in the late twentieth-century via avant-garde approaches to it. This practice presented books as works of art in themselves.²²⁶ Appearing in a diverse range of forms—bound-printed sheets, a box filled with scores, or lengthy scrolls—the "artist's book" eludes a single definition or aesthetic. By the early 1970s, when Cha began to engage with this practice, the modern form of the artist's book was receiving critical attention in the Euro-American art world. This form systematically deconstructed the form of the book and disrupted the authority of the codex

²²² Published posthumously as Jacques Scherer, *Le "Livre" de Mallarmé* (Paris: Gallimard, 1957).

²²³ For a detailed analysis of Mallarmé's involvement in *livres de peintre* within the context of Parisian print culture, see A. S. Arnar, *The Book as Instrument: Stéphane Mallarmé, the Artist's Book, and the Transformation of Print Culture* (London and Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

²²⁴ Lewallen, "Introduction," 2.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

²²⁶ My definition of the artist's book is thus in line with that of Johanna Drucker in "The Artist's Book—As Idea and Form." Instead of proposing a rigid and decisive definition, Drucker sketched out "a zone of activity" as the artist's book: "It is a zone made at the space at the intersection of a number of different disciplines, fields, and ideas—rather than at their limits." She also distinguished the "artist's book" as its form in the twentieth-century from the tradition of *livre d'artiste*, which intersects with the artist's book but is not identical to it. Johanna Drucker, "The Artist's Book—As Idea and Form," in *The Century of Artists' Books* (New York: Granary Books, 1995), 1.

(Dieter Roth, *Children's Book*, 1957);²²⁷ offered a critique of conventional artistic representation through the unconventional form of a box (George Brecht, *Water Yam*, 1963); substituted the work of art with instructions for producing art (Yoko Ono, *Grapefruit*, 1964); and took on the form of a book yet remain completely unreadable (Dieter Roth, *Literaturwurst (Literature Sausage)*, 1961-1974).²²⁸ The interest in this form was sparked largely by the Fluxus movement in New York, which introduced new approaches and media to art vocabulary.²²⁹

In her artist's book *Presence Absence* (1975) (Fig. 16), Cha's form of ordering images, words, and pages echoes filmic sequencing, an approach enhanced by her use of black-and-white still images that seem to be in motion as one flips through the pages. This interest in cinematic techniques appears throughout her works, an interest stemming from her longtime engagement with filmic practices. She was involved in both filmmaking and film theoretical scenes in the San Francisco Bay Area, France, and New York, producing a 16mm silent film *Permutations* (1976) (Fig. 17) that was screened later in 1982.²³⁰ Cha often had images appear and disappear by means of lap dissolve in her video and film works. This technique of fading in and out generates

²²⁷ For an account of Roth's artist's books, which consist of more than a hundred idiosyncratic book objects beginning with *Bilderbuch* (1956) and *Bok* (1956-59), see Kristine Stiles and Peter Selz, eds., *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art: A Sourcebook of Artists' Writings*, Second Edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 327.

²²⁸ Originally published in Tokyo in 1964 by Ono's own imprint, Wunternaum Press, in a limited edition of 500 copies, *Grapefruit* was expanded and reissued by Simon and Schuster in New York in 1970. The artist's book consists of five sections: *Music*, *Painting*, *Event*, *Poetry*, and *Object*. Two more sections, *Film* and *Dance*, were added to the once more updated edition published in 2000. A sequel to *Grapefruit*, *Acorn*, was published in 2013.

²²⁹ Fluxus aimed to dismantle traditional conventions, systematically eroding the securities of the literary genres. Artists scrambled all the codes and conventions that had traditionally categorized literary writing, from poetry to drama to the narrative novel, simultaneously utilizing the conventional "nonliterary." Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Yve-Alain Bois, Benjamin Buchloh, and David Joselit, eds., *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism*, 2nd edition (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2011), 497-8. Unfortunately, a comprehensive understanding of the development of the artist's book far exceeds the limits of this chapter, as it is an artistic activity that one must consider on a global scale as well.

²³⁰ In addition to the 10 minutes-long, *Permutations*, Cha's other 16mm film piece *White Dust from Mongolia* was commenced in 1980 but never completed.

a sense of suspension and evokes a constant state of “in-betweenness.”²³¹ Contrary to general recognition of cinema as a one-way means of communication, as in the case of Christian Metz—whose writing Cha studied and included in *Apparatus* (1980), a collection of essays on filmmaking and film theories that she edited—Cha argued for cinema’s status as a language system by incorporating its techniques into written and spoken language.²³² Her belief that theorists and artists should work together in exploring language is exemplified in her insertion of an original artwork, titled *Commentaire* (1981) (Fig. 18), amongst the writings in *Apparatus* as an intervention. This piece played with notions of blankness, whiteness, and blackness through a filmic presentation of text in black and white, allowing *Apparatus* to function as a collection of both theoretical and creative practice.²³³ As Cha wrote,

My video, film, and performance work...are explorations of language structures inherent in written and spoken material, photographic, and filmic images—the creation of new relationships and meanings in the simultaneity of these forms.²³⁴

As an alternative to the one-way mode of communication between sender and receiver in television and film, Cha had earlier developed the notion of the “sendereceiver,” which formed

²³¹ On this technique, Lawrence Rinder commented that it generates a “distinct sense of suspension, a sense of in-betweenness and proximity to the unknown”: “Cha’s most innovative approach to displacement in the cinematic apparatus has to do not with the transformation of images on the screen, but with the relationships established among multiple screens and between a screen or screens and herself as a performer.” Rinder, “The Plurality of Entrances,” 26-7.

²³² Metz recognized cinema as *not* a language system, as “it contradicts three important characteristics of the linguistic fact: a language is a system of *signs* used for *intercommunication*.” He argued that since cinema does not fulfill the three elements to the definition of language, it is a one-way communication that is only partly a system, one that “uses only very few true signs.” Christian Metz, *Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema*, Michael Taylor, trans. (London and Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 75.

²³³ This multipage text was included in *Apparatus* as her intervention into the anthology. For a detailed analysis of *Commentaire*, see Sue J. Kim, “Apparatus: Theresa Hak Kyung Cha and the Politics of Form,” in *Journal of Asian American Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (June 2005): 143-69.

²³⁴ Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, quoted in Lewallen, “Introduction,” 9.

the central theme of her artist's book, *Audience Distant Relative* (1977) (Fig. 19).²³⁵ This artist's book is composed of seven sheets of paper, folded in half forming seven cards. On the front of six cards, the titles or subjects are printed in black ink: "audience distant relative," "letter sendereceiver," "messenger," "echo," "object/subject," and "between delivery." The seventh card is signed with Cha's name and date of publication. On the back of the cards, Cha defined and expanded on the subject/title of each respective card. On the card titled "audience distant relative," for instance, the text reads as follows:

you are the audience
you are my distant audience
i address you
as i would a distant relative
as if a distant relative
seen only heard only through someone else's description.
neither you nor i
are visible to each other
i can only assume that you can hear me
i can only hope that you hear me [sic]

Here, Cha reached out to recipients of language across a temporal and spatial gap, an intention that was further explored as the work evolved into a mail art project that was exhibited the following year as *Audience Distant Relative* at Galerie Loa in Haarlem, Holland. The work was displayed as six white envelopes, left empty and unsealed, with each title/subject stenciled or printed in black ink on top. The card titled "letter sendereceiver," from the original 1977 work, carried the following text:

This is a letter read aloud.
upon opening it
you hear the sender's voice as your eyes move over the

²³⁵ For an in-depth reading of the 1977 piece, see Mayumo Inoue, "Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's 'Phantomnation': Cinematic Specters and Spectral Collectivity in *Dictée* and *Apparatus*," in *Criticism*, Vol. 56, No. 1 (Winter 2014): 63-4.

words. you, the receiver, seeing the sender's image
speak over the
voice.

The unsealed mail was meant to be read aloud, spoken over, and heard while reading. The audience is a “sendereceiver,” who sends and receives simultaneously through an active, responsive engagement with the letter. As Cha wrote on the card titled “object/subject,” the “sendereceiver” is at once both object and subject. The work’s adapted form as mail art serves as a distinctive metaphor for her desire to both physically and emotionally reach a distant audience that could open, read, and respond to her call. In the line, “This is a letter read aloud [*sic*],” Cha visualized the distance between the “you” and “i” by accentuating the space between words. The “sendereceiver,” upon opening the letter and reading the words out loud, must briefly pause at this gap, marking the gap as both spatial (written) and temporal (spoken).

For Cha, language was the means to reach across this gap. As she inscribed under the subject/title “messenger,” language is what occupies both the space and time between “sendereceivers:”

the messenger, is the voice-presence
occupying the space.
voice presence occupying the
time between.

Cha’s work generated a passage through which conversations, regardless of spatial and temporal distance, could be exchanged between active subjects. Through her work, the artist generated a liminal space to enable such exchanges to continue. This was crucial to Cha, who, as a diasporic subject, continuously searched for ways to reach distant peoples, distant relatives, and a distant home. Cha not only wrote of her history as records of the past, but she also generated a means

through which the audience could continue to share her experiences even after her time. As she printed on the card titled “echo:”

the in-between time: from when a sound is made
to when it returns as an echo
no one knows if it was heard,
when it was heard
when it would be heard
if ever at all
but it continues on and on and on
maybe thousand years

someone’s memory
tale
legend
poem
dream

As such, Cha often engaged in ritualistic practices to create a condition of liminality throughout her work, a most notable work being *A Ble Wail* (1975). In this work, Cha performed the role of the *mudang*, the female shaman in Korean ritual practice. Cha adopted the *mudang*’s traditional function of producing an intermediate and interactive space between two worlds, within which the living and the dead could communicate with each other, through a shamanic ritual called *kut*. I read Cha’s practices as a production of such space, as rituals that function outside of normal time and space, through which she provided a bridge to the estranged past of the Korean peoples.

Here I base my understanding of liminality on the work of anthropologist Victor W.

Turner, who expanded on the concept of liminality to include ritual performance as a kind of liminal space open to performer and audience.²³⁶ Turner proposed that ritual, as a “redressive

²³⁶ Victor W. Turner, *Schism and Continuity in an African Society: A Study of Ndembu Village Life* (New York: The Humanities Press, 1958); in his study of the Ndembu tribe in central Africa, Turner developed the term “social drama” in order to account for the villagers’ process of conflict and crisis resolution. According to Turner’s model, each social drama consists of four main stages. First there is a breach in a conventional norm, which then leads to a crisis in the community that increases as factions are formed. What follows is a “process of redress,” “as formal and informal mechanisms of crisis resolution are employed.” Finally, the social drama concludes with a process of

activity,” is achieved through the creation of liminality, a condition of “being-on-a-threshold,” through which ritual becomes a means of border-crossing. According to him, liminality refers to how ritual transcends social categories and creates transitory space, wherein the old social category loses its grasp but the new one has not yet arrived.²³⁷ In this condition, participants fall into a position that is neither this nor that, and are placed on equal grounds, where they can engage in spontaneous, direct, and egalitarian interchanges with each other.²³⁸

This liminal state therefore provides temporary separation from the cognitive rules and behavioral norms of everyday life. It allows members of a community to process social crises and subsequent changes through transformative actions.²³⁹ Liminality, for Turner, represents the possibility of transcending not only one’s own social status, but all social positions in order to formulate a potentially infinite series of alternative social arrangements.²⁴⁰ The purpose of ritual is, therefore, to produce this temporary experience in order to transcend and reconfigure structural limitations.²⁴¹ Emphasizing the spontaneous and experimental nature of liminality,

reintegration, which often includes either an adjustment to the original social structure or realization of a permanent division between social groups. Marvin Carlson, *Performance: A Critical Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 17; Turner identified ritual as emerging within such procedure as a “process of redress,” a “redressive activity” that functions as a means of social change, with the capability to transform the fixed social and cultural systems of the everyday world. He argued that the process of social change requires an unstructured community experience, in which all participants are placed on equal grounds, in order for the given society to adjust to the changes in the social structure. Bobby C. Alexander, *Victor Turner Revisited: Ritual as Social Change* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 15.

²³⁷ Victor W. Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974), 46-7; and Victor W. Turner, “Frame, Flow, and Reflection: Ritual and Drama as Public Liminality,” in *Performance in Postmodern Culture*, eds. Michel Benamou and Charles Caramello (Madison: The Center for Twentieth Century Studies, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 1977), 33.

²³⁸ Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors*, 46-7.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 273-4.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 13-4.

²⁴¹ Alexander, *Victor Turner Revisited*, 15.

Turner further highlighted indeterminacy as a central concept of ritual, stating that rituals are not primarily rules or rubrics:

...Rules may 'frame' the performance, but the 'flow' of action and interaction within that frame may conduce to hitherto unprecedented insights and even generate new symbols and meanings, which may be incorporated into subsequent performances. Traditional framings have to be reframed—new bottles made for new wine.²⁴²

I adopt Turner's expanded concept of liminality for the interpretation of Cha's artist's books as performative practices. This notion allows us to understand Cha's practice of transcending between diverse genres, different forms and structures, as well as cultural boundaries. A *mudang* would perform a ritual through multiple means—singing, dancing, chanting, praying, performing, and speaking out loud. In a similar manner, Cha's textual practices sought to incorporate the diverse sensations of such ritual experience, combining text and linguistics with ritual practices to generate a multi-sensory interaction with the record of Korean history. Such experience can open new possibilities for the reader; at the same time, it can also leave audience members stranded in a state of confusion and misrecognition. The artist dismantled and exceeded the limitations of conventional boundaries in order to fully account for diasporic experiences, including the confusion and disorientation of an in-between subject.

Rather than choose one identity over the other, Cha embraced the multiplicity of her diasporic identity, along with the resultant feelings of alienation, visualizing her existence as an amalgamative subject that was lost between binary divisions of cultural identity. I turn to Turner's articulation of ritual in order to understand Cha's approach to written history in *Pomegranate Offering* and *Dictée*: her practices aimed to create a condition of liminality, within

²⁴² Ibid., 79.

which history was presented as a shared experience rather than a continuous narrative. In order to incorporate the everyday in her practices, the artist generated a space where participants could transcend conventional boundaries and have unlimited possibilities for the production of art. Emphasizing an interaction with the past through active readers/listeners, Cha proposed that readers engage with history as equal participants, rather than having them “written into” dominant discourses. What Cha wished to achieve can, therefore, be interpreted as an urge to expand discussions of historiography so that the unwritten and unheard could become active participants as well.

3.2.1 *Pomegranate Offering* (1975)

A collage of charcoal, stenciled ink letters, and markings in red on twelve pages of linen canvas hand-sewn together, Cha’s artist’s book, *Pomegranate Offering* (1975) repeats and obscures words, generating new meanings through a process of painful, stuttering pronunciation. Similar to her approach to cinematic techniques, the artist’s book records the painstaking labor involved in the process of forming words and delivering meaning.²⁴³ Instead of a coherent sentence or narrative, words arrive in a halting, ruptured manner, often repeated again and again until Cha gets them “right”—or ultimately fails to. On the front cover of the work (Fig. 20), for example, the words “with” and “red” are repeated in reverse, placed directly underneath the first iteration as if they were reflections in the water or a mirror. The words “blood” and “pearls” are displayed inverted and are incomprehensible unless one traces the letters in reverse, imagining

²⁴³ For a similar approach to *Pomegranate Offering*, especially in relation to *Dictée*, see Min-Ah Cho, “Decreation, Art, and a Passage of Diasporic Soul: Reading Theresa Hak Kyung Cha’s *Pomegranate Offering* with Simone Weil,” in *Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Religion*, Vol. 1, Issue 9 (August 2010).

their reflection above. Cha suggests a bodily engagement with the work, to turn the book around or trace the letters with one's finger, asking the spectator standing in front of this work to realize the process of comprehending language by interrupting it.

It is unclear which of the words are reflections. Slightly faded and distorted, it may be that the readable words "mouth," "red," and "tears" are reflections of an unrecorded memory. This constant movement between two sides of a mirror reflects Cha's status as *en route*, forever in movement in the in-between. The presentation of words in reverse appears throughout the pages. Another page marks Cha's effort to find a word, as she stuttered through a series of different words in English and French. The verso displays faint traces left behind from the words stenciled onto the recto. The artist's book thus presents more than simple pages of writing. Its pages are at once a cinematic screen, the surface of a mirror, and a projection.²⁴⁴ This approach is further reinforced by the appearance of the word "rest" towards the end of the work's pages (Fig. 21). Reminiscent of credits rolling at the end of a film, it seems as if the word is caught in motion as the camera gradually pans out to show the word in its full form. However, it is left to the viewer's imagination to perceive the word "rest," with what seems to be a period mark next to it, as either an independent word or as the end of a sentence that is yet to be seen. The work is forever in suspension, paused at the exact moment of one trying to form words and produce language, lingering at the moment of creation.

²⁴⁴ Trinh T. Minh-ha, for instance, described Cha's video and film installations as "page-screens," which effectively evoked the integration and cohabitation of language and visuality in the artist's work. Trinh, "White Spring."

Pomegranate Offering engages in a process of deconstruction. It demonstrates what happens at the moment that words stand at the tip of one's tongue.²⁴⁵ In an undated artist's statement, Cha wrote that she was "looking at the roots of language before it is born on the tip of the tongue."²⁴⁶ Interested in what is not seen nor told, Cha approached language from a position of one who was "forced to learn languages more 'consciously' at a later age."²⁴⁷ She explained that what continued to hold her attention were "grammatical structures of a language, syntax. How words and meaning are constructed in the language system itself, by function or usage, and how transformation is brought about through manipulation, process as changing the syntax, isolation, removing from context, repetition, and reduction to minimal units."²⁴⁸ Cha explained that these rules of syntax and language shape and frame one's experience of the world.²⁴⁹ In

²⁴⁵ This process is reminiscent of how Jacques Derrida presented drawings in *The Truth in Painting* (1978) in order to visualize the opening up of the *work in progress*, the unveiling of the linear substratum. Here Derrida turned his attention to the work of Italian artist Valerio Adami (b. 1935) from the 1975 exhibition *The Journey of The Drawing* (*Le voyage du dessin*). Derrida moved from ideology to biography to the written or drawn line itself in order to examine what constitutes painting and the idea of it. Adami's drawing after *Glas* shows a text written on the back of a canvas. The text bleeds out onto the frame to the right, is partially hidden under the fold at the bottom, and crossed out at the top next to a half-shown "X." The artist here moves from text to graphics and back to text again, as interchangeable elements in the composition of the drawing. This dialectical movement between text and graphic also occurs in another drawing after *Glas*, or what Derrida calls the fish drawing. Here, the boundaries between the drawn and written are blurred as the outlines of the fish gradually disintegrate from head to tail, at the bottom materializing as an angular scribble that seems to be capital letters. The invisible frame is rendered visible in this picture *of a painting*, not one *in a painting*, which draws attention to what the viewing eye is normally drawn away from in favour of being directed towards the picture placed within the frame. The text that bleeds onto and under the frame in Adami's drawing visualizes this—that here he is presenting a picture *of a painting*. Derrida's truth is thus *in painting*, not in the *picture in the painting*, hence his inclusion of the chapter "Passe-partout" in the book as well as what he calls his act of writing *onto* the *passe-partout*. For Derrida, Adami's drawing exceeds the limits of pictorial representation. Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, Geoffrey Bennington and Ian McLeod, trans. (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 169.

²⁴⁶ Cha, "Artist's Statement / Summary of Work" (Berkeley: Cha Collection, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, undated). This original typewritten text has been reproduced, exhibited, and housed by the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Hyun Yi Kang observed that in language, Cha found both its desire to enunciate agency and self-expression, as well as its transcending quality that allows one to reach across boundaries and communicate with different selves. In order to do so, the artist laid bare the very logics upon which language is structured, ordered, normalized, and

Pomegranate Offering, reading is a textual labor through which one traverses the very process of writing. What emerges is a dialectical moment within which both reader and writer attempt to generate language and understand meaning. These are never achieved, and that in-between space of ongoing conversation is where Cha situated herself as a diasporic subject.

For the artist, creative process was a means of *practicing* her mother language (*mogugeo*).²⁵⁰ Cha used language to weave together different forms of art: “The main body of my work is with language.”²⁵¹ As exemplified in *Pomegranate Offering*, Cha’s work would often generate an awareness of how language is produced, visualizing utterance through the movements of a lip sliding over a lip, a throat swallowing deeply, or tongue being caught between and grinding against teeth. By calling attention to the liminal stage that exists *before* speech, the artist highlighted both bodily presence and ideological distance in relation to text. In the preface to *Apparatus*, she made “active the participating viewer/reader, making visible his/her position in the apparatus.”²⁵² Demanding labor on the reader’s part, Cha invited a more responsive and interactive audience and challenged conventional expectations of textual representation and linear narrative. Creating a bridge between orality and textuality, the artist often visualized the labor of cinematic techniques, writing out or pronouncing, word by word,

privileged. Hyun Yi Kang, “‘Liberating Voice’ of Theresa Hak Kyung Cha’s *Dictée*,” in *Writing Self, Writing Nation*, 78.

²⁵⁰ Cha’s figure of the exile is reminiscent of what Julia Kristeva formulated as the subject’s yearning for the semiotic. She destabilized the reliance on language as a cultural signifier, revealing what exists in-between the Kristevan sense of the semiotic and the symbolic. Kristeva’s articulation of the symbolic and semiotic is distinct from the discipline of semiotics as founded by Ferdinand de Saussure. See Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980).

²⁵¹ Cha, “Artist’s Statement,” n.p.

²⁵² Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, “Preface,” in *Apparatus—Cinematographic Apparatus: Selected Writings* (New York: Tanam Press, 1980), i. Cha engaged with cinematic theories at length in the anthology *Apparatus*, which she edited for her artist peer Reese William’s Tanam Press.

techniques such as “fade in” and “close up.” She would experiment with black-and-white films and videos, primarily presenting sequences of still images and words. However, her interest in the cinematic was not limited to the mediums of film and video.²⁵³

Extending such perspective to the medium of the artist’s book, Cha worked against the idea that the materiality of *the book* should follow conventional modes of representation in order to present a coherent narrative. Cha’s works demand a responsive, flexible, and participating reader who actively engages with not only what is written inside the book, but also its format as a book itself. This approach can also be understood as extending from her interest in the physical engagement with two-dimensional material, as the artist wrote in an undated statement:

“Introducing the performance aspect to projection is to present a possible alternative to the projected image that continues to remain flat and two-dimensional.” As Cha continued, “It is also to explore criteria such as time movement (real, illusionist), the basic unit of time, movement in a gesture as simple as the turning of a person’s head, for example.”²⁵⁴ Such interest in the physical engagement with space and time is reflected in *Dictée*’s presentation as a development that unfolds as the reader flips through.

²⁵³ Elaine Kim described that “Cha experiments with video technology to explore the exile’s yearning to reenter the unrecoverable past and her attempts to imagine a homecoming that can never take place. With video, we can play and replay memories in our attempt to recover lost time, but ultimately there is no return.” Elaine Kim, “Introduction: Interstitial Subjects—Asian American Visual Art as a Site for New Cultural Conversations,” in Elaine H. Kim, Margo Machida and Sharon Mizota, et al., *Fresh Talk Daring Gazes: Conversations on Asian American Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 49.

²⁵⁴ Cha, quoted in Lewallen, “Introduction,” 7-9. Lewallen noted that this interest in cinematic elements appeared in performance pieces such as *Reveill  dans la Brume* (1977) and *Other Things Seen, Other Things Heard (Ailleurs)* (1978). *Ibid.*, 7.

3.3 *Dictée* (1982)

Cha presented a book that reveals the very process through which it has been created: how it has been written, edited, deleted, and bound together. I argue here for an understanding of *Dictée* within the context of her series of artist's books, which sought to break down the normalized format of *the book*. *Dictée* reflects Cha's life and work during turbulent social, political, and artistic changes, enmeshed with her own conflicting feelings of association and alienation. During Cha's student years at the University of California, Berkeley from 1969 to 1978,²⁵⁵ widespread antiwar and women's liberation movements led to major changes in the university's academic structure.²⁵⁶ Several new departments were introduced in response to demands for scholarship on the understudied histories of diasporic communities, such as Ethnic Studies in 1969 and the Berkeley Women's Studies Program in 1976.²⁵⁷ Initially conceived as one of the four undergraduate programs in Ethnic Studies, the Asian American Studies program emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s. During this time, Cha witnessed this active interest in diaspora and postcolonial discourses.²⁵⁸ The Bay Area's artistic interest in the experimental drove forward Cha's engagement with performance and film practices in *Dictée*, which I read as an exploration of her own body of work and its diverse approaches. The book brings together

²⁵⁵ Cha had worked at the Pacific Film Archive of the University Art Museum in Berkeley from 1974 to 1977 as well, during which she gained access to classic and experimental films as well as lectures by renown filmmakers. Online Archive of California, "Guide to the Theresa Hak Kyung Cha Collection 1971-1991," *Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive*, accessed January 14, 2019, <https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/tf238n986k/admin/>.

²⁵⁶ For an account of this period in the San Francisco Bay Area, see Lewallen, "Introduction," 1-2.

²⁵⁷ The Women's Studies program later became a department in 1991. University of California, Berkeley, "History," *Department of Gender & Women's Studies*, accessed February 2, 2019, <http://womensstudies.berkeley.edu/about/history/>.

