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The Politics and Aesthetics of the Wound:
Performative Narratives of the People by Zainichi *Korean Artists**

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Abstract

This paper examines the artworks of the artists in the Asia, Politics, Art Project (APA Project) *from the perspective of "performative narrative of the people," a notion suggested by Homi Bhabha. The* APA Project *shows how the artworks of diasporic artists inscribe otherness within the otherwise homogeneous space of the nation. The participant artists, as the second and third generations of* zainichi *Korean, do not hold the memory of traumatic events suffered by the first minority generation. However, their works utilize* postmemory *based on dim images of memories inherited from their family histories. The elements, such as a grandmother's* chimajeogori *and the lyrics of an old Korean song, are woven by Oh Haji into unique narratives that are distinct from the "pedagogical narrative of the people," emphasizing unity and continuity of the nation-state. Kim uses* chimajeogori *in a multi-layered manner to reveal the existential conditions of students bounded by a violence that has historical roots, but she does not treat it as a simplistic oppositional sign against the dominant national ideology. These minority writers/artists and their works are illustrative cases of performative narratives that use and reconstruct images in the history and everyday life of a minority, splitting the homogeneous space of the nation and suggesting new public and diasporic spaces within it.*

Keywords: *Asia, Politics, Art Project, zainichi* artists, Homi Bhabha, performative narrative of the people, diasporas.

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The Forbiddance of the Return and the Invitation of the Forbidden: Becoming a Bridge for the Deceased

Suji Kwock Kim, a second-generation Korean American poet, raises a question in her autobiographic poem "Resistance: for my Great-Grandfather": "In Jeoollanam-do we used to break the bones of corpses' feet/so their souls wouldn't walk back from the other world, but would you walk/back?" (2003, 23) In the poem, she calls out to miners sent to battle in Manchuria by the Japanese government under the guise of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, to the comfort women raped 40 times per day, and to prisoners beaten to death to save bullets or whose skin is flayed while alive by Japanese military police. Then she asks, "My grandfather and grandmother, would you walk back to this horrible world?"

We find one possible imaginary answer to the question raised in the previous lines from the introduction of the book, *A Reading of Still Hear the Wound: Toward Asia, Politics, Art:*[1] "I will wander this land as a ghost. If it's impossible, I will wander in someone's memory." This passage quoted by Chong-hwa Lee contains the last wish spoken by Mun-sang Cho, a Korean prisoner guard who was convicted and executed as a war criminal.[2] We need to investigate carefully the relationship between the question posed by Kim and the answer from the deceased. In the last sentence of the poem, this world is a place where "the summer wind is crying through the forest of dead bodies," a place where no one wishes to return. The act of breaking

1. *A Reading of Still Hear the Wound: Toward Asia, Politics, Art* (edited by Chong-hwa Lee) is a book that documented the *APA Project* (2006–2008) led by the Center for Asian and Pacific Studies at Seikei University, Japan. At present, this book is available only in Japanese. The above title is the title of the forthcoming English translation of the book *Zanshō no Oto: Ajia, Seiji, Aato no mirai* 残傷の音: アジア·政治·アアトの未来.
2. Mun-sang Cho was a Christian college student in Keijo Imperial University during the Japanese occupation. During the Second World War, he was forced to serve as an interpreter. He delivered orders from Japanese superior officers to war prisoners of the United Allies. In the war crimes trial after the war, he was convicted as a war criminal. He pleaded innocent, but when the prosecutor asked him, "Are you true to your conscience and the teaching of the Bible?" he answered, "I admit my sins and will accept your judgment." He was sentenced to death by hanging and was executed on February 25, 1947, at the age of 26. See Seo (2007).

the ankles of the dead as indicated in the poem is an act emerging from a blissful wish for them to stay peacefully in the next world and not come back to this horrible life. Yet, the dead insist on coming back against all odds. The poet's question of "Would you come back?" creates a fine yet significant crack within the tension between the forbiddance of the return by the living and the manifestation of the return by the dead. The question implies a deep wish that they would return, which makes the question a positive invitation asking for the return of the deceased. Because the assumption that the deceased would not come back is powerful and plausible, the poet's wish that they would come back becomes more earnest and desperate. Haunted and embraced by the voices of the deceased, the poet writes in the poem, "Sometimes in my dreams you hoot like a soul-owl" (Kim 2003, 23). Thus, in the mind of the living, the deceased are presented as images that are powerful yet unable to find a safe home.

The poet's reenacting of the ritual of breaking the ankle of the deceased —a shaman ritual originating from Jeollanam-do province for cleaning a dead person's soul—contains the desperate yet hesitating invitation of return. In the poem, the deceased Korean prisoner willingly and desperately accepts this invitation from the future, the words he did not hear at the moment he was dying. We hear the voice of invitation uttered between "sending well" and "returning well," whose meaning can be embraced through the *Asia, Politics, Art Project* (*APA Project*).

Diasporic Artists and the Construction of Performative People: Scattering the Okinawa Narrative

In his essay "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation," Homi Bhabha shows a theoretical approach that can be applied to the interpretation of the tension between two contradictory "we's": we who break the feet of the deceased and we who invite the deceased. This tension, within the frame of oppositional politics, is expressed through the dichotomy between the universal subject (the majority) who would expel the deceased following nationalist pedagogy and particular individuals

(the minority) who would invite the deceased through unique personal experiences. However, he rejects this dichotomy between the majority inside and the minority outside as irrelevant in representing the contradiction within us.