²⁵⁸ University of California, Berkeley, "Asian American and Asian Diaspora Studies," *Department of Ethnic Studies*, accessed February 2, 2019, <http://aaads.berkeley.edu/about/>.

different aspects of Cha's work not only metaphorically, through recurrent motifs and themes, but also physically: for instance, a photocopy of her mother, which is part of her artist's book *Father/Mother* (1977), is reproduced in *Dictée*, suggesting a connection between the two works (Fig. 22).²⁵⁹

Although first published in 1982, the book went out of print until it reached a larger audience in 1991 at the annual Association of Asian American Studies conference.²⁶⁰ Brian Kim Stefans noted that *Dictée* was initially "dismissed by the Asian American critical establishment and was labeled 'white' and not concerned with community if feminist issues," perhaps due to Cha's frequent reference to Greek mythology, French grammar, and word play.²⁶¹ A collection of essays on *Dictée*, co-edited by Elaine Kim and Norma Alarcón, *Writing Self, Writing Nation* (1994) came to attract scholarly attention to Cha's work.²⁶² Against the earlier dismissal of Cha's work, Kim, who was chair of Berkeley's Ethnic Studies Department at the time, emphasized that the authors were approaching *Dictée* with a focus on her Korean American identity: "*Dictée* is in many ways a contradictory text, its paradoxes rooted in Cha's location in the interstitial outlaw

²⁵⁹ *Father/Mother* (1977) is a handmade artist's book consisting of red and blue photocopies of Cha's mother and father reproduced multiple times and placed alongside Korean calligraphy. Cha manipulated each reproduction so that they would differ in brightness, contrast, and hue.

²⁶⁰ Allan deSouza, "The Spoken Word: Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictée*," in *Third Text*, Vol. 24 (Autumn 1993): 73.

²⁶¹ Brian Kim Stefans, "Korean American Poetry," in *Korean Culture*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (Winter 1997): 5.

²⁶² Scholars have studied the work extensively in both English and Korean ever since the publication of *Writing Self, Writing Nation*, which encouraged critical discussions of Cha's writings beyond the small circle of artists and critics who were closely associated with Cha. The aim of *Writing Self, Writing Nation* was to argue against existing approaches in Asian American studies to *Dictée*, which either dismissed or depoliticized the work's politicohistorical concerns. The authors attempted a critical rethinking of the identity logic in order to engage with its heterogeneities in gender, class, sexuality, race, and nation, while also aiming to maintain forms of unity that would allow for common struggle. These scholars also distanced themselves from postmodern and post-structuralist critics, whose interpretations of *Dictée*'s difference were devoid of sociopolitical grounding, particularly in colonial history. See Lowe, "Unfaithful to the Original," in *Writing Self, Writing Nation*.

spaces between Korea and America, North and South, inside and outside....For her, the in-between is a personal dwelling place that makes survival possible, and to ignore the importance of her Korean American identity is to deny that existence and selfhood.”²⁶³ Alarcón, who had founded the book’s publisher, Third Woman Press, in 1979, brought *Dictée* back into the press in 1995, in response to increased interest in Asian American, feminist, and diaspora studies.

The second page of *Dictée* presents a reproduced photograph of a wall carving (Fig. 23) that reads, in Korean: “Mother / I miss you / I am hungry / I want to go home.”²⁶⁴ Although the origin of this photograph remains uncertain, the image has come to hold significance as a painful reminder of colonial occupation.²⁶⁵ The publication of *Dictée* allowed the image’s message to reemerge with a new urgency and trajectory, inviting the reader to rethink written history and its narrative. Following the vertical alignment, the Korean inscription (*Hangeul*) is read from right

²⁶³ Elaine Kim, “Preface,” in *Writing Self, Writing Nation*, 21. Kim also described that an understanding of *Dictée* “demands specific knowledge of history and politics of race, gender, and colonization that this work addresses with both form and content.” Placing Cha within the context of Asian American female writers, Kim elaborated that: “Cha writes into a politics of representation that includes a long history of orientalism as well as the putative ‘burden of representation’ that cultural theorists like Kobena Mercer and Stuart Hall address so cogently....Asian and Korean American artists write into the specific cultural politics of their communities, such as tensions between cultural nationalist and feminist concerns, questions of nation and postcoloniality in minority discourse, and differential racial formation across decades and locations among internally diverse groups.” Elaine Kim, “Introduction,” in *Fresh Talk Daring Gazes*, 47.

²⁶⁴ Cha, *Dictée*, front. My translation. The “home” in this case is *gohyang* in Korean, which translates to birthplace, hometown, or homeland in English.

²⁶⁵ The origin of the photograph remains a topic of debate. Many scholars have argued that the carving was done by workers subjected to forced labor under Japanese occupation. Dongho Cha, for instance, speculated that this anonymous carving was “probably scratched into a wall by Korean prisoners during the Japanese occupation.” Others have claimed that it was created post-liberation as a set-up for a movie production in 1965. A number of scholars in Japan have argued that the inscription was carved by Korean nationalists to give the impression that it was done by forced laborers. Regardless of its origin, the image continues to hold significance in the memory of the public as a popular signifier of the pain and suffering endured under colonial occupation. I reinforce that speculations around the inscription, which are often rooted in Korean or Japanese political arguments, do not affect the symbolic significance that the image holds for *Dictée* as well as the understanding of the work. Dongho Cha, “Wishing for a Home: Race, Class, and Global Capitalism in Theresa Hak Kyung Cha’s *Dictée* and Se-Hüi Cho’s *A Little Ball Launched by a Dwarf*,” in *MLN*, Vol. 129, No. 5 (December 2014, Comparative Literature Issue): 1097; Elaine Kim, “Poised on the In-between: A Korean American’s Reflections on Theresa Hak Kyung Cha’s *Dictée*,” in *Writing Self, Writing Nation*, 25.

to left. The inscription's directional movement leads the eye towards the left edge of the page where the image is cut off, away from and out of the book.²⁶⁶ When one flips the page backwards, following the direction of the script, the reader returns to an appropriated image of a barren land left in ruins. This unknown landscape leaves the reader stranded, effectively interrupting traditional narrative presentations. The publication destabilizes traditions of textual composition by urging the reader, from the beginning, to engage with the text's defamiliarization of conventional assumptions.

This strategy can be understood as part of Cha's larger aim to uncover unseen relationships *in and around* a work. In a page from another artist's book, *une action, une image* (1976), Cha presents an image of a structure that resembles a frame or a page of a book. The image of a page within a page suggests that what lies outside of the frame must be "read" as well. In the introduction to *Apparatus*, the artist wrote that she sought "to turn backwards and call upon the machinery that creates the impression of reality whose function, inherent in its very medium, is to conceal from its spectator the relationship of the viewer/subject to the work being viewed."²⁶⁷ The image's suggestion of reading backwards, moving away from the narrative and approaching the work in a different manner, emphasizes the fact that one must consider the book's materiality as well, rather than focusing solely on what is written inside. *Dictée* is not a

²⁶⁶ Shelley Sunn Wong, "Unnaming the Same: Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictée*," in *Writing Self, Writing Nation*, 107. Wong observed this image by considering the "traditional function of the frontispiece"; that is, "an illustration which precedes the title page and which functions to provide entry into the text." As Wong speculated, the "beginning" of the work is not the page marked as "1"; instead, one must put into consideration the four pages that precede it: the frontispiece with the illustration, a title page, a dedication page, and a page listing the names of the nine muses. The one time the Korean sign appears in the book, it visually moves off and away from the page. For Wong, this "signal[ed] the instability of that Korean sign within the larger narrative framework of American life." *Ibid.*, 107-8.

²⁶⁷ Cha, "Preface," in *Apparatus*, i.

finished text with a seamless narrative; it is a performative practice that visualizes the very process of writing. Not only does Cha repeat and withdraw words, stumble upon phrases, and practice language, she also includes a copy of handwritten lines covered in proofreading marks. Sprawled across two pages, the copy displays what seems to be an earlier draft of the final part of the chapter “Clio—History.” This chapter points to how history—both the personified idea of it and the chapter here—has been written, filled with changes and deletions.

Dictée speaks of several women, Greek muses, mythical figures, Yu Guan Soon (who was at forefront of the independence movement against colonial Japan), Cha’s mother Young-Soon Huo, St. Thérèse of Lisieux, Jeanne d’Arc as represented in Carl Dreyer’s 1928 silent film and Gertrud from his 1974 film, and Cha herself. The stories of these women are presented indirectly. Instead of referencing fixed points in time, Cha suggested an alternative account of history that defies linearity, juxtaposing figures from different times and spaces with one another to deliver the message that what has happened in the past continues to happen in the present. The manner in which the artist speaks of these elements is poetically reflected in the chapter “Erato—Love Poetry,” which opens with a photograph of St. Thérèse of Lisieux dressed as Jeanne d’Arc followed by the artist describing the cinematic experience of viewing. “You,” as viewer and guest, are entering the house of “she.” “Her portrait is seen through her things, that are hers,”²⁶⁸ Cha wrote: “Her portrait is not represented in a still photograph, nor in a painting. All along, you see her without actually seeing, actually having seen her. You do not see her yet. For the moment, you see only her traces.”²⁶⁹ Instead of presenting a linear narrative, what Cha offered

²⁶⁸ Cha, *Dictée*, 98.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 100.

were fragments, or traces that come together to form a constellation that invites audiences to traverse time and space.

Cha also delved into the question of “blancheur” (“whiteness,” or “purity” in French) throughout several works, including *Commentaire*. She often questioned the perception of the white space as blank and unwritten, as an empty screen that exists only before the image or text begins to roll or appear. Such an approach can also be better understood in the context of imperialist notions of geography, which marked “uncharted lands” on the map as blank spaces.²⁷⁰ This technology of imperialism invited one to mark the unmarked spaces on a map, urging one to conquer these spaces by filling in words and images.²⁷¹

In this sense, the white page functions as an uninhabited space upon which experiences are yet to be inscribed.²⁷² On a typewritten text dated May, 1976, written in preparation for a performance in Paris, the following words appear: “...i walk very slowly and enter the screen space / there are words written occupying the screen space / with the lit candle i trace and follow the words / then turn it over the cloth with poem on it to reveal the inversion / implosion / underneath is again an empty cloth... / i throw on it flour until everything is white again / blood

²⁷⁰ The idea that the whiteness of the blank page can be linked to the logic of imperialism appears in Michael Fried’s reading of Joseph Conrad. Fried connected the blank page to what he called “a field of boundless possibility for the writer seated before it and the white space on the map as a comparable field of imaginative self-realization for the young male European (that is, white) bourgeois subject in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.” Michael Fried, “Almayer’s Face: On “Impressionism” in Conrad, Crane, and Norris,” in *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Autumn, 1990): 233.

²⁷¹ For further discussions of white space, see Diana Dodson, “‘We Lived in the Blank White Spaces’: Rewriting the Paradigm of Denial in Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale*,” in *Utopian Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (1997): 66–86; and Marta Caminero Santangelo, “Moving Beyond ‘The Blank White Spaces’: Atwood’s Gilead, Postmodernism, and Strategic Resistance,” in *Studies in Canadian Literature*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (1994): 20–42.

²⁷² For a reading of Cha’s work through a comparative analysis of Michael Fried and Frantz Fanon’s account of objecthood, see Joseph Jonghyun Jeon, “Black Things, White Things: Objecthood in Theresa Hak Kyung Cha’s *Language Art*,” in Lawrence J. Trudeau, ed., *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*, Vol. 307 (Farmington Hills: Gale, 2015).

of the screenspilledwhite / the screen is emptied again...[sic]"²⁷³ In this work, Cha envisioned whiteness itself as a mark, rather than an empty space yet to be filled. Words are not erased by removing them, returning to the empty status of whiteness, but are overwritten by the artist throwing and spilling white.²⁷⁴ Cha's act of throwing flour emphasized the materiality of whiteness as a construct. Cha reversed the conventional process of writing black-on-white by throwing white-on-black, subverting the idea of whiteness as silence or absence and arguing for its robust presence. The audience is left to contemplate whether the screen has been emptied or filled; here, white can mean anything or nothing.

Cha's approach to whiteness allows for a deeper reading of *Dictée* because the work's margins, blanks, empty pages, and pauses—all of them perceived as white—gain meaning. They are not empty spaces that simply exist between meaningful words, but are intentionally placed spaces that are meant to be seen and read. Cha's utterances, the process of generating language, *include* these blanks, or what she called "pauses."²⁷⁵ The performative text demands active engagement on the part of the reader, asking that whoever reads fill in the blanks with participatory breath and bodily presence. The act of reading transforms the passive recipient into an active participant; the blanks are not empty voids but equal parts of the book.²⁷⁶ Such

²⁷³ This text was written for Cha's performance piece *Performance sur Vampyr*, performed at the Centre d'Etudes Americain du Cinema, Paris, in May 1976, when Cha was a student.

²⁷⁴ Frantz Fanon's phenomenological observation of the postcolonial experience of race identified how whiteness acquires such symbolic status of the idealized standard: "*he must be black in relation to the white man.*" Frantz Fanon, *Black Skins, White Masks*, Charles Lam Markmann, trans. (1952; London: Pluto Press, 2008), xiii. Italics in original.

²⁷⁵ Cha, *Dictée*, 5.

²⁷⁶ Yookyong Choi also argued that Cha's work evokes "conditions of a postmodern and postcolonial subjectivity that engenders a possibility of resistance" through her frequent employment of postmodern and poststructuralist approaches featuring disjunctive images and text. Yookyong Choi, "Globalization and Ethnic Identity in the Art of Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, Young Soon Min, and Nikki S. Lee," Ph.D. diss. (Maryland: University of Maryland, College Park, 2012), 19.

resistance against gendered and imperialist notions of blank space is especially important when considering the fact that *Dictée* speaks of histories of resistance—against Japanese colonization, nationalist frameworks, and male-dominated narratives. These all derive from Cha’s experiences as a diasporic subject, a Korean-born immigrant woman, and the collective histories that she personally related to in her work.

Dictée breaks down linear narratives in terms of both structure and content and lays them out as fragments; Cha then pieced them together to achieve a certain wholeness that could account for her hybrid identity.²⁷⁷ I argue that instead of being a product, as in the case of written history, *Dictée* functions as a continual *passage* through which experience, history, and memory travel. The book is *being written* before the reader’s eyes, and the process of writing unfolds within *Dictée* as the reader moves through pages of an unfinished rough draft, letters and words placed as images, handwritten lines that are edited and crossed out, exercises in French grammar, photocopies and appropriated images, and maps and diagrams. The reader is invited to read along as Cha writes, generating an experience that almost feels as if the artist is writing down what the reader is saying—hence the title, *Dictée*. Through such process, the audience shares in both her struggles and discoveries. I thus understand the book to be an expression of diasporic identity in itself, a passage through which Cha could convey her own thoughts and experiences.

Frantz Fanon earlier speculated the following:

²⁷⁷ The writing style in itself embodies fragmentation and dislocation, with the artist moving fluidly through different form and subject matter throughout the book. A similar emphasis on fragmentation as a strategy appeared in the writing of Michelle Cliff from 1985: “My experience as a writer coming from a culture of colonialism...my struggle to get wholeness from fragmentation while working within fragmentation, producing work which may find its strength in its depiction of fragmentation, through form as well as content, is similar to the experience of other writers whose origins are in countries defined by colonialism.” Michelle Cliff, *The Land of Look Behind* (Ann Arbor: Firebrand Books, 1985).

To speak means to be in a position to use a certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language, but it means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of civilization. ...Every colonized people—in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality—finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation.²⁷⁸

Cha addressed the violence inherent in the colonial practice of annihilating her people's connection to their ancestral roots. However, what she participated in was not the internalization of the self-image produced by colonialism, or what Fanon explained as “a constant effort to run away from his or own individuality, to annihilate his own presence.”²⁷⁹ Cha spoke in the language of the colonizers, yet she represented the perspective of the colonized, situating herself between what Gayatri Spivak called the “gendered subaltern” (as a Korean-born immigrant woman) and the master narrative (dominant narratives of literary canonization). She would thus “speak from within the emancipatory master narratives even while taking a distance from them.”²⁸⁰ Cha thus visualized the colonized object's continuous struggle to regain voice as a speaking subject.

3.4 Cha's Language

Cha's resistance to colonial violence is achieved through language, as this was a particularly emotional area of experience for the artist. Cha spoke of her experience as a newly arrived immigrant to the United States, through which she gained an awareness of how language is *performed*: “As a foreigner, learning a new language extended beyond its basic function as

²⁷⁸ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 8.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 60.

²⁸⁰ Gayatri C. Spivak, “Who Claims Alterity?” in C. Harrison and P. Wood, eds., *Art in Theory 1900-1990* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 1123.

communication as it is general for a native speaker, to a consciously imposed detachment that allowed analysis and experimentation with other relationships of language.”²⁸¹ Drawing attention to the importance of one’s mother tongue, the artist continuously referred to the colonial history that she was born out of in her works. The use of her native language was suppressed during the Japanese occupation of Korea (1910-45), which Cha referenced in “Calliope—Epic Poetry.” The chapter addresses her mother: “Mother, you are eighteen years old. You were born in Yong Jung, Manchuria and this is where you now live. You are not Chinese. You are Korean.”²⁸² Following the family’s exile to Manchuria to escape the occupation of Korea, Cha’s mother was obligated to speak in the “mandatory language” of Japanese.²⁸³ The artist marked this as indicative of dislocation and alienation, identifying her mother as a refugee, an immigrant, and an exile: “It is not your own...The tongue that is forbidden is your own mother tongue.”²⁸⁴

The second page of *Dictée*, with the reproduced photograph, is the only instance of Korean script (*Hangeul*) in the entire book. The book moves through Chinese characters, French, English, and Latin, but never again incorporates the Korean script. Even when writing Korean words, she Romanizes them so that the English reader can also read the words. However, words like “MAH-UHM” are left untranslated, which one can read but not understand, a gesture that

²⁸¹ Cha, “Personal Statement and Outline of Independent Postdoctoral Project” (ca. 1978), quoted in Lewallen, “Introduction,” 9.

²⁸² Cha, *Dictée*, 45.

²⁸³ Cha, *Dictée*, 45. In discussing Manchuria’s linguistic landscape, here I refer specifically to the situation within which Cha’s mother was positioned and as narrated by Cha. Although Manchuria had several so-called “official languages,” Cha’s emphasis lay on her mother’s obligation to speak Japanese, using phrases such as “mandatory language” to describe the Japanese language.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 45.

alludes to the limits of translation.²⁸⁵ Although the book moves fluidly between several languages, meanings are often left unexplained and incomprehensible to readers unfamiliar with the Korean language. I understand this as Cha marking her departure from her homeland, which is further emphasized by the fact that the Korean script ends with the words “I want to go home.” What follows her return journey, which the reader joins by flipping the page backwards, is a barren landscape that welcomes no one. The work therefore follows Cha’s journey away from a lost homeland and lost language, recording her stumbling steps as she learned new languages, writing them down as she attempted to speak.

From the beginning of the chapter “Elitere—Lyric Poetry,” the *disease* (female performer of monologue) struggles to form words: “She mimicks [*sic*] the speaking. That might resemble speech. (Anything at all.) Bared noise, groan, bits torn from words.”²⁸⁶ Throughout *Dictée*, Cha often made reference to the lack of ability to form language, using words such as “tongueless,” “dead words,” and “dead tongue” as textual means indicating the loss of oral language. I read this approach through studies that have examined how the tongue signifies a relationship between language and flesh, matter and meaning.²⁸⁷ In the chapter “Urania—Astrology,” Cha wrote the same verses once in French and then in English, placing them side-by-side on the verso and recto. Here, Cha’s *disease* accounts for the slow and painful process of trying to “speak,”

²⁸⁵ Cha not only complicated the dominating language by overlapping English and French over Korean, but also by breaking down the linear developmental or univocal narratives upon which dominant literary canonizations depend. The hybrid, at times antagonistic relationship between different languages signals to the hierarchy of value attached to them. Lowe, “Unfaithful to the Original,” in *Writing Self, Writing Nation*, 36. For a discussion on the theories of translation and its application to Cha’s work, see *ibid.*, 42.

²⁸⁶ Cha, *Dictée*, 3.

²⁸⁷ Among others, see Carla Mazzio, “Sins of the Tongue in Early Modern England,” in *Modern Language Studies*, Vol. 28, No. ¾ (1998): 93.

biting the tongue between teeth, swallowing deep every time a word is attempted at: “Bite the tongue. Between the teeth. Swallow / deep. Deeper. Swallow. Again, even more. / Until there would be no more organ.”²⁸⁸ As she moves through her attempts to recollect memory and speak about it, struggling to form words, the *disease* says:

La langue dedans. La bouche dedans
la gorge dedans
le poumon l’organe seul
Tout ensemble un. Une.²⁸⁹

Tongue inside the mouth inside
the throat inside
the lung organ alone. The only organ.
All assembled as one. Just one.²⁹⁰

Here, the English version of the verse flattens the feminine *Une* to “one,” through which Cha indicates that something remains unreachable for the monolingual.²⁹¹

A similar attempt appears in Cha’s video piece *Re Dis Appearing* (1977) (Fig. 24), where she overlapped multilingual speech with black-and-white clips and grainy images.²⁹² The work begins with a pair of hands placing a transparent bowl filled with liquid onto a black surface. We realize that it is a bowl of tea. The hands move away, and the screen shows the liquid swirling and swaying slightly within the bowl. We then see the hands enter once again, before the video cuts to images of a landscape, an ocean, and a beach. As the images fade out, we see the hands

²⁸⁸ Cha, *Dictée*, 71.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 66.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 67.

²⁹¹ Sharon Mizota commented on how the limitations of language are realized through Cha’s deliberate, often purposely awkward use of English, arguing for the artist’s deliberate use of experimental orthographies in the use of concepts such as “extention” and “containment.” Sharon Mizota, unpublished essay “Self, Language and Beyond in Theresa Hak Kyung Cha’s *Dictée*” (1991), quoted in Kim, “Preface,” in *Writing Self, Writing Nation*, 28.

²⁹² The work was first screened at Cha’s 1977 MA exhibition at the Worth Ryder Gallery, University of California, Berkeley.

remove the bowl. A female voice is heard reciting words and phrases, alternating between French and English, which overlap each other as the video proceeds. For example, the sounds of “un bol de thé,” “tea bowl,” and “a bowl of tea” are heard accompanying the image of the bowl. However, most of the spoken phrases are undistinguishable and unrecognizable, as they echo over and across each other. One can hear but not understand, especially if not familiar with both languages. The experience of comprehending language is further disrupted by the incomplete nature of the English translation, which continuously attempts but fails to account for the full meaning of idiomatic phrases. The video’s translations are exercised in a more direct and literal manner, as in the case of the words “thé au sommeil” and “tea of sleep,” referencing the immigrant’s experience of dictation—of *Dictée*.

For Cha, who held multiple “tongues” as a multilingual immigrant, the process of translation would simultaneously reveal what is untranslatable.²⁹³ Cha highlighted the fact that *l’organe seul* actually consists of multiple *langues*.²⁹⁴ The *disease*’s sounds, which mimic speech, therefore do not mark failure; rather, they reflect how language is formulated through the very moment of painful delivery. As Cha wrote: “*Inside is the pain of speech the pain to say. Larger still. Greater than is the pain not to say. To not say. Says nothing against the pain to speak. It festers inside. The wound, liquid, dust. Must break. Must void.*”²⁹⁵ This moment is when

²⁹³ This can also be understood as Cha engaging with what Roland Barthes would describe as a “plurality of entrances, the opening of networks, the infinity of languages.” Roland Barthes, *S/Z: An Essay*, Richard Miller, trans. (New York: Noonday Press, 1974), 5.

²⁹⁴ Irina Dumitrescu also focused on this passage to examine how Cha drew attention to how a migrant subject holds multiple tongues, with the destruction of the tongue allowing for language’s release from physical restraints. For a detailed analysis of how Cha recovers the stories of martyrs through the mutilation of the tongue and translation, see Irina Dumitrescu, “The Martyred Tongue: The Legendaries of Prudentius and Theresa Hak Kyung Cha,” in *postmedieval: a journal of medieval cultural studies*, Vol. 8 (2017): 334-51.

²⁹⁵ Cha, *Dictée*, 3. Italics in original.

the tongue bleeds language onto pages, when “The ink spills thickest before it runs dry before it stops writing at all.”²⁹⁶

Blood and language share an important connection within the context of Korea’s colonial history. Although the majority of *Dictée* refers to history in a fragmented, nonlinear manner, the chapter “Clio—History” is an exception in that it clearly marks specific dates and events from during the colonial period.²⁹⁷ The chapter begins with a photo of Yu Guan Soon and a short biography stating her dates of birth and death, and the following sections are marked with specific dates: “Suppression of Foreign Criticism, September 26, 1907,” which documents a fight that took place roughly eight miles away from Su-won on Sunday, September 12 and the massacre that ensued,²⁹⁸ and “Petition from the Koreans of Hawaii to President Roosevelt, Honolulu, T.H., July 12, 1905,” a reprint of the original petition by P.K Yoon and Syngman Rhee requesting support against Japan’s military and political abuse following the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5).²⁹⁹ In this chapter, Cha spoke of a connection between blood and language:

Japan has become the sign. The alphabet. The vocabulary. To this enemy people. The meaning is the instrument, memory that pricks the skin, stabs the flesh, the volume of blood, the physical substance blood as measure, that rests as record, as document. Of *this* enemy people.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁶ Ibid., 133.

²⁹⁷ “Suppression of Foreign Criticism, September 26, 1907,” which documents a fight that took place on Sunday, September 12 and the massacre that ensued, and “Petition from the Koreans of Hawaii to President Roosevelt, Honolulu, T.H., July 12, 1905,” a reprint of the original petition by P.K Yoon and Syngman Rhee requesting support against Japan’s military and political abuse following the Russo-Japanese War. Ibid., 31, 34.