According to Bhabha, there are two ways by which the people of the nation are symbolically constructed. First, the people as a "pedagogical object" is constructed by the authority of narrative that effectively or transcendentally identifies *one* out of *many*. Second, the people "constructed in the performance of narrative, its enunciatory present, is marked in the repetition and pulsation of the national sign" (Bhabha 1990, 299). Performative narratives intervene in the assimilative process of making one out of many. Through endless representation and creation, they inscribe the signs of differences and spaces of boundaries within the self-productive process of the nation. In other words, within the nation, an inevitable tension exists between the people constructed by pedagogical narrative and the one constructed by performative narrative.

Accordingly, we apply Bhabha's theory of performative narrative in understanding a particular art project. We see that the art exhibition, the *APA Project*, and its documentation, *Still Hear the Wound: Toward Asia, Politics, Art*, show examples of a nation that is split and reconstructed by the performative narrative of the people. In these projects (2006–2008), *zainichi* Korean artists, curators, scholars, and feminists participated, collaborating with Japanese participants of Okinawan origin. They participated in the projects not from a position identified by simple oppositional logics, such as minority versus majority. The narrative of the people they perform, document, and transform resists the pedagogical narrative of the people. However, they do not posit themselves as outside the nation, i.e. as having a sort of *a priori* privilege to see and critique the totality of the nation. We see that their individual and family histories and the narratives emerging from suffering in their lives can be called a performative narrative of the people that Bhabha argues is a contradictory force within the nation.

Through these projects, individual artists and critics with different personal life stories went through deep conversations, commenting on each other's work, sharing writings, and discussing the project. The colla-

boration took place not only on the level of the present creation of artworks but also on the level of rewriting past artworks about the memory of war and pain within the context of the project. For example, *Map of the Battle of Okinawa* (1984) by Toshi and Iri Maruki, gave inspiration to Soni Kum for her video work. Jin-suk Choi, a *zainichi* playwright and literary critic, explored the traumatic narrative of Okinawa history and experiences. That the project took place in Okinawa contributed to the transformation of personal creative work into a performative narrative of the people since Okinawa is a place of pain for artists and intellectuals who were born and grew up there. At the same time, Okinawa is a place where national relations cut across each other, creating diverse tensions. As a unique and disparate culture in its own right and yet annexed as part of Japan, Okinawa has been "the outside" forced to be incorporated by "the inside." The history of Okinawa has been a string of sacrifices and pain for Okinawa people and a theme of Okinawan artists. With other outsiders, that is, *zainichi* artists, and academics from South Korea, some having either a direct personal or more indirect familial memory of Jeju Uprising and Massacre,[3] Okinawan artists found the possibility of sympathy and solidarity through the project. However, this process is not a simple, linear creation of solidarity against state power among individual minorities outside the state. In the process of creating a new public subject, there appears the topography of splitting inscribed by national identity, where Jin-suk Choi's critical reflection on the "anti-return position" that opposed the U.S. policy of returning Okinawa to Japanese sovereignty in 1972 stands out (Choi 2009).

Within this critical engagement, Choi points out both the values and limitations of the anti-return position suggested by Okinawa intellectuals in the 1970s. One such intellectual, Arakwa Akira, suggested an anti-return position as a critique of assimilation, that is, a "moral orientation that rejects the unification with *the state* from the perspective of the individual" (Choi 2009, 111). However, Choi argues that the anti-return position's emphasis

3. "The anti-return position" is the manifesto of non-citizens outside the nation whose voices oppose the violence of assimilation forcing Okinawan people and *zainichi* to merge with the Japanese population.

on individuals as autonomous beings outside the system might neglect the collective history of discrimination and the indifference of Okinawan people toward colonized others within the locality, such as *Joseon-in* (Korean), Ainu, and Taiwanese ethnic minorities.[4] He urges that individual narratives must embrace the otherness inherent within their stories and thus operate as other kinds of public narratives that disseminate the totalizing history of the nation as well as the locality.

An instance of such recognition about an "inherent otherness" within particular narratives can be found in July 1996 in Okinawa in an event proposed by Kaiho High School art students. In this event, the art students and about 600 neighbors created a stone tomb out of 236,095 stones, each of which had a number to symbolize the victims during the Okinawa battle. This event was entitled "Ishi no oto" (Voices of Stone), which expressed a new *sensus communis* (common sense). The major victims, of course, were the approximately 120,000 Okinawa people, amounting to one fourth of the residents at that time. Among the victims, however, were nearly 10,000 Koreans who were drafted by force. Choi asks if the expressive action of "Ishi no oto" opens up a new horizon of solidarity and sympathy. Who are the victims in the metaphor relating stones to victims? One Korean who appears in *Ginnemu yashiki* (Ginmemu Mansion) a novel written in 1981 by Okinawan writer Matayoshi Eiki, suggests an answer: "When you talk about bones, you think they belong to Japanese or American soldiers. Then, are the bones of hundreds and thousands of Koreans rotten?" (cited in Cho 2010). With this juxtaposition of Choi's criticism and "Ishi no oto," project participants learn that artistic activity to remember the Okinawa tragedy must include critical reflection on their own narratives.