²⁹⁸ Ibid., 31.

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 34.

³⁰⁰ Ibid., 32.

The chapter subsequently ponders how those who do not understand the language of the colonized do not fully understand the pain of colonial history remembered and recorded in the blood.³⁰¹ Cha made clear that the blood flowing here is that of the Japanese—“Of *this* enemy people”—who are thus unable to properly account for the history of the Korean people. For someone who does not fully grasp the language, these painful memories remain stories of a “distant land.”³⁰² Even the defamiliarization occurring at the beginning of the book is only accessible to readers who are familiar with the Korean script; for others, the page presents an image and not words. Cha rewrote this history in *Dictée* through different languages, images and words, and practices and blanks. She was in search of a way to convey this unfathomable history from her position as an in-between, diasporic subject who held multiple tongues and could therefore resist the authority of a single dominant language, so that, according to Cha, history would not be repeated in oblivion.³⁰³

Following the 1868 Meiji Restoration, Japan sought to strengthen its national security and secure its position as a colonial power, advocating for the idea of *kokutai* (national polity), which sought to combine the nation (*koku*) and the body (*tai*).³⁰⁴ Dovetailing with *kōminka*

³⁰¹ Ibid., 32.

³⁰² Ibid., 33.

³⁰³ Cha wrote: “Why resurrect it all now. From the Past. History, the old wound. The past emotions all over again.... 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 that will not repeat history in oblivion.” Ibid., 32.

³⁰⁴ Christina Yi’s analysis of Ueda Kazutoshi (1867–1937, also known as Ueda Mannen), a leading advocate for linguistic nationalism in the Meiji period, explained how he employed the metaphor of blood and the body to emphasize the link between language and the nation. Yi argued that the basic *kokugo* (national language) principles that Ueda laid out in 1894 would later greatly influence the construction of the national language policy. In promoting this policy, Ueda claimed that the language of the common people “demonstrates a spiritual brotherhood, just as blood demonstrates a brotherhood of the body.” He declared that: “To use Japan’s *kokugo* as an example, one may certainly say that Japanese (*Nihongo*) is the spiritual blood of the Japanese people. Japan’s *kokutai* (national polity) is maintained by this spiritual blood, and the Japanese race is united because of this most strong and long-preserved chain.” Yi, “National Language,” 815.

policies, this ideology of national language came to justify the establishment and maintenance of the nation-state. As such, according to Yi, it also came to “rearticulate ethnic assimilation as individual bodily identification” by emphasizing the links between national polity, national language, and “spiritual blood.”³⁰⁵ Based on the belief that all members of “Japan” should speak a unified language, the ideology of *kokugo* thus came to justify the identification of the Japanese language as homogenous. What occurred here was a process of “colonial translation,” through which different ethnicities were rewritten into the narrative of the state as a homogenous entity while simultaneously preserving the ethnic hierarchy between racialized bodies.³⁰⁶

Scholars have examined how the empire’s colonial language-education policies argued for the significant role of the mother as the primary educator of language in nativizing the national language.³⁰⁷ Cha also makes reference to her mother’s trajectory during the colonial period in the chapter “Calliope—Epic Poetry,” which opens with a photograph of the artist’s

³⁰⁵ Ibid., 818.

³⁰⁶ Katsuya Hirano explained how colonial translation occurred with the Ainu, examining the imperialist narrative that reduced them to an ethnicity (*minzoku*) that was yet to achieve civilization. According to Hirano, historicism and ethnocentrism were the two key logics that supported Japan’s hegemonic ideologies and assimilationist policies towards the Ainu, as well as the territorial expropriation of Hokkaido. In particular, Japanese linguistics played a significant role in the process of colonial translation. As a study of national language via the categorization of the languages of neighboring societies, it effectively placed the Japanese at the center and other ethnicities at the margins of culture and society. Japanese linguistics thus formulated systems of knowledge that positioned Japan in relation to East Asia and the West based on colonial and imperial ideologies. See Katsuya Hirano, “The Politics of Colonial Translation: On the Narrative of the Ainu as a ‘Vanishing Ethnicity,’” Gavin Walker, trans., in *Japan Focus: The Asia-Pacific Journal*, Vol. 4-3-09 (January 2009); also see Takashi Fujitani, “Introduction: Inventing, Forgetting, Remembering,” in *Splendid Monarchy: Power and Pageantry in Modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 1-28.

³⁰⁷ Ueda declared that *kokugo*’s function was akin to that of an educator or “benevolent mother” who was capable of imparting *kokutai* and its ways of thinking. Christina Yi has observed how the figure of the mother has been presented as a mediator between language and the nation within this discourse of national language. Ueda’s “mother,” Yi argued, was disassociated from any real woman, standing in as “a figure or a symbol through which the nationalized body could speak but who could not be heard herself. Only by disassociating the figure of the mother from any actual woman could she then stand in as a link between home and state, mother tongue and national language.” Yi, “National Language,” 816; also see Tomiko Yoda, *Gender and National Literature: Heian Texts in the Construction of Japanese Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 178–9.

mother, Young-soon Huo, reprinted from an earlier work *Father/Mother* (1977). Here, Cha follows Huo's life as part of the first generation of Korean exiles in Yong Jung, Manchuria, where her family relocated to in order to escape Japanese occupation. After Huo graduated from a teacher's college in 1940 at the age of eighteen, she was assigned her first teaching post in a small village in Manchuria, where the presence of the imperial order was "felt by the Japanese language that is being spoken."³⁰⁸ As the artist wrote, "The Japanese flag is hanging at the entry of the office. And below, the educational message of the Meiji emperor framed in purple cloth. It is read at special functions by the principal of the school to all the students."³⁰⁹ Here, Cha identified how her mother was assigned to teach Japanese under the colonial language policy both at home and at school, as at once a mother and teacher.

However, the artist also explained how her mother had the ability to secretly defy such dominance of the Japanese language through her ability to speak multiple languages of Korean, Chinese, and Japanese. By describing Huo in "Calliope—Epic Poetry" as a school teacher who was supposed to teach in Japanese but spoke in Korean, Cha conveyed not only loss but a means of resistance as well.³¹⁰ What Cha called the "forbidden mother tongue" became a "dark" and "secret" language that could disrupt both linguistic and political oppression:

Mother... You are Bilingual. You are Tri-lingual. The tongue that is forbidden is your own mother tongue. You speak in the dark. In the secret. The one that is yours. Your own. You speak very softly, you speak in a whisper. In the dark, in secret. Mother tongue is your refuge. It is being home. Being who you are. Truly. To speak makes you sad. Yearning. To utter each word is a privilege you risk by death. Not only for you but for all.³¹¹

³⁰⁸ Cha, *Dictée*, 49.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 49.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 45.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, 45-6.

The mother tongue is “the mark of belonging,”³¹² as indicated in the way the artist spoke of her mother: “You write. You write you speak voices hidden masked you plant words...From one mouth to another, from one reading to the next the words are realized in their full meaning.”³¹³ The *process* of writing and speaking is what allows for the realization of full meaning; that is, words that refer to things evolve into the very thing that is referred to. By writing and speaking of home in the “forbidden tongue,” “home” ceased to simply refer to home and *became* home in itself. I thus understand Cha’s multilingual practices as an attempt to adopt her mother’s strategy of finding home by speaking home. Under colonial rule, the Korean language passed into disuse. Cha, however, aimed to revive the language through the *disease*.

The idea of “going home” held particular significance for Cha: “my work, until now, in one sense has been a series of metaphors for the return, going back to a lost time and space, always in the imaginary. The content of my work has been the realization of the imprint, the inscription etched from the experience of leaving.”³¹⁴ As also signified in the first two pages of *Dictée*, language is what allowed for this return:

I write. I write you. Daily. From here. If I am not writing, I am thinking about writing. I am composing. Recording movements. You are here I raise the voice. Particles of bits of sound and noise gathered pick up lint, dust. They might scatter and become invisible. Speech morsels. Broken chips of stones. Not hollow not empty. ...The vast ambient sound hiss between the invisible line distance that this line connects the void and space surrounding entering and exiting.³¹⁵

³¹² Ibid., 46.

³¹³ Ibid., 48.

³¹⁴ Cha, “Personal Statement and Outline of Postdoctoral Project,” quoted in Rinder, “The Plurality of Entrances,” 2.

³¹⁵ Cha, *Dictée*, 56.

“Going home,” however, was only made possible by leaving home: “You leave you come back to the shell left empty all this time. To claim to reclaim, the space.”³¹⁶ This theme, for instance, is explored at length in her final video work *Exilée* (1981) (Fig. 25).³¹⁷ *Exilée* drew from her earlier writing *Exilée and Temps Morts*, published a year earlier following her travel back to South Korea in 1979 with her brother for the first time since the family’s departure.

My return to the time and space that was once left, that only existed in memory until the void between the two separate spaces and time are able to be filled, by the actual return to the place, in this case, to Korea, which I have left 17 years ago.³¹⁸

Here, Cha described the flight to Korea in terms of the sixteen time zones that separate San Francisco from Seoul. Not only did she talk about the excitement over finally returning to her homeland, but also spoke of her doubtful feelings towards the much anticipated trip as well as the subsequent sorrowful memory of discovering that she was a stranger at home. In this video piece, Cha explicitly explored the dynamics of displacement by playing with the temporal and spatial disjunction between the United States and South Korea.³¹⁹ This spatial and temporal rift, which was born out of the artist’s diasporic status, was what she conceived of as a liminal space,

³¹⁶ Ibid., 57.

³¹⁷ *Exilée* was belatedly introduced to the South Korean audience in 2000 through an exhibition at the Art Sonje Center in Seoul, followed by a retrospective exhibition held in 2003 at Ssamji Space, Seoul. Curated by Constance M. Lewallen, who was at the time the senior curator at BAMPFA, the exhibition introduced the Romanized name “Theresa Hak Kyung Cha” to the South Korean art world. Interest in Cha’s artistic career has since greatly increased, with notable articles and dissertations on the artist’s practices being published in both Korean and English.

³¹⁸ Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, quoted in Ed Park, “This is the Writing You Have Been Waiting For,” in *Exilée / Temps Morts*, Constance M. Lewallen, ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 13.

³¹⁹ *Exilée* was originally screened as part of a three-channel installation that consisted of a large screen for film projection, a video monitor placed at the center of the film screen, and an audio track that played Cha’s voice-over. By utilizing still shots with voice-overs, slow fadeouts, overlapping images, repetition and deconstruction of words, the artist shared her sense of displacement, fragmentation, and confusion with the audience. For a detailed analysis of *Exilée* as visualizing Cha’s experience as immigrant, creating a space within which her memory persists, see Hyun Yi Kang, “Re-Membering Home,” in Elaine H. Kim and Chungmoo Choi, eds., *Dangerous Women: Korean Women and Nationalism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998): 249-90.

a gap within which both possibilities of leaving home and returning home coexist.³²⁰ As Cha poetically described, she was in a “void and space surrounding entering and exiting.”³²¹ Rather than departing from one point to arrive at another, the artist was forever in motion, *en route* in search of a homeland composed of memories.

3.5 Conclusion

The final section of *Dictée* begins with a blank page, proceeding without a prefatory designation of any kind of Muse. In *Dictée*, Cha spoke of mythical goddesses alongside her mother and herself. By the end of the work, however, she no longer referred to well-known female figures such as Yu Guan Soon and Jeanne d’Arc. She returned to the universality of ritual practices. She spoke of unknown and unnamed women, such as a female healer: “The woman...said that these were special remedies for her mother and that she was to take them to her. She gave her instructions on how to prepare them.”³²² This indicates Cha’s desire to speak of a larger collective of women that exceeds a given time and space, thus continuing to problematize the notion of history and its being written into the present. This also points to the artist’s desire to overcome dominant narratives that imposed themselves upon her voice, as reflected in *Dictée*’s narration of Yu Guan Soon’s revolutionary organization:

Guan Soon forms a resistant group with fellow students and actively begins her revolutionary work. There is already a nationally organized movement, who do not accept her seriousness, her place as a young woman, and they attempt to dissuade her. She is not discouraged and demonstrates to them her conviction and dedication in the cause. She is appointed messenger and she travels on foot to 40 towns, organizing the nation’s mass demonstration to be held on March 1, 1919. This date marks the turning

³²⁰ Cha, *Dictée*, 57.

³²¹ *Ibid.*, 56.

³²² *Ibid.*, 169.

point, it is the largest collective outcry against the Japanese occupation of the Korean people who willingly gave their lives for independence.³²³

Cha explained how despite Yu's imposed status as the men's "appointed messenger," the words of the young female student gained more and more significance as she traveled through different towns on foot. Her words meant more with every responsive audience that she reached, ultimately leading up to the mass demonstration that continues to hold an important place in Korean memory.³²⁴ Drawing attention to women's involvement in nationalist movements, Cha revealed how female participants such as Jeanne d'Arc and Yu Guan Soon endured the double oppression of colonialism and patriarchy. Shedding light on the doubly marginalized histories of women, the artist, as a relay, embodied these women and their stories. *Dictée* follows Yu's search for an audience that will hear the unheard, see the unseen, and remember the forgotten in history. Through this text, Cha aimed to generate stories that will continue to maintain significance for readers across time and space.

Despite having emerged in post-colonial and post-liberation South Korea as a means of asserting agency against colonial domination, the nationalist narrative emphasizing origins heavily risked reproducing the very logics of colonialism.³²⁵ Hyun Yi Kang cautioned against the

³²³ Ibid., 30.

³²⁴ March 1st is a national holiday which is celebrated importantly in South Korea, commemorating the independence movement that took place on March 1, 1919.

³²⁵ According to Partha Chatterjee, the hierarchical relationship between the dominant metropole and the subordinate former colony is maintained due to the fact that "nationalist thought accepts and adopts the same essentialist conception based on the distinction between 'the East' and 'the West,' the same typology created by a transcendent studying subject, and hence the same 'objectifying' procedures of knowledge constructed in the post-Enlightenment age of Western Science." As the colonialist division of hierarchized cultures and peoples remains intact, he continued, "it is this contradictoriness which signifies, in the domain of thought, the theoretical insolubility of the national question in a colonial country, or for that matter, of the extended problem of social transformation in a post-colonial country, within a strictly nationalist framework." Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 38–9.

understanding of Cha as a “representative voice,” which harbors the risk of reifying the individual and omniscient author as an example for a collective history. She argued that such approach “dilutes the immediacy and the specificities of both the personal and the communal,” and that one must consider how Cha was positioned in-between multi-national histories, different languages, and several literary, philosophical, and cultural traditions.³²⁶ Cha’s discussion of colonial history, primarily through memories of her mother, essentially remains from her standpoint as a diasporic subject, which I argue is reflected in her dominant use of English and French instead of Korean and Japanese. Rather than simply reproduce an ‘authentic’ Korean experience, Cha contested notions of origin and shared the colonial history as she experienced it: as mediated through the dominant languages that she herself confronted as a Korean American immigrant. *Dictée* introduces Yu Guan Soon as a central figure by emphasizing her agency, leadership, and subjectivity, in an attempt to reclaim her from the patriotic writing of Korean history which often prioritizes her torture and sacrificial death.³²⁷ As Lisa Lowe argued, “Nationalism may be continuous with colonialism to the degree that it either constructs an analogy between the individual subject and the ‘original’ body, or adopts a narrative of progress that develops the emergent people into a ‘nation.’”³²⁸ Both formations, she continued, “demand that difference and particularity be assimilated to an abstract and identical universality, a

³²⁶ Kang, “‘Liberating voice’ of Theresa Hak Kyung Cha’s *Dictée*,” 77. Kang located Cha’s effort within Asian American literary works that celebrate the breaking of silence and coming into voice, aiming to give agency to the suppressed, ignored, and marginalized creativities in dominant society. *Ibid.*

³²⁷ On this matter, Elaine Kim explained that the prioritization of her death and torture may probably be “to underscore the virtue of individual female self-sacrifice for the benefit of the group while encouraging Korean nationalism.” Kim, “Poised on the In-between,” 16.

³²⁸ Lowe, “Unfaithful to the Original,” 50.

colonialist logic that founds the very basis of its effective hegemony.”³²⁹ Rather than present a harmonious narrative of assimilation and incorporation, Cha brought different genres, modes of literary and artistic production, languages, and histories and memories into a “contact zone,” wherein they coexist with yet constantly critique each other.

Cha’s references to origin remain vague: instead of naming a particular geographical location as her home, she described a homeland that consists mostly of memories and stories. For Cha, a physical home and the lost memory of it are both unreachable. Her works speak in essence of her inability to ‘return home,’ of realizing that her homeland is an imagined one. The artist thus problematized the notion of home, refusing the idealization of it as a static, fixed location. Revealing how written history generates presumptions of natural relationships, she argued that the idea of origin is a construct that is mediated and dictated through language. Instead of a final location where one would arrive or achieve, Cha highlighted instead the *moment* of remembering, the flickering instant of recollection when trying to give words to memory, signaling to the fact that home itself forever remains in the process of formulation. “Destined to be fixed in the motion of perpetual search,”³³⁰ her practices are ongoing journeys of ‘going home,’ with language as her flight for a return that would never be achieved.

³²⁹ Ibid., 50. On this issue, Mayumo Inoue argued that “Refraining from a binarist hypostatization of nativist plenitude and diasporic lack, *Exilée* examines the constitutively exilic nature of filmic images and their shadowy (dis)appearances that can only be differentiated and deferred onto yet another screen and screening.” Inoue, “Theresa Hak Kyung Cha’s ‘Phantomnation,’” 77.

³³⁰ Cha, *Dictée*, 81.

Chapter 4: Nam June Paik's Theatre of Origins

4.1 Introduction

At the opening of the exhibition *Nam June Paik: When He Was in Seoul*, held at the Gallery Hyundai in Seoul on January 28, 2016, producer Jean-Paul Fargier reenacted Nam June Paik's original shamanic ritual from 1990.³³¹ As one of Paik's collaborators, Fargier had filmed several of the artist's performances since their first meeting in France in 1978, including the 1990 performance. The reenactment began with Fargier lighting a candle inside an empty television screen and gazing at an altar upon which piles of fruit and a steamed pig head were arranged according to Korean shamanic tradition. He then covered a broken piano with a white robe, both objects from the original ritual. Afterwards, Fargier proceeded to walk around a cement hat shaped like Joseph Beuys's felt hat, another object from the 1990 performance.³³² *Nam June Paik: When He Was in Seoul* marked the 10th anniversary of Paik's death in 2006, recounting the artist's homecoming and how his work connected him with his homeland. The exhibition also highlighted the continued importance of Paik's 1990 ritual performance for the Korean art world; the event that marked the artist's homecoming is often discussed as a significant point in both Paik's career and the larger art history of South Korea.

Paik's homecoming occurred at a time when the government proceeded to host subsequent mega events while simultaneously seeking to promote a cultural image that was deemed essentially Korean. The idea of globalization became tightly bound together with the

³³¹ The commemorative exhibition also displayed Fargier's film, *Play it Again, Nam*. Produced in 1990, the biographical video documentary of Paik showed the artist's early works and pictures from his childhood. See KH Digital 2, "Remembering 'Crazy Corean' Nam June Paik," in *The Korea Herald* (Feb 1, 2016), accessed November 28, 2019, <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20160201001181>.

³³² Ibid.

development of modern sports, and the government intended to ensure that the country's process of globalization would involve both the accommodation of foreign cultures and the promotion of Korea's sociocultural development.³³³ At the time, mass media coverage primarily focused on glorifying the 1988 Seoul Olympics as a global opportunity to promote the local, an opportunity that the now independent nation was in an urge to grasp. It was also a chance to mimic and even surpass Japan's earlier model of success with the 1964 Olympics. To do so, the promotion of Korean culture and arts was considered necessary as a way of building national prestige.³³⁴ The Olympic Organizing Committee accordingly provided a self-Orientalized version of what it deemed to be the authentic culture of Korea for the gaze of the West, portraying Seoul as both "an ancient and a modern phenomenon," a modern yet oriental metropolis, and a hybrid of the East and West.³³⁵ The government and major institutions collectively argued that reinforcing a genuinely "Korean" identity was the way to gain global recognition, promoting the slogan of "glocalism" which combined the local and the global.

In this chapter, I do not question whether the advocacy of "glocalism" was truly successful, but the reason why Paik was the artist who fit its vision best. While Paik quickly gained popularity in the Korean art world with governmental and corporate support, not everyone responded positively, especially for those who considered his works to be

³³³ Ji-hyun Cho and Alan Bairner, "The Sociocultural Legacy of the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games," in *Leisure Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (2012): 281.

³³⁴ Nancy Kay Rivenburgh, "National Image Richness in Televised Coverage of South Korea during the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games," Ph.D. diss. (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Washington, 1991), 71-2. The Korea Herald (7 May 1988, 8) also announced: "The upcoming summer Olympics will be a rare opportunity for Korea to display its culture and tourist assets to people from every corner of the globe." The Korea Herald, quoted in *ibid.*, 73.

³³⁵ Seoul Olympic Organizing Committee, *Official Souvenir* (Seoul: Seoul Olympic Organizing Committee, 1964), 56.

technologically radical yet apolitical. Paik was not the only Korean artist who was active overseas by 1988, nor was he the only one who promoted the significance of the local. For instance, artists associated with the grassroots *Minjung* (“peoples”) movement also held an exhibition in New York in 1988, which I discuss later in this chapter. Korean artists had also been engaging with avant-garde practices prior to Paik’s homecoming, beginning as early as the 1910s when experimental and modernist art had entered the country, and a small circle of avant-garde artists had formed the Korean Avant-Garde Association in 1969. However, the military regime had censored all cultural expressions from the 1960s onwards, heavily restricting and even imprisoning intellectuals deemed to offend of its rule. Whereas Paik’s work, which did not concern itself with the sociopolitical complexities of South Korea, received ongoing financial and institutional support, for others the regime proved to be the most difficult obstacle in pursuing diverse artistic expressions.³³⁶

Paik’s image has most commonly been constructed as a nomad who brought together the diverse cultures that he came across during his journey around the globe. This image is primarily based on his video and satellite projects, which expressed Paik’s utopian vision of a future in which media technology would positively affect global communication, such as *Global Groove* (1973), *Good Morning, Mr. Orwell* (1984), *Bye Bye Kipling* (1986), and *Wrap Around the World* (1988).³³⁷ Paik himself reinforced this perception by identifying himself as having inherited nomadic traits:

³³⁶ Esther Kim Lee, “Avant-garde Becomes Nationalism: Immortalizing Nam June Paik in South Korea,” in Mike Sell, ed., *Avant-Garde Performance and Material Exchange: Vectors of the Radical* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 153.

³³⁷ According to Paik, *Good Morning, Mr. Orwell* was meant specifically to create a link between France and the United States. *Bye Bye Kipling* then expanded this vision to a link between the East and West; more precisely, between South Korea, Japan, and the United States. With *Wrap Around the World*, Paik stated that he wished to

I question again myself why was I interested in ‘most extreme’? It is because my Mongolian DNA [*sic*]. Mongolian—Ural—Altair horseback hunting people moved around the world in prehistoric age from Siberia to Peru to Korea to Nepal to Lapland. They were not center-oriented like Chinese agrarian society. They saw far and they see a horizon far away [*sic*], they had to go and see far more.³³⁸

Constantly in flux, Paik has come to be understood as perhaps the first “global artist,”³³⁹ “transnational nomad,”³⁴⁰ and “cross-cultural shaman”³⁴¹ who played the role of mediator between different times and cultures through video and satellite.³⁴²

The homecoming of the “global artist” was not a one-day event, but a long-term project that continued throughout the remainder of his career. A significant contribution to this was the opening of the Nam June Paik Art Center on October 8, 2008. Paik first proposed the planning of the center in 2001; after negotiations with the Gyeonggi Cultural Foundation, a nonprofit governmental organization, the accumulated cost for construction approached 30 million United States dollars in total. The center is now the permanent home to many of Paik’s major installations, including *TV Garden* (1974) installed at the center of the lobby, video art pieces

generate a connection that involved the whole world. Eduardo Kac, “Satellite Art: An Interview with Nam June Paik,” in Maria Raponi, ed., *DIVA—Digital & Video Art Fair, 2005 Cologne (A Tribute to Nam June Paik)* (New York: Frère Independent, 2005), 8-9. Originally published in *O Globo* (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil: July 10th, 1988).

³³⁸ Nam June Paik, LP liner notes for *My Jubilee ist Unverhemmt* (Hamburg and Brussels: Edition Lebeer Hossmann, 1977), quoted in Wook Steven Heo, “The Influence of Shamanism on Nam June Paik Video Art,” in *Journal of the Moving Image Technology* (Seoul: Association of Korea, 2018), 98.

³³⁹ For instance, see Anna Maria Guasch, “Nam June Paik. Global Artist,” in Hong-hee Kim, ed., *Nam June Paik y Corea: de lo fantástico a lo hiperreal* (Madrid: Fundación Telefónica; Barcelona: Casa Asia, 2007), 276.

³⁴⁰ For instance, see Kim, “Constructing Transnational Identities,” 910-4.

³⁴¹ For instance, see Heo, “The Influence of Shamanism on Nam June Paik Video Art”; also Wonkon Yi, “Korean Video Art and Shamanism,” in Yasuko Furuichi, Mori Ishigami, and Aki Hoashi, eds., *Serendipity: Photography, Video, Experimental Film and Multimedia Installation from Asia* (Tokyo: The Japan Foundation Asia Center, 2000).

³⁴² Esther Kim Lee also called him in a number of ways: a) a “hyper-nomad” or “voluntary nomad,” based on the work of French scholar Jacques Attali; b) a “transnational, nomadic artist,” based on Youngna Kim’s reading of Paik; and c) a “transnational avant-garde” through James M. Harding and John Rouse’s idea based on Homi Bhabha’s notion of cosmopolitan hybridity. Kim Lee, “Avant-garde Becomes Nationalism,” 159.

such as *Global Groove*, and archival materials.³⁴³ Paik claimed the center to be “the house where the spirit of Nam June Paik lives on,”³⁴⁴ writing this phrase in Korean on the blueprint of the institution that now exhibits his work year round.³⁴⁵ On this note, Esther Kim Lee argued that the center “successfully symbolizes Paik’s life as a stationary nomad by attempting to have a worldwide influence while being in only one, culturally specific location. In this paradox, it is simultaneously a place for commemoration and a space for immortalization—and utterly appropriate to Paik’s identity.”³⁴⁶

Despite the fact that Paik’s life had never been “stationary,” the articulation of Paik as a “stationary nomad”³⁴⁷ provided a means to emphasize his roots as a Korean-born artist. Paik’s homecoming to a “one, culturally specific location”³⁴⁸ necessitated an emphasis on his Koreanness, particularly considering exactly *how* his origins had been formulated. Paik was born in 1932 into an extremely wealthy family in Seoul, Korea under colonial rule. His father owned Taechang, a major textile manufacturing firm, and managed Japan Coal and Iron Co., Ltd during the Japanese occupation of Korea (1910–1945).³⁴⁹ Considering the period’s sociopolitical

³⁴³ Ibid., 158.

³⁴⁴ Nam June Paik Art Center, “Mission/MI,” *Nam June Paik Art Center*, accessed November 20, 2019, <http://njpac-en.ggcf.kr/mission-mi>.

³⁴⁵ Gyeonggi Province, “Nam June Paik Art Center,” *Gyeonggi Province*, accessed November 30, 2019, <https://english.gg.go.kr/nam-june-paik-art-center/>.

³⁴⁶ Kim Lee, “Avant-garde Becomes Nationalism,” 161.

³⁴⁷ Paik used the phrase “stationary nomad” to describe himself in a 1991 interview with Pil-ho Hwang. Noting that the term was coined by a futurologist, the artist used it to refer to humans’ ability to mentally move across physical borders by means of technology, such as telecommunication. According to Paik, the stationary nomad can be anywhere in the world without physically moving, generating increased possibilities in global communication and connections. Nam June Paik, interviewed by Phil-ho Hwang, “The Video Artist Nam June Paik vs. the Philosopher Pil-Ho Hwang,” *Gaeksuk [Auditorium]* (January 1991): 189.

³⁴⁸ Kim Lee, “Avant-garde Becomes Nationalism,” 161.

³⁴⁹ For an account of Paik’s childhood and his family written by the artist’s childhood friend, see Kyung-Hee Lee, “Prince and Princess,” in Toni Stooss and Thomas Kellein, eds., *Nam June Paik: Video Time-Video Space* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1993). For a discussion of Paik’s complicated relationship with his homeland, see Jieun

situation, Paik's privileged family background was the primary factor that allowed for Paik's early exposure to modern technology, such as photography, as well as Western culture and modernist music, including the writings of Karl Marx and the music of composer Arnold Schönberg. Paik also noted: "As for Schönberg, I am still quite proud that I was able to discover him in the information-starved Korea of 1947 when I was only fourteen-and-a-half years old."³⁵⁰ Paik Nak-seung, the artist's father, was identified and labelled as a *chin'il-pa*, which refers to those who were pro-Japanese or collaborators with the Japanese colonial government. He was among those who were prosecuted after 1945 for aiding the imperial rule and was once arrested in 1948 by the Special Committee for Investigation of National Traitors. However, his family managed to maintain political and financial power after independence. This eventually allowed for their escape from the peninsula to Japan in 1950 out of fear of the impending Korean War (1950–1953), which was when the artist's nomadic trajectory began. Even now, Paik's family background continues to emerge as a controversial topic when discussing his work.³⁵¹

Paik's movements continued onwards throughout various countries: he studied musicology at the University of Tokyo, Japan until 1953, moved to Germany to continue his studies in Munich, Freiberg and Cologne, and in 1964 moved to the United States and began working with cellist Charlotte Moorman (1933-1991) in New York. Since his meeting with

Rhee, "Reconstructing the Korean Body: Nam June Paik as Specular Border," in *Oriental Art*, Vol. 48, No. 4 (2002): 47-50.

³⁵⁰ Nam June Paik, "Pensée at 59," in *Nam June Paik: Video Time—Video Space*, 17, quoted in Jieun Rhee, "Performing the Other: Asian Bodies in Performance and Video Art, 1950s-1990s," Ph.D. diss. (Boston: Boston University, 2002), 31.

³⁵¹ See Anki Joung, "The Military Mobilization of Imperialist Japan and the Wartime Cooperation of Korean Capital: Focusing on the Case of Paik Nak-Seung," in *Dongbuga Yeoksa Nonchong*, No. 46 (December 2014), 221-276; also Anki Joung, "A Study of the Colonial Logistics Mobilization and Munitions Company Regime: Focusing on the enforcement of application of the Munitions Companies Act in the Korea," in *Hanil Yeoksa Nonjip*, Vol. 63, No. 0 (May 2014), 49-80.

George Maciunas (1931-1978), the founder of the Fluxus community, Paik had participated in the group's performances in Germany and across Europe. By the early 1980s Paik, now in New York, had gained an international reputation as an important member of Fluxus through his video and satellite works. Before the monumental broadcast of *Good Morning, Mr. Orwell* (1984) (Fig. 26), Paik had remained largely unknown in the Korean art world and had not made much effort to be known there. Paik returned to his birthplace only after achieving international success as an artist.³⁵² *Good Morning, Mr. Orwell* was broadcast in South Korea at noon on January 1, 1984, via the state-owned public Korean Broadcasting System (KBS). Beginning with the phrase "George Orwell, you were half right," referring to Orwell's novel *1984* (1949), the transcontinental broadcast highlighted the positive elements of media technology and the future it was to bring. Following the satellite performance, KBS proceeded to invite Paik to South Korea, after which a significant shift appeared in both his methods and in the scholarship on him.

The year 1988 marks a disjuncture in critical scholarship on Paik, with literature focusing on either before or after his grandiose homecoming, but seldom both. When discussing the former, emphasis is primarily placed on Paik's transnational involvement with Fluxus. The latter, discussed significantly less in art historical scholarship, intensively highlights the artist's so-called "Koreanness," stressing his ethnic nationality and the close relationship he maintained with South Korea's major institutions and corporations. For instance, the South Korean media coverage on Paik that directly followed his 1984 satellite broadcast framed the artist as a shamanic mediator between Korea and the "global." The literature on each period, before and after his homecoming, argue for Paik's status as a "global nomad," but differ substantially in

³⁵² Kim Lee, "Avant-garde Becomes Nationalism," 152.

terms of what the title entails. One promoted Paik's abandonment of any national association, a transnational artist who never stayed in one home, while the other presented Paik's work as a search for his authentic roots, a national artist who finally returned to his one true home.

Such a divided understanding of Paik's artistic trajectory, however, is not as clear cut as it appears to be.³⁵³ Despite the role that the artist played in characterizing Fluxus as an international movement, Paik's involvement is often framed largely in relation to his identity as the Other in the Euro-American art field.³⁵⁴ Furthermore, contrary to how the Korean art world portrayed his homecoming, his flight as the Other never truly ended with a long-awaited return to his permanent home. The homeland that Paik returned to was not the one of his memories, and he continuously had to negotiate with his essentially foreign position to the Korean audience. To resolve this disjuncture in the scholarship on Paik, he must be understood as an artist who responded to the specific conditions of his diasporic experience, which consisted of nomadic flights repeated throughout different cultures and countries. The consideration of Paik as a diasporic artist allows for a more comprehensive analysis of his artistic career, including the

³⁵³ For an examination of the shifting identities of Asian diasporic artists, including Nam June Paik, in local and global contexts, see Rhee, "Performing the Other." Here, Rhee explained that: "As Asians who received Western educations and deeply involved themselves in the international art world, each of these artists confronted the problem of defining themselves in regard to cultures that often viewed them within an ethnic or 'native' frame. While these artists drew on their respective Asian traditions, the postwar Western avant-garde played a major role in shaping their work. By delving into the reception of their works both in the West and in their countries of origin, I argue that their particular 'border' positions created an interface between the rigid dichotomy of East and West." Ibid., vi.

³⁵⁴ John Cage had earlier noted that Paik's performance represented sorrow, anger, and fear. John Cage, quoted in *Nam June Paik: Video Time-Video Space*, 22. Kate Millett also recalled that "Flux persons [were] in hostile new worlds, surviving the local culture through one they formed around themselves." Regarding Paik, she accounted as following: "If Tokyo was hard [for ethnic Koreans], what was it like in Germany? Maybe he had...perfected that manner of being a foreigner, a refugee artist: thick skinned, a little strange, a little funny...ineffably an outsider." Kate Millett, "Bonyari," in *Nam June Paik: Video Time-Video Space*, quoted in Patricia Mellencamp, "The Old and the New: Nam June Paik," in *Art Journal*, Vol. 54, No. 4, Video Art (Winter, 1995), 42.

transition that occurred in 1988, and accounts for the in-between position that he maintained throughout his career.

The dominant understanding of Paik as a global artist is vague. The title is also frequently conflated with the image of the global that was constructed in preparation for the 1988 Seoul Olympics and promoted by the government, major corporations and institutions, and Paik himself. Through media representation and institutional attention, what occurred was a conflation of the global with Paik, with the artist actively embodying and enhancing this connection through works that incorporated shamanic and ritualistic elements. To discuss the significance of the Seoul Olympics for both Paik and the Korean art world at large, this chapter focuses on the artist's ritual performance that marked his return to South Korea, *À Pas de Loup: de Séoul à Budapest* (1990). I examine the context within which Paik's homecoming occurred in order to better understand why certain works, including the monumental satellite event *Wrap Around the World* (1988), were produced and how they were received within South Korea at the time. I further expand the discussion to a later work, *The Tiger Lives* (2000), to consider how the myth of Paik and his work was adopted by hegemonic narratives to promote a particular idea of Koreanness. I consider the crucial role that Paik played in the nationwide promotion of South Korea's global image and the institutional reasons for such an emphasis on the artist in particular. Through such analysis, I aim to contribute to a better understanding of the global that Paik presented to the Korean public during a turbulent sociopolitical time; this concept is often conflated with globalism but in reality describes an idea that is quite different.

4.2 The 1988 Seoul Olympics

The context within which Paik's homecoming occurred centers on the 1988 Seoul Olympics, which was a major event for South Korea as well as the artist.³⁵⁵ The Summer Olympics continue to occupy an important position in the minds of the Korean public, with its legacy affecting the nation's sociocultural sphere in both positive and negative ways.³⁵⁶ The bidding for the 1988 Olympic Games occurred under the successive political regimes of Park Chung-hee and Chun Doo-hwan.³⁵⁷ Park initiated the project to bid for the Games; the plan was continued by the Fifth Republic of South Korea under Chun, which eventually submitted the bid to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in September 1981. The propaganda that shaped the cultural climate of the 1980s at large was termed as the 3S Policy (Sports, Screen, and Sex).³⁵⁸ Chun announced the initiation of this "Sport Republic" policy, which envisioned

³⁵⁵ As a comprehensive analysis of the event and its lasting influence on Korean society far exceeds the limits of this chapter, my analysis primarily focuses on the event's impact on the sociocultural situation when Paik's homecoming took place. For a detailed analysis on the process through which the 1988 Seoul Olympics was realized and the subsequent response from Korean mass media, particularly on how the event was portrayed at the time, see Rivenburgh, "National Image Richness."

³⁵⁶ Ji-Hyun Cho and Alan Bairner's study of this legacy focuses on the positive impact that the Summer Olympics has had on Korean society. See Cho and Bairner, "The Sociocultural Legacy of the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games," 271-89. For an alternative account of the 1988 Games, as opposed to the positive perspective as suggested by Cho and Bairner, see Jihoon Kim, "Embodying the Evictees of Asian Olympic Cities: Video Documentaries of Demolition and Relocation in Seoul and Beijing," in *Asian Cinema*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (2012): 183-97. Here, Kim examined how the preparations for the 1988 Seoul Olympics and the 2008 Beijing Olympics both involved large-scale demolitions of dilapidated houses in each city's old neighborhoods, forcing residents to relocate as the urban poor.

³⁵⁷ The period witnessed the enactment of the Yusin policy (1972-1979), during which Park Chung-hee and his Democratic Republican Party monopolized the nation's political and military powers. The authoritarian control was later succeeded by Chun Doo-hwan, following the coup d'état of May 17th in 1980. The popular phrase "dark age for democracy" commonly refers to this period, during which the successive dictatorships of Park and Chun maintained tight control over the nation's cultural productions. For more, see Chang, *Protest Dialectics*.

³⁵⁸ Repressing any form of expression that confronted state ideologies, Chun's regime promoted a trend of mainstream media that saw a surge of erotic and sexploitation films. Historians and critics have retrospectively argued that the proliferation of exploitation films was supported by the government in order to divert the public's attention away from national and military politics. For an example of such discussion, see Hyung-sook Lee, "Between Local and Global: The Hong Kong Film Syndrome in South Korea," Ph.D. diss. (Los Angeles: University of Southern California, 2006), 37-8.

international sports events as serving as the means through which South Korea would achieve global recognition.³⁵⁹

During this period, the regime held direct control over the nation's cultural development, promoting state ideologies while simultaneously repressing any form of disagreement. Both public and private spheres were closely monitored and regulated by strict censorship laws put forth by the government during this period. Permission to produce cultural events and publications were granted exclusively to those who did not violate state ideologies or security laws. For example, largescale festivals such as the 1986 Asian Games were promoted by the government as evidence of Chun's successful leadership.³⁶⁰ Historian Hyung Il Pai explains that under such circumstances, all forms of public information, from elementary textbooks to mass media, functioned in favor of the idea that the government was leading a national struggle against communist enemies. Such propaganda was further facilitated by a group of leading academics who were generally handpicked by the regime for their support of government policies, which strove to glorify national prestige, justify authoritarian rule, and compete for international recognition with their counterpart, North Korea.³⁶¹ The 3S Policy was further combined with anti-communist propaganda towards North Korea in an attempt to convey the

³⁵⁹ Cho and Bairner, "The Sociocultural Legacy of the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games," 276; also see Woong-yong Ha, "Korean Sports in the 1980s and the Seoul Olympic Games of 1988," in *Journal of Olympic History*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (1998), 11-3.

³⁶⁰ Professional baseball games were established in 1982, major sports events such as the 1986 Asian Games and the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games were held as national festivals, and numerous international sports leagues were initiated throughout the country.

³⁶¹ Hyung Il Pai, *Constructing "Korean" Origins: A Critical Review of Archaeology, Historiography, and Racial Myth in Korean State-Formation Theories* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2000), 3. For further discussion of how the successive regimes of Rhee Syng Man, Park Chung-hee, Chun Doo-hwan, and Roh Tae-woo manipulated aspects of government and education, see *ibid.*

idea that South Korea, unlike its counterpart, had succeeded in gaining international recognition.³⁶²

Hoping to further support the regime amidst increasing demands for democratization and ongoing tensions with North Korea, Chun succeeded in bidding for the Olympic Games.³⁶³ The nation's participation in the mega event was anticipated to showcase the country's economic achievement—the so-called “Miracle of the Han River”—to international audiences.³⁶⁴ The government's foreign policy attracted considerable amounts of corporate donations; in exchange, the government provided tax exemptions and other political benefits, leading to a close-knit relationship with major corporations in promoting a national image. For instance, Chung Ju-Young, founder of the Hyundai Group, was invited to serve as president for the Korea Amateur Sport Association and to assist in the organization of the 1988 Olympic Games.³⁶⁵

³⁶² The allegation that North Korean infiltrators were involved in the Gwangju Democratization Movement was first raised in 1980 with the spreading of leaflets that said: “The agitation is being led by [North Korean] spy agents and rebellious gangsters.” These leaflets were spread on May 21, 1980 by Lee Hui-sung, then-Army Chief of Staff for the Chun administration. JoongAng Ilbo, “TV Shows Tarnish Gwangju History,” *Korea JoongAng Daily* (May 21, 2013), accessed July 15, 2015, <http://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/article.aspx?aid=2971886>.

³⁶³ For a detailed suggestion on the government's principal objectives for hosting the Olympics, see J.B. Manheim, “Rights of Passage: Elections, Olympics, and the External Communications of the Republic of Korea,” a paper presented at the 14th World Congress of the International Political Science Association, Washington, DC (August 1988). Also, for a case study of the “way in which urban spectacles can heighten tensions and disguise social problems in an effort to project a positive global image,” see Ying Yu and Jiangyong Liu, “A Comparative Analysis of the Olympic Impact in East Asia: from Japan, South Korea to China,” in *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, Vol. 28, No. 16 (2011): 2290-308.

³⁶⁴ Nancy Kay Rivenburgh's analysis of mass media coverage on the event revealed the following: “Thematically, references to the Seoul Olympics in relation to non-Korean audiences emphasized three predominant goals or ‘agenda items’ for the Games to accomplish for South Korea. These were, in order of frequency: to enter the country into the ranks of advanced nations; to improve its international relations; and to display traditional and modern Korean culture. The accomplishment of these goals would translate into political viability—in the form of increased world attention and support—for a South Korean government plagued by rising internal pressure for democratic reforms and external pressures to open its doors to trade.” Rivenburgh, “National Image Richness,” 69.

³⁶⁵ Cho and Bairner, “The Sociocultural Legacy of the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games,” 276. Furthermore, “During this period, the Korea Amateur Sport Association (KASA) consistently sought to encourage elite athletes and improve results at international events such as the Olympic Games, World Championships and Asian Games.” *Ibid.*, 276.

The government's emphasis on elite sport development had begun much earlier. The Korean Olympic Committee was formed in 1946, a year after independence, and South Korea joined the IOC the following year in 1947.³⁶⁶ By 1966, Park had established the Taereung Training Center (or Korea National Training Center), which was the country's only national athletic training center for decades.³⁶⁷ Home to the Korea Institute of Sport Science, the largescale athletic village was designed to ensure the nation's continued participation in international elite sport events.³⁶⁸ Scholars have analyzed how the government's focus on elite sport development served as a means to promote national prestige and support political objectives in favor of the military rule.³⁶⁹

However, heightened tension and controversy followed the government's attempts to cover social problems under the guise of a positive global image of modernization. Contrary to the regime's anticipation,³⁷⁰ the successful bidding for the 1988 Games served to boost the democratization movement in South Korea, with political demonstrations leading up to the termination of Chun's regime in 1987.³⁷¹ Following direct elections in December of the same

³⁶⁶ Ibid., 275.

³⁶⁷ Since 2017, the Jincheon National Training Center has been taking over the Taereung Training Center's functions.

³⁶⁸ For a detailed analysis on the significant and symbolic position that the Taereung Training Center holds for South Korea's cultural development at large, see Mi-Ran Jang, "The Relationship between Retirement Expectation, Sense of Psychological Crisis and Re-socialization among the National Representative Athletes," Ph.D. diss. (Yongin, South Korea: Yong In University, February 2015).

³⁶⁹ For example, Nam-gil Ha and J.A. Mangan, "Ideology, Politics, Power: Korean Sport—Transformation, 1945-92," in J.A. Mangan and Fan Hong, eds., *Sport in Asian Society: Past and Present* (London: Frank Cass, 2003), and Cho and Bairner, "The Sociocultural Legacy of the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games."

³⁷⁰ Park Seh-jik, the president of the Seoul Olympic Organizing Committee, for instance, had assured that "the Seoul Olympics will be safe and successful because all complaints of Korean people about democratization are gone." Park Seh-jik, quoted in Clyde Haberman, "South Korea is Walking a Fine Olympic Line," in *New York Times* (21 September 1987).

³⁷¹ June 1987 witnessed a massive wave of political demonstrations, which eventually led to the June 29 declaration that terminated Chun's regime and issued him out of power.

year, with Roh Tae-Woo serving as the transitional president, the upcoming Seoul Olympics came to symbolize a new age for South Korea. The event opened up new possibilities through expanded diplomatic relationships and symbolized the nation's newfound legitimacy in world affairs.³⁷²

To encourage participation and public support in response to anticipations for a positive era of “harmony and progress,” as promised by the 1988 event's official slogan,³⁷³ the Seoul Olympic Organizing Committee commissioned the production of an official theme song.³⁷⁴ Titled “Hand in Hand,” the theme song was performed by the group Koreana in both Korean and English at the Games' opening ceremony, a grandiose celebration of harmony and friendship across different borders—including that between South and North Korea.³⁷⁵ The event's theme of harmony and progress was further accentuated through Paik, who returned to his birthplace for the first time since his departure after being invited to create two commission pieces for the upcoming Olympics. The first piece was *The More the Better* (1988) (Fig. 27), a largescale video installation consisting of 1,003 TV monitors that was placed at the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul. The second was a live satellite event titled *Wrap Around the*

³⁷² Yu and Liu, “A Comparative Analysis of the Olympic Impact in East Asia,” 2294.

³⁷³ “The themes of harmony [were] used by all three East Asian host cities in their Games: for 1964 Tokyo it was framed as the harmony between the East and West, in 1988 Seoul's motto ‘Harmony and Progress,’ and for the 2008 Beijing, ‘One World One Dream’ reflected the theme of harmony.” Sandra Collins, “East Asian Olympic Desires: Identity on the Global Stage in the 1964 Tokyo, 1988 Seoul and 2008 Beijing Games,” in *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, Vol. 28, No. 16 (2011): 2243.

³⁷⁴ For an account on how this slogan came to showcase the political view of the 1988 Olympics, see Collins, “East Asian Olympic Desires.”

³⁷⁵ Sergey Radchenko, however, argued that contrary to the belief that the Olympics contributed to the inter-Korean dialogue, in reality “the Games became a weapon—and a very effective one—in the hands of the South Korean leadership for waging the Cold War against the North Korean regime.” See Sergey Radchenko, “It's Not Enough to Win: The Seoul Olympics and the Roots of North Korea's Isolation,” in *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, Vol. 29, No. 9 (2012), 1244.

World (1988) (Fig. 28),³⁷⁶ which included a feed of *The More the Better* with performers of Korean traditional music dancing around it. Two television networks co-hosted the broadcast—KBS-TV based in Seoul and WNET-TV based in New York—in which Paik also appears wearing a traditional Korean costume. This opportunity to re-explore his roots came to thoroughly affect the remainder of Paik’s career, during which he would often engage in introspection, retrospection, and mourning, particularly more following his stroke in 1996.

Alison Weaver’s analysis of Paik argues that the year 1964 marked an important shift in his work. It was the year the artist moved to New York, after which his investment in video and television intensified, and the same year he met Charlotte Moorman, with whom Paik produced many of his most famous pieces.³⁷⁷ According to Weaver, “Paik’s understanding of and attitude toward photographs changed in 1964 from a Fluxus-inspired indifference to the medium as the documentary residue of live performance, to a positivist stance influenced by communications theorist Marshall McLuhan and artist Joseph Beuys that allows photographs to become active circuits for social change.”³⁷⁸ Extending this case study on 1964 as Paik’s formative year, after which his changed perspective on photographs influenced many of his later works,³⁷⁹ I argue that

³⁷⁶ Paik considered various titles such as “Olympic Fever,” “Good Morning is the Good Evening,” “Space Rainbow,” and “Chip Olympics” before finally deciding on “Wrap Around the World.”

³⁷⁷ John G. Hanhardt also highlighted 1964 as an important year for Paik. See John G. Hanhardt, “The Textual Worlds of Nam June Paik: The Time of Writing and Reading,” in John G. Hanhardt, Gregory Zinman and Edith Decker-Phillips., eds., *We Are in Open Circuits: Writings by Nam June Paik* (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2019).

³⁷⁸ Alison Weaver, “Nam June Paik: The Photograph as Active Circuit,” in *Afterimage*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (Nov/Dec 2014), 16.

³⁷⁹ “Paik’s interest here is not the content, but the channel of communication, how information is transmitted. When considering the medium of photography, the idea of the image as a signal, a proactive element in a system of communication that indicates to the viewer the moment of action, just as a traffic light indicates when to stop or go, is key to understanding Paik’s relationship to photography after 1964. He sought both a physical and a psychological means of evoking the concept of an active circuit, a working signal relevant to the modern age.” *Ibid.*, 18.

the year 1988 also signaled a shift in Paik's artistic attitude. This time, Paik introduced himself as an "active circuit" for the Korean art world, a mediator who could supply the global to and from South Korea.

4.3 *Wrap Around the World* (1988)

Wrap around the World began with a proposal that Paik drafted in 1988 for a satellite television special, originally titled "Space Rainbow," that would interconnect different nations around the globe. After extensive changes from the original plan and financial assistance from multiple television stations, the art event he envisioned eventually evolved into *Wrap around the World*.³⁸⁰ The satellite event aired on September 10, 1988, a week before the Olympic Games began in Seoul. David Bowie's performance with two dancers ("La, La, La, Human Steps") marked the beginning of the satellite broadcast that coordinated live moments from 10 countries around the globe: South Korea, China, the Soviet Union, Japan, the United States, Germany, Ireland, Brazil, Austria, and Israel. By connecting live moments from geographically distant locations, Paik aimed to achieve a sense of simultaneity. For instance, Bowie conducted a conversation via satellite with Japanese musician Ryuichi Sakamoto before the latter began his piano performance in Japan. Al Franken and Tom Davis coordinated these live moments from a WNET studio in New York, playing the role of a human anchor and an alien visitor from space, Dr. Mobius.³⁸¹

³⁸⁰ For a description of the original proposal, see Gregory Zinman, "This Script is Not Final, and is Subject to Changes: Nam June Paik between Page and Screen," in *We Are in Open Circuits*, 73.