4. One good example of discrimination and indifference by Okinawans towards ethnic minorities is the Osaka exhibition in 1903 that had a special exhibition about barbarian ethnic groups. Ainu, *Joseon-in*, Chinese, Indian, *Ryukyu* (Okinawa people), and other ethnic groups were represented as less educated barbarians. The Okinawa intellectuals expressed resentment toward this exhibition not because of the explicit racism of the exhibition but because Okinawa people had been included among the barbarians. Thus, within Okinawa, a discriminatory policy existed that resonated with the Japanese assimilative policy against other minority groups until the 1940s (Shin 2013).

This critical stance destabilizes the pedagogical narrative of the people by distinguishing the incorporation of elegy toward the victims of the Okinawa battle from the state's nationalistic elegy narrative. With the addition of the memory of the discriminatory attitude of Okinawans toward other minority groups, the narrative of elegy diversifies and at the same time becomes richer. Within this crossing of memories and reflections, new narratives of the people emerge.

In a similar manner to the projects that have been discussed, Bhabha looks at the unique role of diasporic artists and curators. In his 1993 essay, "Beyond the Pale: Art in the Age of Multicultural Translation," he adopts the notion of a "borderline artist" and argues:

> The Borderline artist performs a poetics of the open border between cultures. She displays the "interstice," the overlappings and interleavings, the hither and thither that is part of the history of those peoples whose identities are crafted from the experience of social displacement (Bhabha 1993, 23).

As the experiences of social displacement of people vary according to the histories and conditions of localities, the poetics performed by borderline artists do not take a uniform oppositional ideological stance toward the agenda of national cultures. In the case of *zainichi* literature, the discourses of nationalist sentiment fade away among the works of recent young *zainichi* writers. Sang-il Ha points out that:

> Whereas the first and second generations of *zainichi* writers resisted Japanese discrimination toward Korean residents in Japan and articulated a historical and political orientation toward the reunification of Korea, the third generation of *zainichi* showed a significantly different attitude free from a primordial consciousness about the people and nation, as well as the burden of bilingual reality between Japanese and Korean languages. Indeed, for this young generation, *zainichi* identity was not a matter of ideology but of everyday life (Ha 2012, 40).

However, Ha's criticism of young *zainichi* artists is not relevant to the participants of the *APA Project*. The young participants of the *APA Project* do

not treat the nation as an abstract idea nor reduce it to a matter of personal taste and everyday expressions. Instead, they question the stable *topos* of the people. In those "in-between" spaces, they suggest heterogeneous, dissensual narratives that supplement and disturb the official narratives of the nation. As such, their artworks operate as unique narratives on both individual and collective levels, and in both poetic and political senses. We now investigate the formation of dissensual narratives by diasporic artists by examining a poetic essay of project curator Chong-hwa Lee and the artworks of third-generation *zainichi* artists, Oh Haji and Soni Kum.[5]

Azaleas, Not an Azalea: The Splitting of Common Sense

The introduction of the book *A Reading of Still Hear the Wound: Toward Asia, Politics, Art*, written by Chong-hwa Lee, is not simply a summary or report of the project. The writing itself is a literary essay expressing the sensibility of the borderline intellectual. This essay, like a patchwork, juxtaposes the poetic writing of Lee and the writing of others. As indicated in the following passage, Lee's essay as a whole consists of poetic writing and aphorism. She juxtaposes Kim Sowol and Shin Dong-yeop's poems and Jean Genet's words. Lee, a project curator who immigrated into Japan in the 1980s and whose family members experienced the Jeju Uprising, articulates the image of the azalea with multiple, non-male characteristics in the introduction of the book. The azalea can be seen as a nationalistic symbol. However, Lee reveals multiple layers of meanings within the proj-

5. The main objects for analysis include project curator and historian of political thought, Chong-hwa Lee's poetic essay, the fabric art of Oh/Okamura Haji, and video art of Soni Kum. For analysis, we investigated Lee's essay and photos included in the book *A Reading of Still Hear the Wound: Toward Asia, Politics, Art*, as well as the images and testimonies recorded on a DVD entitled *A Reading of Still Hear the Wound II*, made and edited by Soni Kum. The DVD's content includes: *A Reading of Still Hear the Wound* (Maruki Iri/Maruki Toshi/Soni Kum, 23 min), *Seven Artists* (Oh/Okamura Haji/Yamashiro Chikako/Kinjo Michuru/Miyagi Akira/Ito Tari/Soni Kum, 134 min), and *Sakima Gallery* (23 min). The analysis of the writings and DVD data was also complemented by the authors interview with Chong-hwa Lee.

ect by portraying diverse images of azaleas. In Korea, the rose of Sharon is the official national flower that often represents a unified image of the nation-state as expressed in the lyrics of the Korean national anthem, "splendid rivers and mountains, filled with the rose of Sharon." As opposed to this patriotic image of the rose of Sharon organized by pedagogical narratives of the people, Lee suggests images of "azaleas thriving on land." Underneath the unifying image of the rose of Sharon, we find in azaleas an emotional repository, representing fully unfolded sorrows (*han* 恨) of the motherland, as found in such words as "our motherland is fragile as are azaleas and inside the mind of the people from there the sorrows bloom like azaleas" (Lee 2009).

Azalea, or the flower of offering
. . . . . .