³⁸¹ Al Franken and Tom Davis are best known for their comedy partnership "Franken & Davis" on the television program *Saturday Night Live*.

Receiving and retransmitting television signals from around the world, the 90-minute event was meant to broadcast a moment of harmonious global interaction in anticipation of the upcoming 1988 Seoul Olympics. The project strove to “realize for the first time in human history the truly multi-national and multi-lateral TV, enhancing the spirit of the [O]lympics.”³⁸² In preparation for the Games, Paik’s satellite broadcast promoted a sense of international fellowship among the participating countries, particularly considering the Cold War tensions between North and South Korea, the United States and the Soviet Union, and East and West Germany.³⁸³ Dissolving artistic borders between genres and geographical boundaries between cultures, the project envisioned Paik’s perception of a harmonious future in which visual language could suppress physical space.³⁸⁴

Based on a letter that Paik wrote to John Cage, scholarship on the artist commonly notes that his satellite works were conceived as “whole art” (*Gesamtkunstwerk*), referring to the term conceived by Richard Wagner.³⁸⁵ To understand his approach more specifically in relation to the context of the year 1988, however, I focus instead on the explanation that Paik provided during an interview in 1988 with cultural critic and later Minister of Culture of South Korea, Lee Eo-

³⁸² Nam June Paik, “Sync 21” (20 July 1987), Nam June Paik Archive, Box 9, Folder 3, quoted in Douglas Gabriel, “From Seoul to the World: *Minjung* Art and Global Space During the 1988 Olympics,” in *Journal of History of Modern Art*, Vol. 41 (June 2017): 191.

³⁸³ See Kyung-hwa Ahn, “Reanimating Nam June Paik,” in *Koreana: Korean Culture & Arts*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (Winter 2016).

³⁸⁴ Kac, “Satellite Art,” 8-9.

³⁸⁵ John Cage, *A Year from Monday: New Lectures and Writings* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1979), 90. According to Koonyong Kim, “Paik’s allusion to the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk* is interesting because such a comprehensive or grand vision of art seems no longer prized in postmodern artistic practices which are often considered to be an expression of fragmentation, contingency, and ephemerality. Paik’s holistic or totalizing art form and its global vision stand in a somewhat tensional relationship with such postmodern practices.” Koonyong Kim, “The Spatial Unconscious of Global America: A Cartography of Contemporary Social Space and Cultural Forms,” Ph.D. diss. (Durham, NC: Duke University, 2010), 260.

ryeong. Paik stated here that the title “Wrap Around the World” meant to softly envelop the world in a *bojagi*, a Korean traditional wrapping cloth.³⁸⁶ This large piece of cloth is typically used to wrap everyday items, anything from food to books, and has no fixed form—it can even be used as an umbrella when raining or a makeshift hat when snowing. Paik perceived his art to be adjustable and changeable, never remaining within fixed boundaries or limitations and maintaining the potential to contain anything and everything. His satellite project was meant to envelop disparate cultures and hold them within a single layer of coexistence. At the same time, everything remains jumbled inside a *bojagi*; no sense of uniformity, order, or assimilation is imposed upon the components.³⁸⁷

When miscellaneous objects are wrapped in a *bojagi*, the resulting bundle is called a *bottari* in Korean. The traditional equivalent of a travel bag, the *bottari* is often “associated with both the nomadic origins of the Korean people” and individual memories of one’s “peripatetic childhood.”³⁸⁸ The traditional Korean exile moved from place to place with the *bottari*, an object

³⁸⁶ Paik, quoted in *ibid.*, 260-1.

³⁸⁷ Elaine H. Kim and Eui-Young Yu also invoked the multiple functions of *bojagi*, often spelled as *pojagi*, in the introduction to *East to America: Korean American Life Stories, A Collection of Thirty-eight Stories*: “We decided to gather materials for a book that might intervene in the discussion from the flanks instead of head on, by bringing forth a variety of viewpoints to demonstrate how Korean American lives are linked but at the same time are multiple, layered, and non-equivalent. We thought that a collection of stories would show that there can be no real spokesperson, that no one can tell the ‘whole story,’ and that there can be no typology of Korean American identity, family, or community, since a collection of perspectives would insistently point to the absence of thousands of other stories that remain as yet untold. We wanted to bring forth something that would recall the traditional Korean *pojagi*, or wrapping cloth, which was constructed of fabric scraps made into artistic designs by anonymous women for everyday use. Beautiful and functional, the *pojagi* was used to contain and carry ordinary household items as well as to wrap gifts.” Elaine H. Kim and Eui-Young Yu, *East to America: Korean American Life Stories, A Collection of Thirty-eight Stories* (New York: New Press, 1996), xvii-xviii.

³⁸⁸ Sooja Kim, *Kimsooja—Unfolding* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery and Hatje Cantz, 2014), 34, 38. This theme is explored, for instance, in the work of Korean artist Kimsooja. *Bottari Truck in Exile* (1999) was exhibited at the Venice Biennale and dedicated “to refugees of the war that was taking place in Kosovo. Exile is an apt theme in regard to place because it means the loss of one’s native setting or milieu, one’s homeland. For the Biennale, Kimsooja brought the truck loaded with *bottari* (Korean for ‘bundle’) from Korea to Italy. The work was not simply the truck, but the process of getting it from one place to another. She traversed countless national and international boundaries to transport bundles of laundry reminiscent of the baggage in which exiles haul the traces of their

essential to such a lifestyle, with the nomad's entire life held in one's hand or carried on one's back. The idea of traveling with the world on his back appears again in another work, *Chongro Cross* (1990), which I discuss later in this chapter. This recurrent vision of himself as a nomad carrying a *bottari* is the basis for my understanding of Paik as a nomad. The artist not only travelled the world but, through technology, wrapped his whole world into a bundle to travel with him.

Once wrapped and tightly bound, the wide array of objects swept into the cloth are completely obscured, with only the vibrantly colored, outer layer of the *bojagi* remaining visible. The viewer is unable to identify what lies beneath; what was before a two-dimensional piece of cloth has transformed into a three-dimensional object. In such a manner, the metaphor of the *bojagi* can be understood as not only speaking to Paik's artistic strategy of combining various elements into a single entity but also his use of technology as the wrapping cloth. As a nomad, the artist returned to South Korea with his *bottari* in hand, and the Korean art world was thrilled to witness the global world that Paik promised would unfold. What the viewer witnessed on the day of *Wrap Around the World* was not the "five oceans and seven continents" that Paik claimed to have wrapped, but the tightly bundled *bottari* that the nomad had brought with him to present to the world. What traveled with him was not *the* whole world, but *Paik's* own world. Paik's presentation of the global mostly involved the specific artistic movements and trends that he had participated in during his time abroad, most prominently Fluxus.

existence. On seeing the piece, one thinks of transnationalism and the global flows of labour, of forced migrations, of international traffic in contraband or of the worldwide circuitry of capital pulsing through a network of markets. The politics of power and powerlessness, of loss and theft, are there, yet one senses that this framework does not exhaust what the work has to offer, or where it wants to go." Ibid., 115.

The focal point for South Korea's participation in the broadcast was Paik's *The More the Better* (1988). Shaped like a gigantic birthday cake made from video monitors, the piece was installed in Seoul, where Paik was born. To invite Paik to South Korea, it had been necessary to divert the Korean public's attention from his controversial family background. At the time, South Korea had undergone a process of "government-sanctioned cultural purification," which banned the importation of Japanese art and culture in particular.³⁸⁹ The ban was partly lifted later in 1998, but public efforts to expunge any remaining influence of Japanese occupation still persisted.³⁹⁰ Considering such sociopolitical background, Paik's homecoming required a focus on his status as a global artist who, despite his education in Japan and his decision to lead a nomadic lifestyle, still held on to his essentially Korean identity. Media coverage on Paik's return, therefore, focused primarily on his ethnic identity, emphasizing the Koreanness of his work and identifying any references to Korean culture that he had made before. Rather than understanding Paik as a diasporic artist, he was most often portrayed as having journeyed abroad to pursue a Korean art that could achieve international success. For example, the special exhibition *Nam June Paik—Rhapsody in Video* was held in 2007 at the KBS headquarters in Seoul to celebrate Paik's status as an internationally acknowledged Korean brand.³⁹¹

³⁸⁹ Kim Lee, "Avant-garde Becomes Nationalism," 164.

³⁹⁰ According to Kim Lee, "The ban on Japanese culture was the official law of the land, but various Japanese cultural products were imported during that time. For instance, children's animation shows, which were never revealed as being of Japanese origin, were immensely popular amongst Koreans, and Japanese imports were always available in the underground networks. The ban on Japanese popular culture and some films was lifted in 1998, but other forms of culture continue to be censored in Korea." Ibid., 164.

³⁹¹ The Hankyoreh, "The True Taste of Nam June Paik's Art," *Hankyoreh* (July 30, 2007), accessed June 5, 2020, <http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/culture/music/225850.html>.

The governmental slogan for the 1988 Olympics, “From Seoul to the World, and from the World to Seoul,” was extensively boasted nationwide, and Paik was the artist who successfully visualized this ambitious outlook that envisioned Seoul as an international metropolis.³⁹² Following his return, Paik took advantage of the extensive governmental and corporate support he was offered, coming to act as the face of contemporary Korean art for the international market. The artist was commissioned to create work for multiple international events hosted in South Korea, including the Daejeon EXPO in 1993. The media attention on Paik overshadowed the diverse artistic practices that had been occurring simultaneously, including in the diasporas, coming to portray a singular brand of Korean art that was meant to boast the country’s development and achievements. This promotion was largely fueled by major institutions: in an interview in 2001, Paik stated that his recent pieces heavily incorporating Korean culture were created specifically for Korean collectors who were now actively purchasing his artworks.³⁹³ He maintained close relationships with corporations and government institutions in the national project of promoting South Korea as a modern and international country. A notable relationship, for instance, was formulated with the conglomerate Samsung, who had earlier provided the 1,003 video monitors used in the installation of *The More the Better* (1988).³⁹⁴ As a result, Paik continues to be the artist most referred to when discussing Korean artists abroad, symbolizing

³⁹² James F. Larson and Heung-Soo Park, *Global Television and the Politics of the Seoul Olympics* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993), 28.

³⁹³ Alice Kim, “Coyotes and Wolves: An Interview with Nam June Paik,” in *New Art Examiner*, Vol. 28, No. 7 (April 2001), 41.

³⁹⁴ According to Kim Lee, “Samsung announced that it would continuously support Paik under the condition that he only use its TV monitors. Paik began his career in video art with Sony monitors and frequently complained of the high cost. But during the 1980s, Paik no longer had to purchase TV monitors because they were abundantly provided by Samsung. Samsung and Paik had a symbiotic relationship, and both promoted a newly modernized, globalized Korea.” Kim Lee, “Avant-garde Becomes Nationalism,” 153.

global success and recognition for the Korean art world. However, I have sought to clarify that the global that Paik delivered to the Korean audience in 1988, which was quickly absorbed by them, was actually a very specific portrayal that was designed by a symbiotic combination of governmental efforts, major institutions and collectors, and Paik himself.

4.3.1 *Min Joong Art: A New Cultural Movement from Korea (1988)*

Paik's homecoming timely resonated with the slogan of "glocalism" which was then being promoted with the success of the 1988 Olympics. In an interview with Min-hee Kim, Eo-ryeong Lee described this compound: "We should not limit ourselves to just our [Korean] culture, nor should we glorify others'. Globalism must be combined with localism; that is, as glocalism. Each end of the spectrum should come together as one in order for creativity to be born."³⁹⁵ Lee was responsible for directing the opening and closing ceremonies during the 1988 Seoul Olympics, which he accordingly based on the idea of glocalism. These monumental performances were meant to showcase Korean dance, music, arts, and culture to the international audience in a way that would be easily recognizable and globally relatable yet uniquely exotic.³⁹⁶

³⁹⁵ Eo-ryeong Lee, quoted in "88 Seoul Olympics (3) – The Story behind 'Hand in Hand'," *Weekly Chosun*, No. 2417 (July 25, 2016), accessed November 30, 2019, <http://weekly.chosun.com/client/news/viw.asp?nNewsNumb=002417100008>. In Korean, my translation.

³⁹⁶ As Sandra Collins discussed: "In the East Asian Olympic Games discourses, traditional culture becomes a flashpoint of how to identify the different pathways to modernity that have been dominated by western categories. Despite the emphasis on the role of the Olympics as a mega-event to help the economic development of Asian host cities, traditional culture is used as a key strategy to negotiate for some native difference against the backdrop of the western Olympic Games. This tactic of erasing history may be informed by the need to placate the Orientalist desires of the West (1964 Tokyo), to assert the uniqueness of long, cultural traditions despite a problematic modernisation as self-Orientalism (1988 Seoul) or even to underline the historical indebtedness that western civilisation owes to the East as the Orient in the West (2008 Beijing)." Collins, "East Asian Olympic Desires," 2243.

The ceremony concluded with all participants, from different parts of the world, holding hands with each other to form a seemingly endless connection between people. The event remains deeply engraved in the memory of the Korean public, with the symbolic gesture of holding “hands in hands” coming to represent peace, harmony, and the end of wartime tension. South Korea experienced largescale social, cultural, and political impacts following the 1988 Olympics, with notable changes in the nation’s democratic transition and international status.³⁹⁷ As Sergey Radchenko observes, “the 1988 Olympiad enjoys an almost uniquely positive image in the collective memory of the educated public.”³⁹⁸ In response to the event’s popularity, President Kim Young-Sam announced the “Grand Idea of Globalization” in 1994, which “formulated national development strategies in the era of globalization and undertook 43 projects, covering the following six major areas: government administration, diplomacy and unification, economy, social dimension, education and culture, and politics.”³⁹⁹

However, not everyone in the Korean art world agreed with this positive outlook. A notable response came with the exhibition *Min Joong Art: A New Cultural Movement from Korea*, which opened on September 29, 1988, at the Artists Space Gallery in New York.⁴⁰⁰ Byeong-su Choe’s massive banner painting *Bring Back Lee Han-yeol* (1987), an iconic symbol

³⁹⁷ For details, see Cho and Bairner, “The Sociocultural Legacy of the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games.”

³⁹⁸ Radchenko, “It’s Not Enough to Win: The Seoul Olympics and the Roots of North Korea’s Isolation,” 1244.

³⁹⁹ Won-duck Lee and Byung-hoon Lee, “Korean Industrial Relations in the Era of Globalization,” in *Journal of Industrial Relations*, 45 (2003): 507.

⁴⁰⁰ The exhibition title used the currently outdated Romanization, “*Min joong*,” but this chapter will refer to the movement as “*Minjung*” using the McCune Reischauer Romanization. For an extensive study of the *Minjung* cultural movement, see Namhee Lee, *The Making of Minjung: Democracy and the Politics of Representation in South Korea* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007).

of the *Minjung* movement, was hung on the building façade for the show’s opening.⁴⁰¹ This exhibition of *Minjung* art, which means “the people’s art,” was organized by Wan-kyung Sung, Hyuk Um, and the Soo Yoo Cultural Exchange House, a collective of Korean artists and critics. *Minjung* artists most notably reacted to the state of the cultural sphere under the successive dictatorships of Park and Chun, seeking to rewrite dominant narratives promoted by major institutions.⁴⁰² They were concerned with issues such as capitalist structures, government policies, the everyday life of farmers and city laborers, and the national division and subsequent tension between North and South Korea.⁴⁰³ The aim of *Minjung* artists was to provide an alternative interpretation of history, one that would speak to the reality of the people who were being marginalized under the regime.⁴⁰⁴

From the very beginning, what the Korean organizers sought to convey through the exhibition was a search for an “authentic ‘Koreanness’” that could address questions specific to the sociopolitical reality of Korea.⁴⁰⁵ They argued for an alternative to the Koreanness that had

⁴⁰¹ The banner painting depicted the iconic photograph of Lee Han-yeol’s death, a university student who was hit by a teargas grenade canister during the demonstration of June 9, 1987 against the brutalities of the dictatorship under Chun Doo-hwan. The work was produced six days after the tragic event for Lee’s memorial service. The photograph proceeded to be circulated widely in South Korea, with protests occurring all across the country during the 1987 June Democracy Movement. For a detailed account of the period’s democratization efforts and the involvement of *Minjung*, see Sohl Lee, *Being Political Popular: South Korean Art at the Intersection of Popular Culture and Democracy, 1980-2010* (Seoul: Hyunsil Publishing, 2012).

⁴⁰² On how the *Minjung* movement approached the theory of history, see Kenneth Wells, “The Cultural Construction of Korean History,” in *South Korea’s Minjung Movement: The Culture and Politics of Dissidence* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1995).

⁴⁰³ As Douglas Gabriel explained, “*minjung* artists initiated a revival of figurative realism, often appropriating motifs from popular folk genre painting of the Chosŏn Dynasty (1392-1910), as well as other autochthonous traditions such as *t’alch’um* (masked dance).” Gabriel, “From Seoul to the World,” 189.

⁴⁰⁴ Kim, “A Brief History of Modern Korean Art,” 54.

⁴⁰⁵ Gyung Eun Oh, “An Alternative Approach to Identity Issues of Korean Contemporary Art: A Case Study of *Minjoong* Art. A New Cultural Movement from Korea Exhibition,” in *Journal of the Association of Western Art History*, Vol. 45 (August 2016), 110. In Korean.

been broadcast to the world through the 1988 Olympics, which Sung and Um perceived to have internalized First-World perspectives in its attempt to showcase the nation to the world.⁴⁰⁶ Their approach, however, was found unfavorable by major institutions who were striving to portray a particular image of South Korea and its art world to the international audience. For instance, the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, which was first established in 1969, hosted the exhibition *Korean Art Today* (1986–1988) and launched a massive overview of the artistic achievements of Korean artists since 1910.⁴⁰⁷ Out of the over 700 works on display across four sites in Seoul and its surrounding areas, the stars of this exhibition were undoubtedly Dansaekhwa paintings and Nam June Paik’s *The More the Better*, which were proudly presented as the “today” of Korean art.⁴⁰⁸

Minjung artists were excluded entirely from this monumental exhibition of contemporary art in Seoul held in anticipation of the international attention that the 1988 Olympics would attract, mainly due to the anti-dictatorship and pro-democracy contents of their work. Their emphasis was on producing political works of socialist realism and not artistic experimentation, which was what the show primarily sought for.⁴⁰⁹ The National Museum’s decision to exclude *Minjung* artists from the exhibition was eventually reversed, as other participating artists

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid., 110.

⁴⁰⁷ The Korean title can be translated to *The Yesterday and Today of Korean Contemporary Art*. For an in-depth discussion of this show in relation to the larger genealogy of state-sponsored art exhibitions in South Korea, see Joan Kee, “Longevity Studies: The Contemporary Korean Art Exhibition at Fifty,” in *Your Bright Future: 12 Korean Artists* (Houston and Los Angeles: Museum of Fine Arts Houston and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2009).

⁴⁰⁸ For a detailed account on Dansaekhwa, see Kee, *Contemporary Korean Art*.

⁴⁰⁹ As a result, *Minjung* artists were often accused of supporting North Korean communist propaganda. See Youngna Kim, “Two Traditions: Monochrome Art of the 1970s and *Minjung* Art of the 1980s,” in *20th Century Korean Art* (London: Laurence King Publishing Ltd., 2005); also Kim Lee, “Avant-garde Becomes Nationalism,” 153-4.

responded negatively to the announcement, even threatening to withdraw their work.⁴¹⁰ Despite the retraction, *Minjung* artists heavily criticized the state-sponsored exhibition for depicting a Korean history that failed to reflect the reality of its people, and instead moved to organize their own event and seek for an opportunity abroad.

Sung and Um had planned for the *Minjung* exhibition to occur concurrently with both the exhibition at the National Museum and the 1988 Seoul Olympics.⁴¹¹ The Soo Yoo Cultural Exchange House's proposal, submitted in 1987 to multiple art venues, detailed such planning:

Next year, 1988, promises to be quite an eventful and media focused year for [S]outh Korea, highlighted by the Seoul Summer Olympics. Many fear that this extravagantly costly event is being manipulated by the present Chun government to lend [legitimacy] to his unpopular and undemocratic rule. We hope to be able to arrange some part of the proposed exhibition tour to coincide with the Summer Olympics. This [timeframe] would provide a particularly meaningful context for these works which cast a critical eye at the government while also providing insight into the complex social dynamics of a changing society.⁴¹²

The *Minjung* exhibition challenged the government's presentation of the Olympics as an event for harmony and progress, highlighting the political reality of the nation within which the state regulated all spheres of society. At the same time, the curators situated the *Minjung* movement in contradistinction to Dansaekhwa, which they considered to be "a capitulation to Western

⁴¹⁰ Gabriel, "From Seoul to the World," 195.

⁴¹¹ Ibid., 188.

⁴¹² Soo Yoo Collective, untitled document proposing an exhibition titled "Min Joong: A New Movement of Political Art From Korea" (1987), quoted in *ibid.*, 195. An exhibition of *Minjung* art had been mounted in 1987 at A Space Gallery in Toronto and Minor Injury in Brooklyn, featuring the work of five *Minjung* artists: O Yun, Sung Neung-yung, Park Bul-dong, Kim Yong-tae, and Kim Bong-jun. According to Gabriel, *Minjung* was brought to the attention of Valerie Smith, the curator for Artists Space, through the Korean artist and owner of Minor Injury, Mo Bahc. For details on this process through which the exhibition at Artists Space was ultimately realized, see *ibid.* For a review of the 1987 exhibition at A Space Gallery, see John Bentley Mays, "Korean Works Full of High Spirits, Sharp Ironies," in *Globe and Mail* (9 January 1987).

modernism...[that] ignored exigent social and political issues in South Korea, including the authoritarian government, and the deleterious effects of headlong industrialization.”⁴¹³

However, Gyung Eun Oh has argued that despite the *Minjung* exhibition’s intention to critique the Korean government at an international stage, its venue introduced the movement more as an instance of cultural resistance towards Western modernism. At the exhibition’s panel discussion, for instance, Hal Foster questioned the role that *Minjung* could play in the debate on cultural politics between the First and Third Worlds.⁴¹⁴ The Korean curators were thus faced with the dilemma that the more the American art world gained interest in *Minjung*, the further it was displaced from its local roots. The movement was inserted into the binary framework of developed and developing countries, which obscured the specificity of the sociopolitical situation within which it was born.⁴¹⁵

Participating artists, many of whom aligned with the agenda of the larger *Minjung* cultural movement’s grassroots activism, expressed anxiety about whether the American audience could properly comprehend their priorities.⁴¹⁶ The exhibition catalogue tended to reveal the implication that Western audiences were inexorably alienated from *Minjung* art and its significance for South Korea. As Douglas Gabriel also pointed out, “The catalogue essays...frequently implied that only those of a particular national background could claim

⁴¹³ Gabriel, “From Seoul to the World,” 189.

⁴¹⁴ Oh, “An Alternative Approach to Identity Issues of Korean Contemporary Art,” 112.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid., 97-118.

⁴¹⁶ Sung Wan-kyung’s essay for the exhibition catalogue explicitly voiced this concern: “I must confess that I am skeptical of the response that *Min Joong* Art will receive from a North American audience. Most North Americans are ignorant of the historical, cultural and political history of Korea.” Wan-kyung Sung, “Two Cultures, Two Horizons,” in *Min Joong Art* (New York: Artists Space, 1988), 9-18.

access to any substantive meaning in the artworks.”⁴¹⁷ As a result of their concentrated efforts to present *Minjung* art to American audiences, the exhibition ironically came to adopt yet another ethnic nationalist narrative, contrary to the curators’ initial intentions.⁴¹⁸ The exhibition nevertheless proved meaningful in assessing what was being promoted as Korean art inside and outside of the nation and the multiple frameworks of national identity that artists were faced with.

The *Minjung* exhibition coincided with Paik’s broadcast of *Wrap Around the World*, but the participating artists’ and Paik’s trajectories in the art world differed widely afterwards.⁴¹⁹ As the military dictatorship began to be overturned, Paik’s video art rose to popularity while the influence of *Minjung* art declined. Paik’s *The More the Better* welcomed visitors to the National Museum who had come to witness the “today” of Korean art.⁴²⁰ Compared to the explicitly political narrative of *Minjung* artworks, Paik’s practices spoke of a “total artistic freedom that

⁴¹⁷ Gabriel, “From Seoul to the World,” 205. He also observed that, for instance, Lucy Lippard, the only non-Korean who contributed to the exhibition catalogue, “nevertheless deferred to the interpretations of Korean critics whenever discussing specific artworks in her essay.” Furthermore, “the discourse surrounding the show was replete with concerns over the presumed incomprehensibility of the work for Western viewers who could not assume the authority of the ‘Other.’” Gabriel’s analysis of the exhibition, however, “attempted to demonstrate that by the late 1980s the artistic form and political content of *minjung* artworks were international in scope, as opposed to being limited to the immediate political ambitions of the *minjung* cultural movement in South Korea.” Gabriel emphasized “how *minjung* artists pushed back against contemporary conceptions and visual representations of the global, and especially images that equated the 1988 Olympics with a steamrolling of spatial and ideological divisions and hierarchies throughout the world.” Ibid., 206-7.

⁴¹⁸ Oh, “An Alternative Approach to Identity Issues of Korean Contemporary Art,” 22.