The transformation of goddess and "metamorphosis"
The curtain looking at them from foreign countries
Time in which the curtain's skirt
taken out of Grandmother's *hanbok* skirt
becomes the life-living of white fine net

At the end of long hairs is the memory of hairs
revealing anywhere, found nowhere
not showing its trace, traceless
the memory of needles and hairs, their hints

Then, scattering, glittering petals
into the far distant memory embracing needles

crawling, flowing, floating, sleeping, dancing
play of the goddess

The bodies transforming, mixing, transiting,
"metamorphosing" bodies
from the body that became a needle

playing dead, playing goddess

> Azalea blooming from the crawling and dancing crowd
> The moments those azaleas are becoming the skirts of *Joseon* women
> (Lee 2009).

In South Korea, the rose of Sharon is often used as a symbol for government rituals, politicians' badges, and police ranks, or even as the name of satellites. Although the azalea is not directly used for official narratives, the flower is often used as a key symbol to produce a nationalistic emotion. In South Korea, the male image of the rose of Sharon is coupled with the female image of azaleas in the pedagogical narrative construction of the people. In contrast, in North Korea, the image of azaleas holds an official status within pedagogical state narratives, and this attribution causes a misunderstanding that the azalea is the national flower of North Korea.[6]

However, in Lee's essay we see that the azaleas are not a symbol with a singular meaning that complements the male image of the rose of Sharon. Lee names azaleas as the flower of "bodily sacrifice," which is articulated when compared to the rose of Sharon. If azaleas are the bodies of the deceased, the rose of Sharon is the ceremonial emblem that covers them with a solemn gesture. However, the bodies are not complete but fall and scatter like "the exposed collective bodies of the deceased" (Lee 2009, vii) because her azaleas are a "transforming and metamorphosing goddess" (Lee 2009, vii). We find that azaleas in Lee's introduction are not a maternal plant with the official partnership of a paternal plant but multiple goddesses embodying various deep emotions of the people. As further evidence, Lee quotes from Jean Genet's diary to show the metamorphosis of *becoming females* that overcomes the simple dichotomy between male and female: "In this studio, a man is slowly dying consuming himself and before our eyes turning himself into goddesses" (Genet 1993, 328; cited in

6. In North Korea, art practices mainly combine the images of azaleas and state narrative. For example, since the 1970s, a contemporary dance performance entitled *The Azalea of Our Nation* continued to utilize the image of the azalea to strengthen patriotism. This piece, one of the renowned revolutionary art works in North Korea, celebrates Kim Il-sung's advance into colonized Joseon in 1939 and portrays the emotion of the female soldiers who followed their leader onto the land of their country. See Lee (2008).

Lee 2009, ix). Thus, Lee's azaleas turn into goddesses while falling as Genet's man turns into goddesses while dying.

From these conceptions of the flower, Lee introduces three different versions of azaleas to challenge the dominant images of them. The most well-known version is the azalea of Kim Sowol, a renowned Korean poet during the colonial era.[7] His azalea as an image of femininity represents bodily sacrifice and sadness. However, Lee juxtaposes his azalea with other images of azaleas portrayed by two Korean poets, Shin Dong-yeop and Si-jong Kim, through which the images of azaleas are elevated from feminine symbols of sacrifice to transformation and metamorphosis. In the introduction, Lee quotes Shin Dong-yeop's poem "San-e, eondeok-e" (In the Mountain and on the Hill). To Lee, the azaleas are "the beautiful flower of his" blooming on the mountain and on the hill "while his face can't be found ever." Whose face is this? We find a clue in Shin Dong-yeop's poem "Jindalle sancheon" (Azaleas Flooding the Landscape).[8] Azaleas bloom because "those languished while waiting" went to and died in "the mountains" where guerillas fought with rifles against the combat planes firing bullet rains over their heads. Here, azaleas grow and bloom on the bones, blood, and water from rotting bodies of the dead guerillas. Shin Dong-yeop portrays dead guerillas as those napping in the shadows of azaleas with their rifles put to one side.

This partisan image of Shin Dong-yeop's azaleas resonates with Lee's narrative of her life. Her hometown is Jeju-do, and some of her father's generation participated in the uprising as guerillas, so naturally, her family histories include memories of the Jeju Uprising. Few people on the island are unable to relate to the event given the scale of the massacre. The azaleas expressed by Lee, as a flower of bodily sacrifice and offering, represent her own family history and at the same time destabilize the pedagogic narrative of the people. The narratives of struggle take "the azaleas blooming land" out of the conventional national boundary and inscribe it in the liminality

7. An Son-jae, "Translating Korean Poetry," accessed March 2, 2012, http://hompi.sogang.ac.kr/anthony/Azaleas.htm.

8. See Kim 1994, 264–265.

of nation-state and people.

Like the azaleas that appear in the poem of Shin Dong-yeop, the azaleas depicted by Si-jong Kim, a *zainichi* poet also contain multiplicity. In his poem "Jindalle"(Azalea) published in *Azalea*, the literary magazine of Osaka-based *zainichi* poet collectives established in 1952, the poet portrays the flower as an image from his past memories. When the Jeju Uprising took place, he moved to Osaka to escape from the massacre. He remembered the azalea on Jeju-do being red. The so-called *yeongsanhong* or Jeju azalea, has the botanical name of rhododendron, which belongs to *ericaceae*, the same family of azaleas. The color of *yeongsanhong* is more reddish than that of ordinary azaleas, which are actually close to pink. So, in Si-jong Kim's poem, *yeongsanhong* blooms as "red red azaleas." The poet describes the flower as "blooming even in the land of Japan," "not forgetting the season/whoever steps on, whoever destroys them" (Lee 2009, xiv–xvi). As such, the red azaleas, like the spilled blood of guerrillas engaged in battle, bloom anywhere while suggesting memories of the past, thus transforming "the land" from the space of a nation-state to a diasporic space.