⁴¹⁹ Gabriel’s essay “argues that artists such as Kim Dong-won and Kim Yong-tae challenged such representations of the global that proliferated during the Olympics, showing how spectacles of international conviviality were underwritten by violent spatial transformations within South Korea. I submit that *minjung* artists’ engagement with representations of global space in the late 1980s stands as an integral but seldom acknowledged thread within the history of the art movement.” Gabriel, “From Seoul to the World,” 190.

⁴²⁰ MMCA Gwacheon, *30 Years 1986-2016 <Archive Project: Coexistence of Memory>*, accessed December 5, 2019, <https://www.mmca.go.kr/exhibitions/exhibitionsDetail.do?exhId=201608230000485>.

transcended politics,” which was more readily acceptable for the Korean art world.⁴²¹ As Youngna Kim observes, “the polemics and the division of the art world between those for and those against *minjung* art ended suddenly around 1988, the year of the Seoul Olympics, when the Korean government adopted more open policies and deregulated foreign travel.”⁴²²

Wrap Around the World contributed greatly to the abundant pre-Games media coverage.⁴²³ Paik contributed to setting a nationalist narrative for the Olympics and guiding international attention to particular points of Korea that the government wished to promote: Westernized yet maintaining tradition, modernized but still essentially Korean. Paik’s earlier works, such as *Bye Bye Kipling*, also corresponded with the Olympic Organizing Committee’s goal to “create unity between the East and the West,” making the artist an ideal figure for the largescale promotion.⁴²⁴ Broadcast with the latest technology, *Wrap Around the World* was co-hosted in New York and Seoul, showcasing Korean tradition in front of a massive symbol of modern art. Paik’s satellite project thus fit the theme of glocalism perfectly, offering the nation an opportunity to join not only the global field of elite sport, but that of the arts as well.

⁴²¹ Kim Lee, “Avant-garde Becomes Nationalism,” 154.

⁴²² Kim, “Two Traditions,” 268.

⁴²³ As Rivenburgh pointed out, by the time the Olympics was broadcast to international audiences, “a substantial amount of image ‘baggage’ had accrued. There was an abundance of television images leading up to the opening day of the Olympics—from the replay of Korean war images in both documentary and film portrayals to news coverage of student unrest to the hosting of the ‘Today’ show from Seoul the week leading up to the Games.” Rivenburgh, “National Image Richness,” 75.

⁴²⁴ Seh-jik Park, “Forward,” in *Seoul 1988: A Guide to the XXIVth Olympiad* (Seoul: Seoul Olympic Organizing Committee, 1988), n.p.

4.4 *À Pas de Loup: de Séoul à Budapest (1990)*

Paik further reinforced his position as mediator between the East and West by holding a ritualistic performance on July 20, 1990. This was part of a series of events and exhibitions that he hosted as part of his homecoming trip. Paik had earlier mounted an exhibition titled *Beuys Vox, 1961–86* from September 14 to 30, 1988, at the Gallery Hyundai and Gallery Won, in honor of Joseph Beuys (1921–1986) and their close friendship.⁴²⁵ The exhibition included a photograph of the two artists at the 1961 Zero group exhibition where they had first met, another from *24-Stunden* (24 Hours; 1965) at the Galerie Parnass, and a photograph of the two performing *In Memoriam George Maciunas: Piano Duet Joseph Beuys & Nam June Paik* (1978). The event presented a collection of Beuys's various "voices," hence the title. The 1990 performance was also held to commemorate his friend's passing four years previously. However, what Paik introduced to the audience through these events was not only the individual artist Beuys, but Paik's entire history with Fluxus and the Euro-American art world.

Beuys and Shaman, a 30-minute U-matic recording of the original ritual performance, begins with the sound of *pungmul*, a Korean genre of percussion music performed with traditional instruments.⁴²⁶ In the open backyard of the Gallery Hyundai, 50 photographers, more than 20 cameramen, and a large audience are sitting, standing, and even climbing brick fences and trees to gain a better view.⁴²⁷ Across from the audience, a large altar is covered with

⁴²⁵ For an account on Paik's relationship with Beuys, see Pilar Parcerisas, "Nam June Paik and Joseph Beuys. Elective Affinities," in *Nam June Paik y Corea*, 329-36.

⁴²⁶ For a comprehensive discussion of *pungmul*, see Nathan Hesselink, *P'ungmul: South Korean Drumming and Dance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

⁴²⁷ Jean-Paul Fargier, "White Magic," in *À Pas de Loup: de Séoul à Budapest* (Seoul: Galerie Hyundai/Galerie Won, 1990), 10.

sacrificial offerings, piles of various foods and fruits. In front of the altar, a female shaman proceeds to perform a spiritual rite, humming, singing, and dancing as musicians seated around her continue to play *pungmul*. An old, broken piano lies on its side in the center of the open space. Paik is seen moving around the backyard, engaging in various acts with the arranged objects: he puts on a white traditional robe (*dopo*) and a black traditional hat (*gat*), places cement hats on each side of the piano, hammers into the folds of the broken instrument, puts sage in the cement hats and places a fabric hat labeled “wolf” on top before proceeding to burn the pile, sprays rice over the objects, squeezes paint over photographs of Beuys, and lays down a bowl of rice. Towards the left side of the backyard, 16 empty black televisions are stacked in a large pile; Paik lights a candle and places it in one of them. These actions are all part of Paik’s ceremonial rite that occurs simultaneously with the female shaman’s ritual performance.

July 20 was a special day for Paik. It was his birthday and also the day that Beuys gained public recognition through a controversial Fluxus happening in 1964.⁴²⁸ As Paik wrote in 1965:

July 20 1932 Day of the insurrection against Hitler [*sic*], I was born in Seoul/Korea as son of my father and mother. ...It was June 17th according to the Lunar Calendar (Day of Uprising against Stalin). At home I celebrate my birthday according to the old Korean custom on June 17th according to the Lunar Calendar, and in school and on my passport is the official July 20th birth date. I prefer this date, because, if the German Volk had been more against Hitler, the valuable blood against Stalin would not have been necessary.⁴²⁹

⁴²⁸ For a discussion of Beuys’s infamous performance, which resulted in a lawsuit against him, see Rachel Jans, “Nam June Paik: Kinship, Collaboration, and Commemoration,” San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (August 2018), accessed November 10, 2019, <https://www.sfmoma.org/essay/nam-june-paik/>. Also see Adam C. Oellers, “Wollt Ihr Das Totale Leben?”: Fluxus Und Agit-Pop Der 60er Jahre in Aachen: Katalog Zur Ausstellung Im Neuenaachenerkunsverein, 14. Januar-19. Februar 1995 (Aachen: Neuer Aachener Kunsverein, 1995).

⁴²⁹ Nam June Paik, “Nam June Paik,” in Wolf Vossell and Juergen Becker, eds., *Happenings, Fluxus, Pop Art, Nouveau Realisme* (Reineck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1965), 444–5.

For Paik, July 20 represented his feelings of kinship with Beuys, Fluxus in its earliest days, and his multinational identity. According to Rachel Jans, the date “confirmed his place in a generation—along with Beuys—that was acutely aware of the political and humanitarian catastrophes of the twentieth century.”⁴³⁰ It was also on this day in 1990 that Paik held the shamanic ritual (*gut*) in the backyard of the Gallery Hyundai to commemorate both birth (his) and death (Beuys’s).

Paik’s performance was modeled after the *Jinokwi-gut*, which is typically performed to guide the spirit of the deceased to the afterworld. Still practiced throughout Korea today, although its name and structure differ per region,⁴³¹ the *Jinokwi-gut* is performed by a *mudang* (a spiritual medium or shaman) and includes music, dance, prayers, and an offering of food.⁴³² The ritual is meant to free the spirit of the deceased from the earthly world and to guide it to the afterworld by granting unfulfilled wishes or resolving any remaining regrets.⁴³³ Paik made clear that he had been influenced by Korean shamanism from a young age. He recalled that every October, his mother would call a *mudang* to hold an annual shamanic rite to prevent hardship for the following year. The artist called the annual event a “24-hour long nonstop happening” and traced the roots of his attraction to experimental practices back to his childhood in Korea:

⁴³⁰ Jans, “Nam June Paik: Kinship, Collaboration, and Commemoration.”

⁴³¹ For a comparison between the different variations of this ritual, see Hyung-kun Kim, “A Comparative Study on Oguisaenam-gut of South Coast: Focused on the Comparison to Ogu-gut of East Coast and Sitkim-gut of Jeollanam-do,” in *Korean Shamanism*, Vol. 20 (February 2010): 171-221.

⁴³² For an extensive examination on the *Jinokwi-gut*, see Deok-muk Kim, “Study on Jinokwi-gut in Hwanghae-do: Mudangs’ Comparative Study according to Gut Procedure,” in *Korean Shamanism*, Vol. 2 (December 2000): 25-46. Also see Nami Lee and Eun Young Kim, “Korean Ritual for Transforming Death and Sickness into Rebirth and Integration,” in *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, Vol. 7, No. 5 (2017). For a more overall approach to the history of *gut*, see James H. Grayson, *Korea: A Religious History*, Second Edition, (London: Routledge, 2002).

⁴³³ For an extensive anthropological account of the *Jinokwi-gut*, see Hyun-key Kim Hogarth, *Kut: Happiness through Reciprocity* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1998).

“Ultimately, my arts are very close to the Korean people’s art, especially time art, dance, and shaman’s music rather than traditional high art.”⁴³⁴ For the artist, the two distinct mediums of shamanic ritual and video art shared the same characteristic of being “experience-oriented.”⁴³⁵ Combining the tradition of shamanic rituals with the experimental approaches of Fluxus, Paik’s 45-minute *gut* was meant to honor both his and Beuys’s personal and artistic roots, while also making reference to Beuys’s practices which were well known for their shamanistic qualities.

At the beginning of the event, Paik carefully delivered the story of Beuys to the audience so that references would not be missed—especially the famous Beuys *mythos* of March 1944 when his airplane crashed.⁴³⁶ The event was titled *À Pas de Loup: de Séoul à Budapest*, or *Nam June Paik + Shaman Exorcism Rite + Joseph Beuys’s Memorial Service*, and was also called by titles such as *Dream of the Ural-Altai Peoples* and *Shaman Exorcism Rite in Search of Time Lost*.⁴³⁷ Paik and Beuys had originally promised to hold a shamanic performance together in

⁴³⁴ Nam June Paik, interviewed by Phil-ho Hwang, “Artists Indeed Keepers of the Abstract Noun of ‘Truth,’” in *Auditorium* (January 1998), 189, quoted in Heo, “The Influence of Shamanism on Nam June Paik Video Art,” 100.

⁴³⁵ Nam June Paik, *Beuys Vox 1961–86* (Seoul: Won Gallery/Hyundai Gallery, 1988), 47. According to Paik, “Time-based, sequentially retrievable, non-gravity oriented information” included “memory, folk tale, singing, chanting poems, music, dance, audio tape, videotape, [and] movies.” *Ibid.*, 46-7. Hong-hee Kim further discusses Paik’s emphasis on shamanism in his work, arguing that the artist connected *gut* with happening and shamanism with video art. She states that these genres are “interconnected based on the concept of the so-called subject-object ‘interactivity,’ and...share aesthetic similarity in that they are all temporal genres centered on time.” Hong-hee Kim, “Korean ‘Paik Nam-june’ and the World’s ‘Nam June Paik’: Shamanism in the Work of Nam June Paik,” in *Nam June Paik y Corea*, 130. Kim also argued that “happening and gut have common features in terms of audience participation, intermedia style, and the aesthetics of indeterminacy.” Furthermore, Kim argues for the significance of these genres as: “unique temporal genres that put the flow of time on hold or reverse it...[and] present new perceptual experience to the audience.” *Ibid.*, 130.

⁴³⁶ See Claudia Mesch, *Joseph Beuys* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 2017); also Joseph Beuys and Antony Hudek, eds., *Greetings from the Eurasian: Joseph Beuys* (Antwerp: M HKA, the Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp; London: Koenig Books, 2017).

⁴³⁷ For a description of the performance and references to these titles, see Kwang-su Oh, “Nam June Paik, Beuys and Shaman Exorcism Rite: A Search for the Original Form,” in *À Pas de Loup*, 60–7.

celebration of the 1988 Seoul Olympics,⁴³⁸ during which they would merge their souls—representing Korea and Eurasia, respectively—through a ritual.⁴³⁹ Beuys, however, passed away in January 1986, two years prior to the Olympic Games, leaving Paik to perform alone in the backyard of the Gallery Hyundai. Traditional Korean houses surrounded three sides of the site, located across from the royal palace Gyeongbokgung. The combination of the avant-garde artist and Korean shamanism, scheduled to be performed in a well-known neighborhood of historical significance, attracted widespread curiosity. A large crowd gathered to witness the event, despite invitations being limited to guests from artistic and cultural spheres due to the small size of the venue.⁴⁴⁰

Paik's 1990 ritual was performed along with *mudang* Kim Yu-seon and her husband Kim Seok-chul and involved symbolic objects that each represented various aspects of Paik and Beuys, including two hats made of cement. These hats were casts of Beuys's emblematic felt hat;⁴⁴¹ Paik busted open the top cover of two, opening them up both physically and metaphorically. The artist interacted with the hats in various ways throughout the performance.

⁴³⁸ According to Kwang-su Oh, KBS TV allegedly first proposed to Beuys that he organize a performance in Seoul for the upcoming Olympics. Beuys responded that he would visit Korea only after the clamor of the mega event subsided. The artist, however, died before the opening of the 1988 Olympic Games. *Ibid.*, 61.

⁴³⁹ As Jans explains, "The subtitle *Dream of the Ural-Altaic Peoples* was an allusion to the two artists' shared cultural origins, as Korean shamanism is believed by many to have originated in Siberia, a part of Eurasia. Beuys's own self-created origin story began in that boundary-straddling region, in the Ural Mountains, where he claimed to have been nursed by indigenous Tatars after his plane was shot down during World War II." Jans, "Nam June Paik: Kinship, Collaboration, and Commemoration."

⁴⁴⁰ As Kwang-su Oh wrote, "Many days before the performance, many metropolitan newspapers stimulated the interest of the people who clamored not to miss this once in a life-time spectacle." Furthermore, "The following day's newspapers estimate the crowd at 300 to 500 persons. One newspaper estimated the number at 1,000, but the garden couldn't hold that many people, but if the newspaper included the persons outside the gate and those who returned home after being denied admission, then the estimation might be accurate." Oh, "Nam June Paik, Beuys and Shaman Exorcism Rite," 61.

⁴⁴¹ With Galerie Won, Paik created twelve editions of these casts in total. Fargier, "White Magic," 12.

For instance, when Paik appeared from behind a wall of television sets with a cement hat in hand, his hand was slipped through the hat's gaping hole. He also squeezed ketchup into the hat through the hole, sprayed rice and other miscellaneous substances onto the hat, and put it on his head several times. The cement hat acted as the spiritual passageway through which Paik could give his offerings to Beuys. It was the doorway through which Paik, dressed in a *dopo* with a *gat*,⁴⁴² and Beuys, wearing his iconic suit and felt hat, could meet. This meeting was also achieved through Paik's constant interaction with a four-fold screen, which he held, moved around with, and sprayed paint onto (Fig. 29). The screen displayed Beuys's name written in Chinese characters alongside three printed photographs of Beuys, taken from his duet performance with Paik in 1984 at the Seibu Museum of Art (Sōgetsu Hall) in Tokyo, titled *Coyote III with Pianovariation 1984*.⁴⁴³

The allusion to a spiritual conversation with Beuys of 1984 is further enhanced in the video recording of the performance, *Beuys and Shaman*, which is intermixed with moments from the 1984 duet performance and consists of Paik's signature disruptive editing. The screen constantly shifts between scenes from the backyard performance and footage of Beuys howling coyote sounds into a microphone, jumping back and forth between Beuys in the past and Paik in the present, or in Beuys's future. As the chaotic mix of image and sound continues to flash by, it seems to the viewer as if Beuys is responding to Paik, who is calling out to him through the photographs. The sounds of the two performances gradually clash together, eventually forming a

⁴⁴² See, for instance, Hye-kyung Kim, "The Study of Correlation in the Coming-of-age Ceremony Costume for Men in the Josun Dynasty," in *Chamunwha Saneophak*, Vol. 37 (2017): 21-50.

⁴⁴³ Eva Beuys, *Joseph Beuys: Coyote III, Konzert 1984 mit Nam June Paik, Pianovariation 1984* (Berlin: Joseph Beuys Medien-Archiv; Göttingen: Steidl, c2008).

seamless duet of mismatched instruments. The recording lacks any sense of linear procession, as different scenes from Paik's performance are shown repeatedly or in apparently random order. Towards the end, everything seems to occur at once and in a loop; the viewer's sense of time begins to break down as the sound of *pungmul* and Beuys's howling voice continue to increase.

Their transtemporal duet that exceeds the boundaries of life and death can be understood as an extension of Paik's wish to construct an "electronic superhighway."⁴⁴⁴ Through the medium of video, the artist understood time as existing simultaneously rather than linearly, with no point of origin nor final destination. As Paik said, "Thanks to technology, we can live not only in the future, but also in the past."⁴⁴⁵ Within Paik's world in flux, the division between past, present, and future is broken down, and the spiritual duet is ultimately realized through means of technology.⁴⁴⁶ The artist further emphasized the role of media in rituals and wrote the following for the exhibition catalogue: "Medium (Media) as a medieval theological concept denotes an instrumentality or means of communicating with God. The origin of *Kut* [*gut*] (shaman's exorcism rite) is *ol* (the spirit itself) in Mongolian which is almost a synonym with media [*sic*]."⁴⁴⁷

With the purpose of the ritual achieved, the live and the dead part ways towards the very end of *Beuys and Shaman*. As the footages of Paik and Beuys cross over each other once more,

⁴⁴⁴ Paik is credited for having coined the phrase in 1974.

⁴⁴⁵ Nam June Paik, interviewed by Florian Matzner, "A Short Trip on the Electronic Superhighway with Nam June Paik," in *Eine DATA base/Nam June Paik*, exhibition catalogue for the 1993 Venice Biennale (Germany: Edition Cantz, 1993), 130.

⁴⁴⁶ Video introduced several characteristics to the art world: simultaneity, ease of use, and immateriality. These particular characteristics allowed video to function well with not only happenings but also diverse forms of art, including performance, conceptual, kinetic, and Pop art. Mellencamp, "The Old and the New: Nam June Paik," 41.

⁴⁴⁷ Nam June Paik, "Spirit-Media-Kut," in *À Pas de Loup*, 46.

Paik's clip begins to rewind, returning to the beginning, whereas Beuys's continues to play. While Paik enters a loop, Beuys proceeds onward, a gesture towards his passing away. The video editing here conveys the message that although the medium of video allows time to flow differently, what he called an "eternal return" is never truly achieved. Paik commented on this during an interview with Japanese architect Arata Isozaki in 1993:

You are born only once. You die only once. The most important things happen only once. A human being has an essential yearning or angst for the non-repeatable. The reason I became well-known through destructive art was also because of this non-repeatability. Once you break an expensive piano, it cannot be put back together. Once you throw water on the ground, you cannot scoop it back up. From this fear and yearning born of the fragility of life, our philosophy of the 'eternal return' emerges.⁴⁴⁸

Paik further participated in this duet with an offering of ceremonial music during the performance (Fig. 30). With two lengthy smoking pipes, the artist beat bowls, saucers, a washing basin, and a chamber pot. He created sounds that blended into that of *pungmul* that played throughout the ritual performance, using everyday objects as shamanic materials—a common method in the practice of *gut*.⁴⁴⁹ The focal point for Paik's offering was the broken piano that lay on its side. The piano possibly paid homage to how Beuys destroyed one of the three pianos installed at Paik's first solo exhibition in 1963, *Exposition of Music—Electronic Television*, at the Galerie Parnass in Wuppertal, Germany. Paik recalled their meeting at the debut of his first series of altered televisions: "I heard some clattering noise from the adjacent room. I went out to find a man smashing the Ibach Piano into pieces with an ax. I went closer to the scene to find it

⁴⁴⁸ Arata Isozaki, "A Conversation with Nam June Paik," in *Nam June Paik: Video Time—Video Space*, 125.

⁴⁴⁹ For a discussion of the transformation of everyday objects into shamanic materials during a *gut*, see Kitae Song, "The Function and Theoretical Formalization of Shamanic Materials of Sitgimgut," in *Korean Shamanism*, Vol. 15 (August 2007), 107-31.

was the ever-serious and funny man, Beuys.”⁴⁵⁰ The broken piano symbolized their fateful meeting, an appropriate centerpiece for a ritual dedicated to their friendship.

The ritual reached its high point with Paik placing a bowl of rice on top of the piano, sticking a spoon into its center (Fig. 31)—a gesture in Korean tradition of offering food to the deceased or ancestors.⁴⁵¹ This offering of food, combined with his act of spraying rice over Beuys’s photographs, made specific reference to commemorative rituals that are traditionally held to worship one’s ancestors. Most common is an annual rite called *jesa*, for which days of preparation and labor are devoted to preparing a single meal meant for ancestral spirits who are believed to visit their families. The ceremony is arranged so that participating family members are reminded that another world exists beyond the material one and that the physical world can reach out to and be influenced by the spiritual one.⁴⁵² Paik’s performance adopted this setting and directly drew upon traditional elements to reinforce his self-positioning as a spiritual medium. Paik later ate the bowl of rice while walking around the backyard, sharing with the audience his union with Beuys. The ritual that the artist performed was ultimately meant for the audience to witness and participate in as his role as a spiritual medium necessitated a successful connection between inhabitants of this world (the audience) with the world beyond (Beuys).⁴⁵³

⁴⁵⁰ Paik, *Beuys Vox*, 22.

⁴⁵¹ Paik, however, puts the spoon into the rice upside-down with the spoon part up, which is the opposite of the traditional way. This may be because the piano, which served as his altar, was also turned over, indicating that he was “turning over” all procedures in this ritual act. The approach of “turning over” was often employed in Paik’s works, which sought to break down predetermined and preexisting conventions and perceptions.

⁴⁵² For an analysis of the practice of *jesa*, examining the ancestral memorial services of Confucianism as a “ritualization of memory,” see Wook Lee, “The Meaning of Ancestral Memorial Services and the Ritualization of Memory,” in *Korean Studies*, Vol. 19 (December 2011), 473-500.

⁴⁵³ Paik, *À Pas de Loup*, 53.

Such communal connection was further enhanced by the spatial arrangement of the performance as a *pan*, or more specifically a *gut-pan*. In Korean, the common phrase for performing a shamanic ritual is “*gut-pan-eul beol-ida*,” which refers to the act of “opening a *gut-pan*.” The space of *pan* allows for the occurrence of any form of engagement within its blurry boundaries: from drinking or gambling to community gatherings and everyday life. The most notable activity held on a *pan* is *pungmul*, or often farmers’ instrumental music, which was also played throughout Paik’s ritual.⁴⁵⁴ Sociologist Hagen Koo, in his account of how the concept of *pan* was adopted for student protests, explained that for performances happening on a *pan*, such as masked dances and *pungmul*, “there is no fixed stage, no separation of the performers and audience, and no strict following of the written script, and actually there is no clear genre distinction among these cultural forms.”⁴⁵⁵ He continued that:

Throughout the performance, participation by the audience is not only encouraged but is regarded as essential, and the end of the performance breaks down this separation completely, as the performers and the audience join together to dance with a heightened spirit of joy and release. Participation, spontaneity, naturalness, and a communal feeling of solidarity are all features [involved].⁴⁵⁶

Pan therefore exceeds the definition of a geographical location to account for both physical and conceptual spaces. While a *gut-pan* is held, all participants are invited to pray, sing,

⁴⁵⁴ *Pungmul* was frequently performed within the traditional village as *madang nori*, a traditional form of masked dance-drama in Korea, and would often be described as “*pan-eul beol-ida*,” or “opening a *pan*.” For a detailed analysis on the various usages of *pan* in traditional Korean society, see Heung Ju Park, “*Ttorang-gwangdae-wa ‘pan’ui sanggwanseong yeongu - Gyeonggi-bukbu-jiyeokeul jungsimeuro* [The Study about Interrelationship between *Ttorang-gwangdae* and *Pan*: Especially about *Ttorang-gwangdae* in Gyeonggi-do Northern Province],” in *Folk Studies*, Vol. 29 (Andong, South Korea: The Center for Folk Studies, Andong University, 2014). In Korean.

⁴⁵⁵ Hagen Koo also explained that the young intellectuals of the *Minjung* movement adopted the communal and collective spirit underlying all forms of *minjung* culture, which they saw as an effective means of demonstrating an authenticity of Korean culture and arousing consciousness among the masses. Hagen Koo, *Korean Workers: The Culture and Politics of Class Formation* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2001).