Looking at azaleas blooming in a foreign land, the poet does not represent the nation-state he left. Rather, through a poetic metaphor, he defines any place where azaleas bloom as his hometown. As such, he transforms the moment of the azaleas' blooming into the instance of emergence of an "ambivalent nation-space." In his poem, the red azaleas are not flowers of recollection of his home country but flowers that "rise in red, red color" on the hollow surface of his nation. Here, we need to point out that the central image of "red" azaleas within the poetic narratives is not ideologically incorporated into the national symbol of North Korea even though the *zainichi* literary magazine *Azalea* was closed in 1958 as a result of Si-jong Kim being criticized for idolizing Kim Il-sung in North Korea. (Si-jong Kim himself was a member of Jochongnyeon or the Pro-Pyongyang Federation of Korean Residents' League in Japan.) On the contrary, Si-jong Kim's image of the azalea shows that not all *zainichi* writers in Osaka followed the ideological dogma of North Korea and rather treated the image of azaleas in their literary works as a national symbol of their mother country. By utilizing multiple images and significations of azaleas, Osaka-based *zaini-*

chi writers resisted the incorporation of the flowers into the single narrative of the state. Rather, they used them to perform the narrative of the people in destabilizing the given frameworks of the nation: they inscribed new narratives of azaleas within the dichotomy between Japan and Korea in order to signify the resistance of the colonized against the colonizing and, at the same time, within the dichotomy between North Korea and South Korea to denote the resistance of poetry against ideological division.

In a similar manner to the way Si-jong Kim portrays the azaleas, Chonghwa Lee, by employing a patchwork of images of azaleas, presents a multiplicity of images of azaleas creating heterogeneity within the space of the nation. Azaleas are a symbol not of individuals but of a collective. In Lee's introductory essay, this collective symbol transforms national homogeneity into a collectivity of struggling beings, which in turn inscribes heterogeneity within a new imaginary nation state where struggling beings find their place as people. In this patchwork that prompts metamorphosis, we find the nomadic aesthetics of constructing spaces suggested by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. According to Jung-woo Lee:

> Nomadic aesthetics unfolds as patchwork with varying features. Continuous variations in orientations and connections allow for nomadic aesthetics. The smooth space is the product of the patchwork of local spaces. Deleuze and Guattari characterize this smooth space as that of "nomads" constructed by the connections of small "nomads" (Lee 2012, 267).

In line with this interpretation of patchwork, Lee's preface is not a simple juxtaposition of azalea poems. Enacting the patchwork of various poetic images of azaleas and performative narratives of the people against the national pedagogy, Lee articulates heterogeneous spaces within the nation that have been considered unifying spaces.

This aesthetics of constructing spaces penetrates the whole project as well as Lee's own writing. As we will later explore in the next section, the artist participants of the *APA Project* invited by Lee also show a similar approach to constructing spaces. The participant artists cut across the given national territories and create works based on the sensibility and

existence nurtured under the shadows of the nation-state. With keen sensitivity to their own personal experiences as minorities, which results in the connection of politics with aesthetics, they invent new public narratives that deconstruct the canonical state narrative. They bring fine grains of memory out of their personal experiences and then craft them to crystallize new narratives of the people. The images from their memories also construct unlimited versions of empathetic narrative as the images of azaleas are "the exposed collective bodies of the deceased" that spin off multiple narratives.

Other Red Flowers: Asia, Politics, and Art of *Postmemory*

Rebecca Jennison, one of the scholar participants of the *APA Project*, analyzes the works of third-generation *zainichi*, Oh Haji and Soni Kum, and explores artistic narratives of the non-witness generation who grew up in dim traumatic memories inherited from their ancestors. She argues that the works of these two artists show the characteristics of *postmemory*, a notion suggested by Marianne Hirsch. *Postmemory* means the memories of later generations who are distant from the parent generations who directly suffered traumatic events. It may be said that *postmemory* is distinct from memory in that *postmemory* is mediated, while memory is unmediated. According to Hirsch, however, "postmemory is a powerful and very particular form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation" (Hirsh 1997, 22; cited in Jennison 2009, 9). The *postmemory* of the second and third generations, children of survivors of traumatic events, is characterized by rupture and break because their memories do not bear direct witness and experience. In dealing with these predicaments, the *postmemory* of later generations, generated despite being distant from the traumatic events, has a potential for critical reflection on the past to form new empathetic narratives.

Following Hirsh's interpretation of *postmemory*, we see that *postmemory* is distinct from nostalgia, which Fredric Jameson postulates as one of the

main characteristics of postmodern art. According to Jameson, nostalgia means "something of a substitute for that older system of historical representation, indeed as a virtual symptom-formation, a formal compensation for the enfeeblement of historicity in our own time" (Jameson 1990, 179). For Jameson, nostalgia is no less than a private mood or symptom that in consequence testifies to the loss of collective memories of historical events and experiences in contemporary consumer culture. In comparison, *postmemory* is constitutive of collective memory mediated by artistic practices stitching together shreds, dim lights, and fragments—the very "broken feet of the deceased"—that allow for the return of the forbidden. The constitutive power of *postmemory* that links the past and the present through engaging with various memories and materials is illustrated well in the works of Oh Haji.

Figure 1. Oh Haji, *Three Flowers*, 2004.

In Oh's works utilizing textile fabrics, the symbolic objects that are most repeatedly appearing are her grandmother's *chimajeogori* (a traditional Korean two-piece dress) and the flowers on it. Her works *Three Generations*, *Three Times*, and *Three Flowers* (2004) were made out of white *chimajeogori* and hemp cloth owned by her late grandmother. In *Three Flowers*, white, red, and pink flowers are embroidered on the cloth made of her grand-

mother's white *hanbok* (Korean traditional clothing). This piece was installed with *Three Times* and *Three Generations*. The latter is a frame containing the photographs of her grandmother, mother, and the artist, herself while the former is a print of juxtaposed photographic images of the three women.[9]

For her grandmother, who emigrated from Korea to Japan and suffered severe discrimination while residing in Japan, the *chimajeogori* and azaleas are cultural objects of sadness and longing that endlessly returned her to her motherland and mother tongue. Oh's identity is distant from that of her grandmother who could feel free and comfortable only when she spoke Korean while Oh's generation can speak Japanese fluently. She recognizes that her grandmother's language and *chimajeogori* are symbols of discrimination in her space of residence, but she is not necessarily forced or motivated to use those symbols. Her grandmother was not able to communicate with Oh about her lifelong story, even though they lived together under the same roof. There was only painful silence between the two women (Jennison and Hein 2011).

In response to this inability to communicate, Oh invites her grandmother out of the silence and into her imaginary story. On the red flower petals she crafted, Oh inscribed the lyrics of old Korean songs she heard for the first time in her life. She also created new clothes that are neither *hanbok* nor *kimono* (Japanese traditional clothing). As such, Oh creates a new narrative out of national signs, like the *chimajeogori*. The stories of her grandmother are revived through creative work, rather than fading into oblivion.

Her works introduce multiple ways of interpretation for viewers by contrasting traditional images. The hybrid wedding dress in Figure 2 looks like a *kimono* to Koreans, but in the eyes of the Japanese it looks like a *hanbok*. Oh dualizes her identity and creates new objects containing discordant

9. In *Three Generations*, the images of three women wearing *chimajeogori* are put together side by side: on the left, the image of her grandmother, on the right Oh's image, and at the center, the image of her mother. The cloth on which the images are printed is hemp cloth originally prepared by her grandmother to wrap her own dead body. It was kept intact after the funeral, and Oh used it for her artwork. In each image, all women stand on the road of a small island near the Jeju-do. Oh traveled to the island to take the photo (Kim 2009, 179–180).

Figure 2. Oh Haji, *Wedding Dress for Minority Race*, 2000.

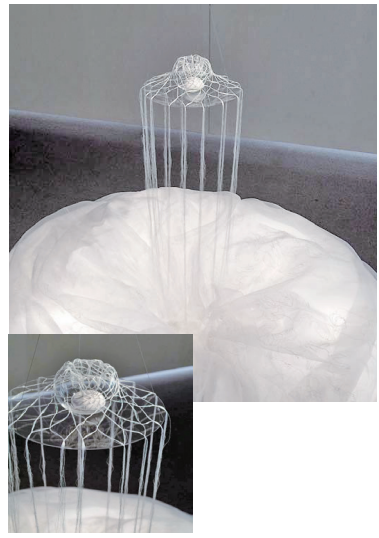

Figure 3: Oh Haji, *Kahan*, 2007

materials and languages. For example, she created flower-shaped spots or white/red images of flowers; while not identical with azaleas, they yet contain traces of wounds inherited from the past.

Oh introduces in her works familiar materials and transforms them to unfamiliar objects to suggest to viewers a new way of interpreting national tradition. She uses for her installation the actual *chimajeogori* of her grandmother, a family legacy. It is true that the *chimajeogori*, as traditional Korean clothing, can be considered an object that reminds viewers of the tradition and history of the nation. Here, Oh's clothing is a hand-made fabric woven from vertical and horizontal movements of threads. According to Jungwoo Lee, a piece of fabric, in contrast to a piece of patchwork, is an example of settlement aesthetics constructed from a perspective that "cultivates roads through heterogeneous spaces, sets up indexes on them, and views the whole distance beyond them" (Lee 2012, 267). In other words, the fabric and the patchwork are opposite not only in aesthetics but also in constructing reality. However, Oh transforms the fabric to a patchwork by knitting *chimajeogori* with other images and installing them to cover the gallery space.

In short, through combining fabric with patchwork by connecting the *chimajeogori* with a variety of objects and images, Oh undermines the pedagogic narrative imposed upon the *chimajeogori*, thereby inviting a new public sensibility into her installation. Oh counts on the *chimajeogori* as a national archetype to cross the threshold of memories kept by the first generation. However, the space Oh enters produces a new cultural and political sensibility different from a "land flooded with azaleas." The space newly opened by Oh's work is characterized by an ambiguous sensibility that oscillates between a land represented by azaleas and a space without a national symbol.

Another example of using familiar materials to open up a new public sentiment about nation and tradition can be found in the work of Soni Kum, another participant artist of the project. For her, the *chimajeogori* is not a family heritage but an ideological heritage. She uses images borrowed from official narratives of the people to produce new narratives. Her short film, *Beast of Me*, produced before the launch of the project,[10] also uses the *chimajeogori*. In this case, however, it is not a family legacy but more of an ideological legacy that had been commonly used as a school uniform—a black skirt and a white upper garment—in *Joseon* schools[11] which are run mostly by Jochongnyeon.