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 145.

dance, and share their emotions together with one another. In light of this context, the interpretation of Paik's performance as an act of "opening a *pan*," within which any form of activity can take place on equal grounds without discrimination, allows for an understanding of how the event fluidly incorporated a variety of activities from singing and dancing (the *mudang* Kim Yu-seon), to playing music (Kim Seok-chul who conducted the musicians), to installations (the piano, the altar, and the stack of empty televisions), and to eating and drinking (Paik). These different acts, chaotically occurring all at once, conversed with each other rather than functioning separately. Furthermore, the spatial arrangement invited the audience to also participate freely, dissolving the separation between artist and audience. Paik continuously engaged with the audience throughout the ritual performance. In the recording, for instance, he is seen smiling, laughing, waving hands, and giving a thumbs up to the crowd. He also invited audience members to participate in the ritual. At one point, two women from the crowd joined Paik in shoveling into the ground and spraying soil over the piano. This moment of metaphorical burial was recorded and included in *Beuys and Shaman* as an essential part of the artist's performance.⁴⁵⁷

This inclusion was also part of Paik's careful planning of how the performance would be recorded. *Beuys and Shaman* displayed an apparent interest in recording the recorder, with footage often focusing on cameramen and photographers. The diverse responses to Paik and his

⁴⁵⁷ This idea is shared with happening, which "realizes the participatory ideal by employing such concepts as 'intermedia' and 'indeterminacy,' which deny the traditional concept of art: happening as an intermedia situation between art and theatre, and as an indeterminate environment in terms of time and space. In such a happening environment, the role of audience is changed from passive spectator into active participant, assuming itself as an important aesthetic element of the 'here and now.'" Hong-hee Kim, "Problem of Audience—Participation which Emerged in Nam June Paik's Video Art 'Participation—TV' as an Extended Concept of Happening," in *À Pas de Loup*, 88.

work were also meant to be part of the event.⁴⁵⁸ Jean-Paul Fargier, who filmed the event from the top of a tree in the middle of the backyard, recalled a facsimile that he had received from Paik before leaving Paris: “Hurry up and get here. I am going to do a performance with shamans. I’ll let you have the best place from which to shoot. My camera will use the next best one.”⁴⁵⁹ As promised, the TV crew from French Canal Plus filmed the event from the highest position available. Paik’s official cameraman, however, was the only person allowed to move freely around the backyard, filming the event from multiple angles.⁴⁶⁰ As Fargier recalled, “All the other lens carriers were forced to stay in the place that they had chosen: some were at the foot of our tree [where he and crewmember Jean-Michel Gautreau were perched], the rest were facing us, at a certain angle to the action.”⁴⁶¹ As the boundary between the recorder and the recorded was blurred, what was reinforced was the notion that all acts occurring within the *pan* are inherent parts of the experience.⁴⁶²

At one point during the shamanic ritual, Paik threw his black hat onto the floor, piled whipped cream and rice onto it, and then proceeded to kneel down on the ground and rub his face into the messy, sticky, white pile. When he emerged, his face was partially covered in white, after which he quickly disappeared from view by ducking behind the stack of televisions— what can be understood as the back stage. Prior to his homecoming, as Jieun Rhee also argues, Paik

⁴⁵⁸ This was an often-intended element of Paik’s work. As Hanhardt and Mellencamp have also argued, “Paik’s work is reciprocal and experiential, a *process* that completes itself *through our response*. . . . It’s not that the work speaks best for itself, but that it always speaks with us—no matter who we are.” Mellencamp, “The Old and the New: Nam June Paik,” 43. Italics in original.

⁴⁵⁹ Paik, quoted in Fargier, “White Magic,” 10.

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁴⁶² For an account on Paik’s respect for the audience, see Mellencamp, “The Old and the New: Nam June Paik,” 43.

had continuously negotiated his Asian identity within the avant-garde art world of the West as a “cultural terrorist,” “yellow peril,” and a “Zen master”—but not specifically as a Korean.⁴⁶³ With the 1990 ritual event, however, Paik organized a particular presentation of himself as Korean.

Scholarship on Paik has also come to reflect such a divided self-presentation. When discussing Paik’s works prior to 1988, particularly those produced during his years in New York, it is difficult to consider them without referring to his academic background in Japan, his affiliation with Japanese avant-garde artists and engineers, and his engagement with Sony Corporation. His relationship with Japan has been emphasized far more than that with South Korea, an interest highlighted further by, for instance, his collaboration with Japanese engineer Shuya Abe in creating the *Paik/Abe Synthesizer* (1969). Following Paik’s grandiose homecoming to South Korea, however, scholarship on his later works primarily focus on his Korean ethnicity, the artist’s incorporation of Korean culture and tradition in his works, his affiliation with conglomerates including Samsung, and his family background in Korea. In particular, his family’s pro-Japanese activities under the colonial order were often omitted completely and had little impact on Paik’s reception when he returned to South Korea. This division in scholarly interest reflects the artist’s own deliberate presentation of his identity—through strategic appropriation and usage of stereotypes—as being aligned with a particular cultural and ethnic category. Paik, once an “Asian” who roamed through the streets of New York, now presented himself as a “Korean” who had finally found his true home.

Here, the artist first appeared in front of the audience as the “yellow peril,” the “yellow skinned” member of Fluxus who had come to South Korea to introduce Beuys and his artistic

⁴⁶³ Rhee, “Performing the Other,” 47-72.

trajectory.⁴⁶⁴ Paik was essentially an racialized outsider, an Asian dressed in a shirt, trousers, and suspenders. The performance, however, moved on to present his new identity as a Korean from the West who was now re-wearing his tradition. Paik smeared white on his skin and wore white over his clothes, a demonstration that fit his name—the word “Paik” means white in Korean. As Fargier called it, the event was a “theater of origins,” a careful presentation of the artist’s nomadic trajectory up to his eventual return to Korea.⁴⁶⁵

To the Korean audience witnessing the event, Paik’s reference to a common ritual practice would have been instantly identifiable and relatable. The artist successfully integrated with the Korean art world by associating himself with a well-known tradition and introduced his practice of happening in a way that all audience members, even those who were exposed to happenings for the first time, would understand with little to no explanation. Paik offered a moment of simultaneity, during which the East and West met with each other. The sensational response that he received indicates that his approach provided a welcome solution to the public’s sense of urgency to enter the global art scene as a subjective, independent participant. In such context, Paik’s ritual was a strategic performance to ensure that his return to South Korea was not seen as that of a complete outsider who found his roots solely in the Euro-American tradition, but instead as a moment of genuine homecoming, wherein the nomad declared that this was his origin.

⁴⁶⁴ Paik introduced himself as the “yellow peril” in a letter (1963-4) written to George Maciunas. The sketched words, signed by Paik, reads as “Yellow Peril! C’est moi.” For a discussion of the metaphor “the yellow peril” itself, see Doobo Shim, “Yellow Peril through Model Minority to Renewed Yellow Peril,” in *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (1998): 385–409; Fargier, “White Magic,” 18.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid.

4.4.1 *Chongro Cross* (1991)

In *The Ballad of East and West* (1889), Rudyard Kipling laments: “East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet.”⁴⁶⁶ Paik refuted this proposal with *Bye Bye Kipling* (1986), wherein he linked Seoul, Tokyo, and New York through a live satellite broadcast. Throughout his practices, the artist had positioned himself as a mediator between humanity and technology and the East and West, often accentuating this presentation through the incorporation of Korean shamanic traditions. However, Paik’s performance in Seoul was not the first time that he utilized shamanism in his practices: he hung a bull’s head, still dripping blood, over the entrance of the Galerie Parnass, Wuppertal for his first solo exhibition, performed a ritual to mourn the memorable death of *Robot K-456* after it was hit by a car, and sprayed rice and paint over objects on multiple occasions. Throughout his artistic career, Paik also often incorporated the figure of the *mudang*, including in *Guadalcanal Requiem* (1977), *Good Morning, Mr. Orwell* (1984), *Global Groove* (1973), and *Wrap Around the World* (2000).

The strategic embodiment of a particular cultural legacy in *À Pas de Loup* was thus not new to Paik.⁴⁶⁷ For one, Zen had been a convenient strategy for Paik to attract the attention of

⁴⁶⁶ Kingsley Amis, *Rudyard Kipling and His World* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1975), 54.

⁴⁶⁷ Koonyong Kim also discussed how Paik’s early career in music sought to “recast and reconfigure Korean music through Schönberg’s modern techniques. Such an abstract and depersonalized form of Western musical modernism was not completely without strategic advantages, in that it allowed Paik to avoid copying Japan’s traditional music and to rationalize and ‘modernize’ Korea’s musical conventions.” As Kim argued, however, “Paik’s postcolonial project of revitalizing Korean music through Schönberg’s dodecaphonic music in the cultural landscape of postwar Japan was not entirely successful as it involved embracing Western culture in favor of the former colonizer’s culture (in this case, Japanese culture).” Koonyong Kim, “Rewriting the Origin of New Media: History and Postcoloniality in Nam June Paik’s Video Art,” in *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity*, Vol. 6, No. 11 (November 2016), 897.

Western viewers who, according to Rhee, had “presumed the cultural legacy of Zen was something imbedded in his Asian body.”⁴⁶⁸ Rhee elaborates, noting that:

On the one hand, Zen worked in Paik’s favor, paving his way to the core of the Western avant-garde circle; his Asian body gained salience from its obvious exoticism. On the other hand, these features of Otherness within the ethnic and cultural frame of the West became a disadvantage to the artist in presenting his originality. ...[However,] Paik’s Asian body after all inserted itself quite successfully in the narrative of Western avant-garde art. Allan Kaprow called Paik a ‘cultural terrorist.’ And indeed, we have seen that Paik presented his Asian body as a threat, ‘a yellow peril’ to Western music, decorum, and even items of clothing, destroying the aura of refined musical performances with foreign thoughts and sounds.⁴⁶⁹

Paik had earlier asserted his Otherness, responding to Orientalism with self-Orientalism, to negotiate with preexisting binaries and carve his space in-between. He self-positioned himself as a mediator between the East and West, making use of a preexisting constructed idea of the East through his work. Paik’s post-homecoming emphasis on Koreanness was not a dramatic shift in his approach, but rather a continuation of a tactic that he had employed during his years with Fluxus. The difference was that this time, he instead formulated and utilized an image of the West, because he was now in the “East”—that is, South Korea. He mediated between the two binary categories of East and West that each attempted to lay claim on his identity, presenting himself as a Korean from the West, a liminal subject who was both and neither.

What had changed for Paik with his return to Korea was not his approach, but rather his primary audience. Paik commented on his attention to the Korean audience in “Aesthetics of Bibim-bab (a rice hash)—The Art of Post Industry Era” (1995), written for the Korean newspaper *Chosun Ilbo*: “If someone asks what is more important, ‘seller’ or ‘buyer’ in art, I

⁴⁶⁸ Rhee, “Performing the Other,” 53.

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 53-4.

would reply without hesitation that ‘buyer’ is by far more important. Also, I am confident that there are many exemplary ‘buyers’ in [South] Korea.”⁴⁷⁰ However, this outlook was not how the artist had always considered the country. As scholars have often noted, Paik maintained a complicated relationship with his birthplace, often referring to it as an “under-developed,”⁴⁷¹ “backward country.”⁴⁷² Accordingly, the inclusion of Korean culture in Paik’s work primarily focused on depictions of the past, with particular emphasis on the time that he and his family had lived in Seoul. After his return to South Korea, the artist reevaluated his relationship with this audience, as Gregory Zinman also notes:

Even as he was hailed as a hero in his homeland—Carol Brandenburg, who produced the satellite pieces, recalls Paik being received as a ‘huge celebrity,’ in Korea, and mentions that she and Paik dined with the mayor of Seoul when they were planning *Kipling*—the artist seemed to revel in positioning his work between East and West, so that ‘Cage and Korean pottery,’ for example, could become a subset of a late-1960s proposal regarding ‘Comparative Aesthetics,’ or Joseph Beuys’s numinous practice could be linked to Mongolian and Korean shamanism.⁴⁷³

The artist’s desire to create a link between East and West, or Beuys and Korean shamanism, was a recurrent theme throughout several of his works and writings.⁴⁷⁴ An example that immediately

⁴⁷⁰ Nam June Paik, “Aesthetics of Bibim-bab (a rice hash)—The Art of Post Industry Era,” originally published in Korean (partially in Chinese and English) in the *Chosun Ilbo* (January 1, 1995), reprinted in *We Are in Open Circuits*, 329-32, quoted in *ibid.*, 329.

⁴⁷¹ Nam June Paik, “I Lived only one year in Munich,” in Josef Anton Riedl, ed., *Neue Musik, Sondernummer zum Kunstprogramm der Olympischen Spiele* (Munich: Druckerei Holzinger, 1972), 58, reprinted in *We Are in Open Circuits*.

⁴⁷² Nam June Paik, “DNA is not racism,” originally in Nam June Paik, *Jos Decock: dessins et aquarelles* (Paris: Château de Nemours, 1988), reprinted in *We Are in Open Circuits*.

⁴⁷³ Gregory Zinman, “This Script is Not Final, and is Subject to Changes: Nam June Paik between Page and Screen,” in *We Are in Open Circuits*, 78.

⁴⁷⁴ For instance, Paik included the written enactment of a ritual ceremony, titled “Spirit-Media-Kut,” in the exhibition catalogue for *À Pas de Loup*. See Paik, “Spirit-Media-Kut,” in *À Pas de Loup*, 46.

followed the 1990 performance was Paik's sculptural installation *Chongro Cross* (1991), which included objects that had been used in the ritual the year before.

Chongro Cross (Fig. 32) was titled after the Jongno district in Seoul, where his family's textile factory had been based during Paik's childhood. The installation combined video, photography, film, and objects meant for ancestral worship in order to exhibit memories of the artist's ancestral and artistic origins.⁴⁷⁵ The piece was organized in the form of a shrine, with ceremonial objects placed on the floor in front of a grid-like structure consisting of videos mounted on the wall. The square-shaped grid was composed of four photographs and eight video monitors that played what Paik referred to as "the first P.R. films" for his father's textile factory.⁴⁷⁶ Paik intermixed the old films produced in 1929 with a color video that shows him, dressed in a traditional Korean costume, wandering the streets of Seoul with a wooden carrier on his back.⁴⁷⁷ These wooden carriers are also placed on the ground in *Chongro Cross* as part of the installation. Called *jigae* in Korean, the wooden carrier was traditionally used in Korea to carry everyday luggage, which included anything from harvested rice to textiles. In the color video, however, Paik is seen carrying several globes instead of food or luggage. At one point, the video monitor shows Paik walking through the bustling city streets of Seoul transporting these globes; the screen then cuts to a grainy black-and-white footage of the old streets of Seoul where a man is seen transporting what seems to be food on a wooden carrier. The screen continues to transition between past and present, visualizing how Paik's carrying of "worlds" on his back, a representation of his nomadic trajectory, is related to his ancestral lineage in Seoul.

⁴⁷⁵ Jans, "Nam June Paik: Kinship, Collaboration, and Commemoration."

⁴⁷⁶ Ken Hakuta, interviewed by Rachel Jans (March 15, 2015), quoted in *ibid.*

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

This genealogical association is further reinforced with the positive and negative versions of two photographs that are positioned at the four corners of the grid. One of them is a photograph of Paik as a baby sitting on his father's lap; the other is a photograph of Paik's grandfather dressed in traditional Korean attire. The placement of the four photographs, set amongst vibrantly flashing video monitors, evokes Frederic Jameson's description of Paik's multi-channel video art:

...hosts of closed frames (stacks of 'discontinuous' TV sets with their 'autonomous' images) are brought to life simultaneously. Such 'texts' thus project an impossible new type of perception: you cannot simply follow one video image and ignore the others, nor can you watch them all at once. ...something like the impossible synthesis of both those perspectives is what the text demands and withholds, and this can fittingly stand as an allegorical emblem for the motto, Difference relates.⁴⁷⁸

Three generations of different times coexist within the grid as the screens chaotically alternate between past and present, playing and rewinding repeatedly, and confuse the viewer's perception of linear time. The work can be further understood through Alison Weaver's argument that after the year 1964, Paik viewed photographs as "a continuous feedback loop, a two-way system of communication."⁴⁷⁹ As Weaver noted: "For Paik, the image, whether still or moving, is not fixed, but is an interactive vehicle, a link in the circuit of energy required to engage in productive dialogue."⁴⁸⁰ Various moments from Paik's life, from a baby to an artist "carrying worlds," continue to play in a loop as the video monitors sit within a larger loop—a grid that has no beginning nor ending, which can start anywhere and ends nowhere.

⁴⁷⁸ Fredric Jameson, *Jameson on Jameson: Conversations on Cultural Marxism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 29.

⁴⁷⁹ Weaver, "Nam June Paik: The Photograph as Active Circuit," 16.

⁴⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 20.

It gradually becomes clear to the viewer, however, that everything takes place in Seoul. Paik's past and present, as well as his genealogy, differ in time but share the same location. The artist's placement of a fedora hat made from cement, which he had used in the 1990 event, within the grid symbolizes that Paik brought Beuys to Seoul. *À Pas de Loup* had been meant to spiritually bring Beuys to Paik's birthplace; with *Chongro Cross*, Beuys was now resting inside a shrine or altar, under which ceremonial objects were being offered. By reading *Chongro Cross* in relation to the 1990 ritual performance, I propose that Paik's purpose was to visualize his moment of homecoming. Paik had argued for his position as a mediator between the East and West with works such as *Bye Bye Kipling* (1986). In *Chongro Cross*, the East refers to his ancestral origins, Paik's father and grandfather from Seoul who had prompted the artist's life as a nomad; the West represents his artistic origins, from the moment he had discovered Schönberg when he was fifteen to his fateful meeting with Beuys.⁴⁸¹ The East and West that meet at this crosswalk are not vague and all-encompassing concepts, but both refer to very specific memories for the artist. Contrary to Kipling, for Paik the East and West were not binary concepts, and *Chongro Cross* functions as a shamanic space within which his origins coexist.⁴⁸² The work exhibited that Paik had returned to Seoul, the East where his grandfather had once produced "the

⁴⁸¹ Paik had first been introduced to Arnold Schönberg, "Opus 31," which sparked his interest in art and composition. This topic later evolved into his graduation thesis at Tokyo University. In 1956, Paik moved to West Germany to study Western classical and modernist traditions, and in 1958 met his mentor John Cage, who inspired his relocation to the United States. Mellencamp, "The Old and the New: Nam June Paik," 41.

⁴⁸² For the idea that we are all interrelated through shamanism, see Paik, "Spirit-Media-Kut," in *À Pas de Loup*, 46. On this note, Hanhardt observed that: "To Paik, the real and imagined confluence of Central Europe and the East (read Korea) becomes the basis for him to return to his origins, with the assertion that he never left (or we never left) since we are all linked in a shamanistic myth origin, binding ourselves and our ancestors in a global continental drift of cultures and peoples." John G. Hanhardt, "Nam June Paik: In a Global Groove, From Korea to American and Back Again," in The National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, *Nam June Paik. Videotime. Videospace* (Seoul: AP International, 1992), 104.

first P.R. films” and the artist himself now produced video art, while bringing worlds on his back, including Beuys and his experiences in the West. I understand *Chongro Cross* as not only paying homage to his close friend Beuys, but to Paik himself as well by revisiting his roots; this intersection of memories functioned as yet another “theater of origins.”

4.5 *The Tiger Lives* (1999)

Paik’s institutional popularity in post-liberation South Korea depended on how the image of global space had been formulated by the late 1980s, or what Gabriel called “a prominent trope in contemporary artworks and commercial images produced internationally in anticipation of the Seoul Olympics.”⁴⁸³ A continuation of Paik’s narrative of global unity that had accompanied the 1988 Olympics appeared with *The Tiger Lives* (1999) (Fig. 33), a work produced in anticipation of the new millennium. The work brought together a wide range of footage from Paik’s past trajectory, including his classic videotapes and recordings of Fluxus happenings, intermixed with new material prepared for the work. The video also included recent footage of Paik after his stroke but undeterred by it, continuing to actively engage in artistic practices. Now sitting in a wheelchair, Paik is seen painting the word “tiger” in Korean onto furniture with white paint. He then proceeds to draw in the face of a tiger, its shape closely resembling that of a television with its ears substituting antennas. Later, the video shows a female shaman dancing and praying at a *gut*; midway, the screen begins to slow down and blur, with multiple afterimages gradually overlapping one another. The footage is looped slightly to create an illusion in which different moments in time seem to occur simultaneously. This overlapping gradually intensifies as the

⁴⁸³ Gabriel, “From Seoul to the World,” 190.

ritual proceeds, and the perception of linear time breaks down as familiar scenes from Paik's past work—the dancers in *Global Groove*, Charlotte Moorman performing with Paik, an interview with John Cage, and Paik pounding on a piano with his forearms and fists—are intermixed with the shaman's slow dancing.

This elaborate presentation of Paik's past and present in the face of an upcoming future was commissioned to be broadcast during South Korea's millennium celebration⁴⁸⁴ and began to play right after the Peace Bell at Imjingak Park was struck 21 times at midnight.⁴⁸⁵ *The Tiger Lives* was created for the special exhibition *DMZ 2000: The Millennium Celebration*, which celebrated the coming of the new millennium on December 31, 1999. The event was organized by the Millennium Preparatory Committee of the Presidential Advisory Council, chaired by Eo-ryeong Lee who had earlier directed the opening and closing ceremonies for the 1988 Olympics, and the 21st Century Research Institute of Arts Management, chaired by Lee Dong-il who was responsible for the overall planning of the millennial exhibition.⁴⁸⁶ *DMZ 2000* occurred at the outdoor stage of Imjingak Park, located nearby the Military Demarcation Line, and was broadcast live to 87 countries by satellite through BBC and PBS. Tens of thousands of postcards

⁴⁸⁴ The television broadcast, however, was a shortened version lasting 14 minutes, while the international broadcast of the work was only 3 minutes long.

⁴⁸⁵ The government's official introduction to the site is as following: "Imjingak Resort, located 7 km from the Military Demarcation Line, is now at the forefront of tourism related to the Korean War. Imjingak was built in 1972 with the hope that someday unification would be possible. The three-storied Imjingak is surrounded by several monuments, Unification Park and North Korea Center. In front of Imjingak is the Gyeongui Train Line which was destroyed during the Korean War in 1950. It has been under reconstruction since 2000. Every year many events for unification are held at Imjingak. It is now one of the more famous DMZ tourist spots for foreigners because it is possible to visit without going through any security check points." The Peace Bell is introduced as following: "The Peace Bell was built in 2000 to pray for peace of the human race and national unification in celebration of the new millennium. Symbolizing the 21st century, it was built with 21 stairs and in the weight of 21 tons." Gyeonggi Province, "DMZ/IMJINGAK," *Gyeonggi Province*, accessed November 30, 2019, <https://english.gg.go.kr/dmz-imjingak/>.

⁴⁸⁶ Hong-hee Kim, "After Seeing Nam June Paik's 'Tiger...' at 'DMZ 2000,'" *Jungang Ilbo* (January 4, 2000), accessed November 30, 2019, <https://news.joins.com/article/3861168>. In Korean.

were scattered over the audience on which children from all over the world had written their wishes for the new century.⁴⁸⁷ The event was subtitled “A Ritual for Unification in the New Millennium,” and sought to deliver a message of peace and harmony to a global audience, hence Paik’s production of a video ritual.

DMZ 2000 brought together the various elements of Paik’s work that I have discussed in this chapter. First, it sought to bring East and West together. *The Tiger Lives* was mounted on two large video sculptures; one sculpture was in the shape of a cello, the other a *bipa*—a traditional pear-shaped lute.⁴⁸⁸ The cello symbolized Paik’s past career in the West, which gained recognition with *Opera Sextronique* (1967), performed with cellist Charlotte Moorman. The *bipa* represented the Eastern equivalent of the cello, symbolizing Paik’s present and future in the East. Second, the event was broadcast live internationally, anticipating an opportunity to boast South Korea’s advancement into the new millennium. The exhibition shared the ideologies of the 1988 Olympics, in many ways continuing on with the global dream that the earlier event had proposed. Third, the millennial celebration also involved a shamanic performance *A gut*, based on the same type of ritual as Paik’s in 1990, was held by several *mudang* who danced and prayed for spirits of the world. Fourth, the idea of the *bojagi* came to symbolize the nation’s advancement into the new century through a performance titled *Pojagi* [*sic*], conceived and directed by Ping Chong (1946–). According to Chong, *Pojagi* is the fourth part of his East-West Quartet:

⁴⁸⁷ Seong-ho Paik, “Nam June Paik’s ‘DMZ 2000’: What Happens,” *Jungang Ilbo* (December 10, 1999), accessed November 30, 2019, <https://news Joins.com/article/3851279>. In Korean.

⁴⁸⁸ The instrument spread from China (*pipa*) to Korea (*bipa*) and Japan (*biwa*), with slight variations in shape and sound.

Pojagi is a prismatic exploration of Korean history from the 16th century to the dawn of the 21st century, focusing primarily of relations with Japan and the United States. Inspired by traditional Korean shamanistic rituals, *Pojagi* was devised as a theatrical rite of discovery and longing, a summoning of the dead to give witness to the present. Eyewitness testimonies of early encounters between Europeans and Koreans, a succession of Japanese occupations, the assassination of Korea's Queen Min, the arbitrary partition of the peninsula at the dawn of the Cold War, and reflections on the delicate ecosystem of the demilitarized zone combine to tell the tale of an indomitable people and embattled land.⁴⁸⁹

Pojagi enveloped the aforementioned ideas, from the meeting of East and West to shamanic presentations of tradition, offering a glimpse of what was underneath the wrapping cloth of Koreanness.