In the early 2000s, Kum had to pass through the streets of Tokyo wearing the *chimajeogori* at a time when anti-North Korean sentiment in Japan escalated due to North Korea's nuclear tests and former U.S. President Bush's linking of North Korea as part of the axis of evil. Kum expresses in her works the fear and pain of her own and fellow female students

10. *Beast of Me* can be found on Soni Kum's official website, http://www.sonikum.com/index.php?/filmvideo/beast-of-me/.

11. *Joseon* schools are educational institutes that teach Korean language and history for *zainich* students. Since their founding in the 1950s, most of them have been sponsored by North Korea and Jochongnyeon. The number of students in Joseon schools continues to decrease. In the early 1970s, the number reached 46,000, but as of 2004 it went down to 11,500. In 2013, the Japanese government decided not to subsidize *Joseon* schools at the high school level so that they would not be able to provide students with free education. This decision has been criticized as being politically charged by the government's hostility toward North Korea, which critics say should be separated from educational policies.

Figure 4. Soni Kum, Still images of *Beast of Me*, 2005, 18 min.

caused by national hatred and violence toward them while commuting to school. This discrimination is different from what the first generation of *zainichi* experienced during the colonial period or after the war. However, Kum shows that her plight expressed in the term "beast of me" is caused by political conflicts among the nation-states that are not unrelated to the experiences of colonialism. The violence and conflict within and among nation-states can be interpreted as the wound that does not fully heal and keeps coming back from the past to the present. The present is linked with the past yet not in a linear manner.

In her film, Kum overlaps the violence toward animals with racial and ethnic violence in order to reveal a ubiquity of violence not reducible to a simple ideological dichotomy of cruel American/Japanese imperialism versus North Korea. Kum asks why only female students among the students in *Joseon* school are mandated to wear the *chimajeogori*, and she questions the patriarchal order working inside the minority group. She reads a letter sent to her mother by a relative who emigrated from Japan to North Korea and asks why her relatives were purged and died even though they did not express any complaints toward the North Korean regime. Thus, her film and her action within it also calls attention to the authoritarianism in North Korea that had been used to glamorize its propaganda against imperialism. Furthermore, we note that the human violence toward animals is introduced in her work not only to testify to the ubiquity of violence cutting across national and gender lines but also to reveal that

personal existence is caught up in a state violence that has historical roots. Here, "the beast" and the violence toward it have both historical and poetic resonance. This film ends with lines from Chi-hwan Yu's "Song-ga" (A Hymn): "like Cain being chased/why wouldn't I dare to suffer this ordeal even as a beast?" By referring to Yu, who during Japanese rule moved to Manchuria to avoid the coercive Japanese policy of adopting Japanese names, Kum's works extend to the historical space of the first migrant generation and their personal tragedy portrayed in the poem, that is, as exiles who fall into the state of a beast. On the other hand, through the *Map of the Battle of Okinawa* displayed at Sakima gallery in her video work, *Still Hear the Wound*, produced for the project, she shows that the pain of "beast of me" is also related to the pain of others. As such, at the core of the work of borderline artists, we find minority suffering, a wound ruptured and connected across generations in the form of performative narratives, yielding a new public sensibility about the people. As a borderline artist Kum articulates her artistic principles concerning how individual suffering is related with common experiences. With regard to this, she argues in her artist statement:

> My art practice is to create a new, but also profoundly old envisioning of an invisible, uncertified, and mystic realm of our world today. It may be called a realm of the unconscious, dreams, and so on, but certainly, it is another world, which we have been dreaming for, the world beyond suffering. "There has to be something beyond this pain, torment, and misery," is a common predicament, which human beings have been questing for in the far distance, as a faint image. Like a mirage, it has never been realized for us.[12]

On her website created in 2013, Kum discusses the common predicament, about the impossible dream beyond "suffering," a dream that in reality was never realized for them as minority, that is, a mirage. Kum can posit the common predicament by combining her own social and quandary with the suffering continuing from the generation of her grandparents. Also, Kum

12. Soni Kum, "Artist Statement," 2013, accessed March 3, 2012 http://www.sonikum.com/.

responds to the hardships of others through narratives found in other works in the project and experiences the traces and pieces of the plight of others not easily incorporated into the pedagogical narrative of the people. Kum's artistic strategy of making the impossible possible is to deconstruct and reconstruct the images in everyday life into the images "ordinarily unattainable in this physical world" as the expression of a "utopian non-bodily space." Her poetic images built as such are to "dissolve the core block of our frozen psyche" and to testify to "another realm of our consciousness" (Kum 2013).

Conclusion

Chong-hwa Lee's introductory chapter of *A Reading of Still Hear the Wound: Toward Asia, Politics, Art* and the artworks of Kum and Oh in the *APA Project* borrow, repeat, and reconstruct the images from tradition and everyday life familiar to Korean people, such as azaleas and the *chima-jeogori*, in order to deal with a forbidden past and imagine an impossible future to come. The purpose of utilizing familiar images is not to provoke nostalgia or reaffirm national pride. Using the images in a performative, rather than pedagogical, manner, they reveal the limits of nationalism taken for granted and internalized in our minds. In other words, they show that nationalism itself, which has overwhelmed us as a homogeneous space filling all the holes and cracks in our identity and memory, is in fact the product of an arbitrary stitching of images. According to Ernest Gellner:

> Nationalism is not what it seems, and above all not what it seems to itself. . . . The cultural shreds and patches used by nationalism are often arbitrary historical inventions. Any old shred would have served as well. But in no way does it follow that the principle of nationalism . . . is itself in the least contingent and accidental (Gellner 1983, 55; cited in Bhabha 1990, 294).