The "Korea" that the exhibition largely spoke of was not limited to South Korea. Symbolically installed near the Demilitarized Zone dividing the peninsula, *The Tiger Lives* envisioned Paik's hope for the unification of the two Koreas. The video reveals that the tiger here refers specifically to those of the Kumgang Mountains located in North Korea. In the video, Paik writes the words "Kumgang Tiger" in Korean beneath his drawing of one and also draws a mountain with the word "Kumgang Mountain" written in Korean under it. The Kumgang Tiger is a well-known figure in Korean folklore, appearing throughout various cultural traditions, from fairytales to paintings. *The Tiger Lives* flashes through a lengthy series of historical artworks that depict the Kumgang Tiger, which Paik intermixed with footage of a live tiger running and crawling through the woods. This tiger, native to North Korea, has come to represent a memory of the unified Korea for South Koreans who are no longer able to visit the region. The word "tiger" also commonly refers to the Korean peninsula as a whole, a popular symbol that has

⁴⁸⁹ Ping Chong, "Pojagi," *Ping Chong*, accessed December 4, 2019, <https://www.pingchong.org/interdisciplinary-performance/production-archive/pojagi/>.

appeared throughout history.⁴⁹⁰ Thus the work's title spoke to both the ongoing presence of this memory in the minds of the Korean public as well as the fact that, despite remaining inaccessible across the border, the tiger continues to live.⁴⁹¹

4.6 Conclusion

Paik's last video sculpture is titled *Ommah* (2005) (Fig. 34), which means "mom" or "mommy" in Korean.⁴⁹² The work, which John G. Hanhardt described as "a poetic and evocative expression of hope and renewal for Korea, his homeland,"⁴⁹³ was created a year before the artist passed away. *Ommah* consists of a one-channel video installation on a 19-inch LCD monitor, with an apricot-colored traditional Korean silk robe called a *durumagi* mounted on a bamboo pole and draped over the monitor. The last name "PAIK" is inscribed at the bottom of the robe, which is hung like a scarecrow. According to Ken Hakuta (b. 1951), Paik's nephew and executor of the artist's estate, *Ommah* represented both Paik's mother and his motherland, as the title also suggests. Hakuta noted that Paik purchased the *durumagi*, assumed to be from the 19th century,

⁴⁹⁰ The Korean peninsula is commonly referred to as being shaped like a tiger, with this imagery appearing throughout Korean history in various artworks and cultural productions.

⁴⁹¹ The two gigantic sculptures were both over five meters tall and over two meters long, standing with the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) as their backdrop. *DMZ 2000* took place during the era of the "Sunshine Policy," which refers to South Korea's foreign policy towards the North that took place from 1998 to 2007. Articulated by president Dae Jung Kim, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2000 for his successful implementation of it, the policy resulted in significant moments in inter-Korean relations. However, as curator Sunjung Kim explained on the topic of the Korean DMZ: "Despite what its name might suggest, the Demilitarized Zone that surrounds the military demarcation line between the South and the North is an area of sustained tension, with both sides held in a heavily armed and ongoing standoff." The de-facto border barrier that divides the Korean Peninsula persists as a major player in South Korea's national and international conflicts, continuing to divide the "homeland" that the diasporic artist dreamt of. Sunjung Kim, "REAL DMZ PROJECT 2013," *Samuso*, accessed April 17, 2014, <http://realdmz.org/project/2013/curatorial-essay-eng>.

⁴⁹² I thank Anton Lee for bringing this to my attention.

⁴⁹³ John G. Hanhardt, quoted in Kim Lee, "Avant-garde Becomes Nationalism," 162.

while roaming antique stores in New York in his wheelchair.⁴⁹⁴ Through the lightweight, translucent silk, images flash by on the monitor, in which three Korean girls in traditional dresses continue to dance, play, and run around. At one point, the girls call out to their mother, saying “*ommah*.” The monitor is positioned within the robe where a womb would be, indicating that it represents the origin of Paik’s memories. In particular, the work is about childhood memories in Seoul, with the colorfully dyed *durumagi* functioning as a reminder of both Paik’s mother and his family’s textile business.

Ommah was first shown at the 49-day memorial of Paik’s death held in Seoul. Paik passed away in Miami on January 29, 2006, at the age of 73. His funeral was held at the Frank Campbell Funeral Chapel in New York City, where major Fluxus and video artists came together to see his departure. Per Paik’s request, his ashes were buried in the 10 countries that were significant to his life as an artist. His final burial place was in South Korea, following Paik’s announcement at a press conference earlier in 2004: “I wish to go back to Korea and be buried there.”⁴⁹⁵ This project of homecoming continued even after his death, with the Korean art world welcoming his ashes with nationwide events to commemorate his posthumous return. Despite his United States citizenship and transnational career, the Korean art world understood South Korea to be his one true home and welcomed his ashes by hosting a series of public memorial ceremonies that were covered by the media extensively as the return of “a genius artist.”⁴⁹⁶ The

⁴⁹⁴ Hankyung, “Paik Nam June’s Final Work ‘Ommah,’ Sold to the National Gallery of Art, Washington,” in The Korea Economic Daily, *Hankyung*, accessed February 20, 2020, <https://www.hankyung.com/life/article/2010042171101>. In Korean.

⁴⁹⁵ Nam June Paik, quoted in Kim Lee, “Avant-garde Becomes Nationalism,” 150.

⁴⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 150.

ashes were brought to be kept at Bongeun-sa, a Buddhist temple in Seoul, where a large banner reading “Welcome Home, Nam June Paik,” in both Korean and English, was placed.

The 49-day memorial was a nationwide celebration of Paik’s return that occurred in multiple locations and involved a wide range of activities, such as shamanic rituals, Buddhist funerary prayers, and artistic reenactments of his early happenings. For instance, artist Hwan Ryu reenacted Paik’s *Hommage à John Cage: Music for Tape Recorder and Piano* (1959) in the city of Daejeon, beating a piano with a hammer. At Bongeun-sa, Ken Paik Hakuta dragged a violin on a string to recall Paik’s *Action With a Violin on a String* (1961), and a copy of *The More the Better* (1988) was made out of cloth and installed at the temple grounds. These commemorative performances all spoke to the ongoing significance of Paik and his work to South Korea. On this matter, Esther Kim Lee’s study of Paik’s “posthumous homecoming” argues that he “epitomized the modern Korean hero” for the Korean public, which is ironic when considering that he was from a family perceived to be an enemy of Korea, “the polar opposite of the image of a national hero.”⁴⁹⁷ Paik was instead emphasized as “a cosmopolitan who left [Korea] for artistic navigation”⁴⁹⁸ and as an artist who had utilized his Koreanness in achieving international recognition.

There exists a disjuncture between the literature on Paik before and after 1988, with interpretations of his artistic approach differing substantially. To resolve this divided understanding, the artist should be understood as having responded specifically to the diasporic experience that he underwent, which consisted of nomadic flights repeated throughout different

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid., 150.

⁴⁹⁸ Yong-do Chung, “Nam June Paik’s Video Art and Buddhism,” in *The Buddhist Review*, Vol. 26 (2006), quoted in Kim Lee, “Avant-garde Becomes Nationalism,” 157.

counties and cultures. Contrary to how the Korean media portrayed the artist's return to his motherland, and despite the permanent identity as Korean that was associated with him even posthumously, the dilemma of Paik's homecoming was that he could never truly reach his home. The stationary nomad still remained in motion as the motherland he dreamt of was ultimately an imaginary one. Paik continuously referenced his childhood and ancestral lineage when discussing home, as in *Ommah*. The always playful, ever-childlike Paik wished to return the home of his memories, to a Korea of the past, and attempted to reach it through various means, from looping videos to shamanic rituals. Paik's portrayal of his birthplace always focused on its tradition and myths, speaking to a unified Korea that maintained an essentially Korean identity, while his presentations used the latest technological means.

Following President Kim Young Sam's declaration for Korea's age of globalization in 1993, Paik began to spearhead the introduction of Western avant-garde art to the Korean art world. According to Esther Kim Lee, his reputation as a "genius artist" steadily grew throughout the 1990s: "he was a leading figure in bringing the Whitney Biennial in Asia to Seoul and helped establish a Korean pavilion at the Venice Biennale. Also in 1993, he was vital in organizing the Seoul Fluxus Festival."⁴⁹⁹ Paik criticized the country's protectionist and conservative tendencies, arguing for a more cosmopolitan perspective through advanced information technology. Despite criticism towards the artist's heavy emphasis on Westernization and capitalistic globalization, as Kim Lee asserts, "by the mid-1990s, he was an icon that represented the nation and its new identity."⁵⁰⁰ Not only was Paik in the future, bringing together past and present through

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid., 154.

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid., 154.

technology, he *was* the future for South Korea, just like his tower of television monitors represented the country in *Wrap Around the World*. Although existing scholarship most often introduces Paik based on his nationality as either a Korean artist or the first global artist, Paik's diasporic status is better understood when considering the distinction between the Korea that Paik yearned for and the Korea that he actually returned to. This chapter has therefore sought to allow for a more comprehensive approach to his nomadic career, one that accounts for the transitory year of 1988 as a significant part of his artistic trajectory.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

As *Ommah* gained recognition after Paik passed away in 2006, it became the lens through which Korean art historians narrated and perceived the artist's life. In January 2007, the Korea Minting and Security Printing Corporation released a series of official stamps featuring four of Paik's works: *Ommah*, *Megatron/Matrix*, *TV Buddha*, and *The More the Better*. In total, 450,000 copies of each stamp were printed to commemorate the first anniversary of Paik's death. Compared to his other three videos, the relatively less-discussed *Ommah* was featured on a national commemorative stamp. This suggests that the South Korean public related more to *Ommah* than to his earlier Fluxus performances or to works such as *TV Bra for Living Sculpture* (1969). As Esther Kim Lee summarizes, "Abroad, Paik is commemorated as an avant-garde 'cultural terrorist,' but in [South] Korea, he is a prodigal son who finally came home."⁵⁰¹ The artist's return to his motherland was the focal point of interest for the Korean art world, and thus works that promoted a sense of nostalgia and emphasized Paik's cultural identity as a Korean-born artist resonated most with the general public. Widespread Korean acknowledgment of *Ommah*'s significance also reflects a nationalistic perspective that placed more emphasis on Paik's role as a mediator between South Korea and the world. He was perceived as leveraging telecommunication technology to support the country's economic development and cultural recognition. This demonstrates that the significance of homeland in the Korean diasporas contributes, through works of art, to the development of economic strategies in a globalized financial market. In such a situation, communication and media entities appropriate artistic

⁵⁰¹ Ibid., 162.

strategies and practices, which highlights the value of diasporic art for understanding where South Korea is situated politically today.

This dissertation offers a major contribution to the fields of Art History and Asian studies in that it connects the two fields through an exploration into Korean diasporic art and an examination of the negotiations undertaken in the works by three late-20th-century artists. These artists' works reveal the complexity of the Korean diaspora in the 20th century in regards to Japanese, American, and European cultures that they encountered. Their artistic expressions form vivid records of their memories and experiences navigating through the complicated history of diasporic formations.

Numerous members of Korean diasporas engaged in multidisciplinary cultural practices, as evidenced in existing scholarship. However, such expressions have most often been examined separately, according to different fields of study. For example, Cha's *Dictée* and her artist's books have rarely been examined collectively; the former has been studied extensively in the fields of Asian studies, history, and literature, while the latter have often been examined independently as art objects by art historians. By examining Cha's works through the lens of both Korean and Korean American literature as well as the discipline of Art History, we can better comprehend Cha's artistic expressions, which refused to be bound to a single genre or category, and also honour her wish to be perceived from multiple directions in diverse ways.⁵⁰² Similarly, Son's *Landscape of Body* has never been discussed in relation to his other works. His approach to art is more comprehensively understood when examined through the lenses of both art history, which accounts for the avant-garde art scene within which he was active in both

⁵⁰² Lewallen, "Introduction: Theresa Hak Kyung Cha," 13.

Japan and South Korea, and Asian studies, which extensively traces the history of *zainichi* communities and their experiences. We can also better understand Paik's oeuvre when both Asian Studies and Art History are considered together; such an approach allows for an investigation into the disjuncture between his practices before and after his return to South Korea. Paik's practices before his return have been studied extensively in scholarship on American and Korean art, while his work after his return has been examined more frequently in studies on Korean history and culture in relation to the 1988 Seoul Olympics and postwar economic development. By connecting seemingly disparate narratives, this dissertation has sought to achieve a better understanding of contemporary Korean art as responding to specific moments in Korean history, both within the peninsula and in diasporic communities.

Furthermore, this dissertation's organic analysis has sought to weave existing studies together, allowing for a better understanding of diasporic subjects' multidisciplinary and experimental processes. Son, Cha, and Paik absorbed and were shaped by the diverse cultures and practices that they encountered in their different trajectories, engaging in multiple forms of artistic production in search of ways to express their experiences of existing in an in-between. In this text, I have identified the connections between the artists' diverse works and their interpretations, drawing on Art History and Asian Studies literature to explore the artists' works comparatively rather than in isolation. Such a comprehensive analysis of the complexity of diasporic art given each artist's unique environment speaks to its significance within the larger context of Korean, Japanese, and Asian American Art History. In particular, I have emphasized that the "Koreanness" that is either imposed on or actively pursued by an artist is not the same for all artists. This Koreanness shifts according to an artist's social, political, and cultural context. Although Korean diasporic artists are similar in that they commonly speak of a "home"

or “homeland,” gesturing toward South Korea and its art world, I have demonstrated that they have each referred to quite different “homes.” One can better understand diasporic artists and their practices by focusing on their specificities, rather than generalizing them into a single, unifying category of Korean Diaspora.

Chapter 2 has examined how artistic expressions of the diasporic experience have been incorporated into postwar discourses of “Koreanness” and “Japaneseness.” Artists both inside and outside of South Korea have engaged with the question of cultural identity, either associating themselves with contemporary ideas of “Koreanness” and “Japaneseness” or completely negating their significance. Through a historical overview of how and why the two concepts maintain a crucial role in the development of Korean modern and contemporary art, I have examined how such nationalistic emphases on cultural identity were extended to understandings of diasporic Koreans as well. Son’s perspective differed from other major artists of his time in that he was most explicit in expressing his identity as a *zainichi* artist, distancing himself from many of his peers. My case study on Son’s practices has focused on his involuntary existence in-between different cultures and nations. He identified himself as a *zainichi* artist, as part of a minority group deprived of legal and national status in Japan, who remained unable to return “home” because the imagined homeland of “Korea” no longer exists as a physical location.

Chapter 3 has expanded on this examination of an in-between status by focusing on Cha’s work, which addresses invisible social, cultural, national, and geographical boundaries on U.S. soil. Through a concentration on language, Cha connected her experience as a diasporic subject to the complicated history of Japanese colonialism in Korea, the U.S.’s role in the Korean War, and the subsequent partition of the peninsula. Refusing to idealize the notion of “home” as a static, fixed location, the artist argued that the idea of origin is a construct that is mediated and

dictated through language. This chapter has also explored how Cha contested popular notions of origin and commented on colonial history as she experienced it—mediated through the dominant languages that she herself confronted as a Korean American immigrant. As her works vividly depict, she remained in constant motion between different homes, confronting denial and alienation. Although she eventually secured a legal and physical home, Cha continued to perceive herself as existing in-between her new and old homes and the memories associated with them.

Finally, Chapter 4 has examined the reason behind South Korea's national emphasis on Paik as a global Korean artist. His visit to South Korea was celebrated as a return to his true home and a rediscovery of his true cultural identity. Paik's grandiose homecoming marked a significant turning point in his career, but the homeland that he returned to continuously demanded that he grapple with his foreign position in front of a Korean audience. Paik responded to such demands by presenting himself as a shamanic mediator between the two disparate fields of art, as a cultural liaison between "Western" and "Eastern" art. In his case, cultural identity acted as a strategic tool for promoting global success and the assimilation of new territories. As expressed in Paik's works tracing his return to South Korea, diasporic experiences became a means through which artists could secure their position in the Korean art world. In response to the many cultural and racial discriminations that he faced throughout his journey across the globe, Paik maintained an active status in multiple art worlds, deliberately positioning himself as an in-between subject.

By examining each artist's individual experience, I have underlined the diversity of diasporic identities, rather than considering them under an overarching category of "Korean Diaspora." In this way, I have aimed to dismantle the concept of a single diaspora, drawing

attention to experiences that do not readily fit into a linear narrative of colonialism, independence, displacement, and return. I have brought attention to the complex existences and in-between experiences that often go overlooked by mainstream narratives. This dissertation's understanding of diaspora is reflected in Cha's words in *Dictée*: "Our destination is fixed on the perpetual motion of search. Fixed in its perpetual exile."⁵⁰³

In approaching each artist through the lens of diaspora, I have discovered that, contrary to depictions in existing literature, the three artists discussed in this text were acutely aware of their inability to return to their desired homelands. The realization of the impossibility of return drove them to express their experiences through artistic practices meant to mark their existence, highlighting both their in-between and in-motion experiences. The trajectories of these artists' lives differed significantly; each took a different route and traveled to different locations. Throughout their journeys, their "in-between" locations were never identical. Mainstream narratives of these artists fail to address the multiple "Koreas" that these artists longed to return to and that they reference in their work. The notion of returning to the homeland shaped each artist as individuals and artists, guiding them as they attempted to understand what it means to belong, whether through paint and performance, language, or "new media art."

Future research could delve further into the artists' approach to the relationship between language and the diasporic experience. At one point, Cage requested that Paik not correct his grammatical errors when using English. Paik scribbled these words at the bottom of a letter, published in *Radical Software* in 1971: "please, don't correct English Error, John Cage said so

⁵⁰³ Cha, *Dictée*, 81.

[sic].”⁵⁰⁴ Cage was deeply interested in liberating language from the dominance of syntax, and thus perceived grammatical errors as chance happenings that could free sound and form from preexisting meanings. However, as Taehyung Kim also noted, errors in written and spoken language can also mark one’s detachment from a language system, reinforcing a subject’s silence.⁵⁰⁵

Artists have dealt with this detachment in different ways. In *Mouth to Mouth* (1975), Cha highlights the process of learning and practicing a language system; however, the expected phonetic sounding of the Korean vowels as seen on-screen is disrupted by random sounds of running water and static signals. In part, Cha’s work demonstrates how despite the production of sounds, a subject remains incomprehensible and “silent” until language is fully formulated in a prescribed manner. Paik, on the other hand, expressed interest in visualizing sound with electronic waves, presenting an experience of “seeing” music. The artist installed experimental televisions at his first solo show *Exposition of Music – Electronic Television* held in Galerie Parnass in Wuppertal in March 1963. These interactive television monitors responded to audience members stepping on a pedal switch or speaking into a microphone; the screen would generate dots and images in response to the wavelength of the sounds produced. Through an in-depth analysis of such works, future studies could more deeply consider diverse explorations of written, spoken, and visualized language, as well as notions of textuality and orality in relation to the concept of diaspora.

⁵⁰⁴ Nam June Paik, “Letter,” originally published in *Radical Software #3* (1971), reprinted in Judson Rosebush, ed., *Nam June Paik: videa 'n' videology, 1959-1973* (Syracuse, NY: Everson Museum of Art, 1974), n.p.

⁵⁰⁵ Taehyung Kim, “A Nomad in Fluxus: Nam June Paik’s Artwork between the East and West,” in *Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 19 (April 2013): 10-1.

Cage's comment also brings light to the fact that Paik was part of a small group of Asian avant-garde artists active in the Euro-American art world. Most of these artists were Japanese, and Paik was able to distinguish himself as an insider based on his family background and education in Japan. Alongside artists such as Yoko Ono, On Kawara, Yayoi Kusama, and Shigeo Kubota, Paik was able to present himself as an "Oriental" or "Asian" artist, rather than a Korean artist.⁵⁰⁶ Paik strategically positioned himself this way in the 1960s and 1970s by highlighting his connection to Zen Buddhism and his ties to Japanese artists. According to Kim Lee, Paik often referred to Zen philosophy as "ours" alongside Japanese artists, intentionally inserting himself into preexisting categories of race and culture.⁵⁰⁷ Son, on the other hand, had to grapple with his position as a *zainichi* artist and the question of assimilation, remaining aware of his inability to truly become an "insider" of Japan's avant-garde art group. The similarities and differences between Son and Paik's tactics could also be interesting for exploration in future studies.

Additionally, further exploration into Korean diaspora movements alongside the history of art would allow for an even more expansive study of the boundaries and dynamics of Korean modern and contemporary art. Another important aspect that requires further attention is the existence of North Korea and diasporic communities that trace their roots to the North. The tension between the two Koreas and the effect that the in-between border has on diasporas and their art worlds deserve critical consideration in relation to today's international society. Future researchers could identify the boundaries that render certain diasporic groups invisible and thus

⁵⁰⁶ Kim Lee, "Avant-garde Becomes Nationalism," 151; Rhee, "Performing the Other," 47-72.

⁵⁰⁷ Kim Lee, "Avant-garde Becomes Nationalism," 151.

generate possibilities for future artistic practices both within the Korean peninsula and in the larger art world. In conclusion, through three case studies on visual artists exploring their Korean diasporic identities, this dissertation has demonstrated that diaspora communities should be understood as heterogeneous communities, each with their own individual conditions.

Figures

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Figure 1. Son Ah Yoo, *Location of Colors (Iro no ichi)*, 1982. Watercolour and pencil. Collection of the Ha Jung Woong Collection, Yeongam Ha Jung Woong Museum of Art.

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Figure 2. Son Ah Yoo, *Landscape of Body (Shintai no fūkei)*, from *Totsuka, Kanagawa*, 1969. Photograph. Collection of the Gwangju Museum of Art.

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Figure 3. Noboru Takayama, *Drama Underground Zoo (Chika dōbutsu-en)*, 1970. Installation view. Photograph © Tokyo Publishing House, 2012.

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Figure 4. Noboru Takayama, *Drama Underground Zoo (Chika dōbutsu-en)*, 1970. Installation view. Photograph © Tokyo Publishing House, 2012.

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Figure 5. Son Ah Yoo, *Landscape of Body (Shintai no fūkei)*, from *Totsuka, Kanagawa*, 1969. Photograph. Collection of the Gwangju Museum of Art.

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Figure 6. Son Ah Yoo, *Elimination of Form (Keitai no shōkyo)*, 1985. Photograph © Kōrinsha Shuppan, 1997.

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Figure 7. Son Ah Yoo, *Traces of Memory (Kioku no konseki)*, 1984. Oil on canvas. Collection of the Busan Museum of Art.

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Figure 8. Unknown, *Map of Hanyang*, c.1780. Collection of the Seoul Museum of History.

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Figure 9. Lee Ufan, *From Line*, 1974. Oil on canvas. Collection of The Museum of Modern Art.

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Figure 10. Lee Ufan, *From Point*, 1978. Oil on canvas. Collection of The Dallas Museum of Art.

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Figure 11. Son Ah Yoo, *Emerging Object, Sinking Object (Arawareru mono shizumiyuku mono)*, 1976. Oil on canvas. Collection of the Gwangju Museum of Art.

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Figure 12. Tokyo Gallery, *Korea: Five Artists, Five Hinsek 'White,'* 1975. Exhibition view. Photograph © Tokyo Gallery, Tokyo, 1975.

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Figure 13. Son Ah Yoo, *Cobalt Blue (Kobaruto burū)*, 2000. Vegetable paint on paper. Collection of the Gwangju Museum of Art.

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Figure 14. Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Dictée*, 1982. Broadside by Tanam Press. Courtesy of the Theresa Hak Kyung Cha Collection, University of California, Berkeley, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive.

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Figure 15. Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Pomegranate Offering*, 1975. Front cover and excerpts. Courtesy of the Theresa Hak Kyung Cha Collection, University of California, Berkeley, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive.

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Figure 16. Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Presence Absence*, 1975. Courtesy of the Theresa Hak Kyung Cha Collection, University of California, Berkeley, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive.

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Figure 17. Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Permutations*, 1975. Excerpts. Collection of Centre Georges Pompidou.

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Figure 18. Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Commentaire*, 1981. Excerpts. Photograph © University of California Press.

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Figure 19. Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Audience Distant Relative*, 1978. Work on paper, Black ink on 6 white envelopes. Courtesy of the Theresa Hak Kyung Cha Collection, University of California, Berkeley, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive.

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Figure 20. Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Pomegranate Offering*, 1975. Front cover. Courtesy of the Theresa Hak Kyung Cha Collection, University of California, Berkeley, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive.

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Figure 21. Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Pomegranate Offering*, 1975. Excerpts. Courtesy of the Theresa Hak Kyung Cha Collection, University of California, Berkeley, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive.

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Figure 22. Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Father/Mother*, 1977. Detail. Courtesy of the Theresa Hak Kyung Cha Collection, University of California, Berkeley, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive.

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Figure 23. Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Dictée*, 1982. Detail. Photograph © Tanam Press, 1982.

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Figure 24. Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Re Dis Appearing*, 1977. Courtesy of the Theresa Hak Kyung Cha Collection, University of California, Berkeley, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive.

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Figure 25. Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Exilée*, 1980. Installation view. Courtesy of the Theresa Hak Kyung Cha Collection, University of California, Berkeley, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive.

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Figure 26. Nam June Paik, *Good Morning, Mr. Orwell*, 1984. Collection of the Nam June Paik Art Center.

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Figure 27. Nam June Paik, *The More the Better*, 1988. Collection of The Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul.

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Figure 28. Nam June Paik, *Wrap Around the World*, 1988. Collection of the Nam June Paik Art Center.

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Figure 29. Nam June Paik, *À Pas de Loup: de Séoul à Budapest*, 1990. Photograph © Gallery Won, 1990.

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Figure 30. Nam June Paik, *À Pas de Loup: de Séoul à Budapest*, 1990. Photograph © Gallery Won, 1990.

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Figure 31. Nam June Paik, *À Pas de Loup: de Séoul à Budapest*, 1990. Photograph © Gallery Won, 1990.

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Figure 32. Nam June Paik, *Chongro Cross*, 1991. Collection of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

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Figure 33. Nam June Paik, *The Tiger Lives*, 1999. Collection of the Nam June Paik Art Center.

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Figure 34. Nam June Paik, *Ommah*, 2005. Collection of the National Gallery of Art.

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