Gellner argues that nationalism, necessary and primordial as it looks, is an

unstable flux of cultural constructs. It is true that Gellner's functionalist theory consequently emphasizes the authority of nationalism. The tension inherent in his theory of nationalism between constructivism and primordialism shows that once the cultural shreds and patches are incorporated into the pedagogical narratives of the people, they are felt as "real." The *zainichi* writers and artists do not simply debunk the fictitious nature of azaleas and *chimajeogori* images integrated in the pedagogic narrative of the people. Rather, they proactively accept those images that make nationalism look necessary and primordial. However, they use them to demystify and secularize the people narrated through them. They discover various layers of traditional images from the past to scatter and inscribe them on the time-space of the present. By intersecting and weaving diverse cultural images, they take the sensibility of the nation out of both pedagogical authority and the psyche of the victimized. The borderline artists of the *postmemory* generation connect the disparate time, space, and subjects through poetic construction. This connection extends the suffering of the minority beyond the mentality of a particular group and their historical trauma.

Whereas the notion of *postmemory* suggested by Hirsch links the past and the present in a non-linear manner, Bhabha directs attention to "the perplexity of the living" that a minority undergoes while living among the pedagogical people of the nation. Yet, the perplexity of a minority's life can be reduced to neither "some existential, ethical anguish of the empiricism of everyday life" nor the "spontaneous and primordial presence of the *people* in the liberatory discourses of populist resentment" (Bhabha 1990, 307). In other words, the perplexity of a minority's life cannot be contained within everyday languages nor politically correct languages. According to him, the perplexity of a minority's life testifies to the personal, public, and political experiences of a minority.

> The space of human life is pushed to its incommensurable extreme; the judgment of living is perplexed; the *topos* of the narrative is neither the transcendental, pedagogical idea of history nor the institution of the state, but a strange temporality of the repetition of the one in the

> other—an oscillating movement in the governing *present* of cultural authority (Bhabha 1990, 307).

The *zainichi* writers and artists we illuminated so far provide examples of transforming and metamorphosing the personal perplexity of the living into public and political narratives of minority people, that is, narrating complexities of the nation by deploying and crafting personal memories. We understand that the *APA Project* was prepared and performed to prompt and expand the constructing process by which the individual predicament of artists transforms into private-public and aesthetic-political narratives.

The young generation of *zainichi* writers and artists is supposed to embrace the perplexity of the living as their fate. Their sense of belonging is inevitably contradictory because their legal belonging, psychological belonging, and physical belonging rarely coincide with one another. However, the *zainichi* writers and artists do not dissolve this perplexity to accept the dominant belonging either by strengthening their national pride or by being passively assimilated to the hegemonic state. Their identity is simultaneously interpreted as Japanese and Korean, but this interpretation is not made from the language of the center to that of periphery or *vice versa.* This interpretation as a sort of cultural practice is an oscillating movement from one space to another and one sense to another so as to create heterogeneous communities. Their interpretative works transform prose into poetry, trauma as disease, and images as wounds that have not yet healed but keep coming back. In their works, transformations come about: personal stories of individual perplexity of the living change into a disconcerted history of the people; those deprived of memories regain the light and shadows drawn from a forbidden past; and the nation that mobilized people reemerges as abating diasporic spaces spread across South Korea, North Korea, and Japan.

The *APA Project* contains diverse ways of addressing the issues of diaspora that critique unifying nationalist discourses. The encounter that happened in the project between Okinawa artists and *zainich* artists who shared a common predicament even in different times and places contrib-

utes to the invention of a diasporic space. This encounter can also make a contribution to reflexivity and creativity in weaving new spaces. The *APA Project* seems to have served as a place of conversation and collaboration that made it possible for diverse stories of migrant generations, Japanese of Okinawan origin, and those with *postmemories* of the Jeju Uprising to converge and for young artists to rewrite these stories through their aesthetic languages. Through the project, they learn and experience the predicament of other minority artists, which resisted the authority of the state's pedagogical narrative of the people.

The *Asia, Politics, Art Project,* which was designed as a workshop to learn, remember, and share the predicament of others, reconstructs not only the special dimension of nations by cutting across national boundaries, the project also weaves the temporal dimension of the nation by connecting the past with the future. This reconstruction of time does not follow a linear logic of regression to the past or progression toward the future. Rather, it follows a logic of ritual that invites, soothes, and sends off spirits. Metaphorically speaking, the *zainich* artists and writers heal the broken feet of the deceased so that they could return to the present, and thus symbolic logic is distinct from the linear logic of national progress. With the help of the imagination and the mediation of artistic and literary practice, the new ankles (*boksappyeo*)[13] of the deceased in the past transcend the boundaries of a nation tainted by painful memories of the colonized and toward another kind of diasporic experience in Asia.

13. *Boksappyeo* in Korean means the ankle. *Boksa* and *ppyeo* mean peaches and bone, respectively. Koreans call the ankle *boksappyeo* because of the similarity in appearance between the ankle and peaches. So in this paper, attaching the new ankle, *boksappyeo*, onto the feet of the deceased symbolizes both the healing of spirits and an artistic practice of patching different images together.

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