

# ■ Cinematic Folds underneath “East Asia”: Humorous Traces of History in *H Story* and *Secret Sunshine*

Mayumo Inoue  
Hitotsubashi University

## Abstract

Especially since the 1930s, “East Asia” as a spatial imaginary has been increasingly deployed by Imperial Japan and the U.S. to institute a larval network of nation-forms that locally mediate and effectuate biopowers. For critical intellectuals today, a critical exodus out of an “East Asia” as an imperial network of nation-states is not only necessary; it has to propose an alternative process in politics and arts whereby categories of nationality, culture, and colonial difference are at once deconstructed and overcome.

This essay first situates the genealogical origin of the term “East Asia” in Japanese imperialism in the 1930s and then considers two theoretical efforts to critique metaphysical assumptions about culture that legitimate such imperial ideology: Martin Heidegger’s “The Age of the World Picture” and Rey Chow’s *The Age of the World Target*. If both Heidegger and Chow underscore the importance of “theory” as a practice in which currently foreclosed modes of life can be “thought,” they also shed a critical light upon a symptomatic return to a non-theoretical culturalism in East Asia today—most notably exemplified by the term “Asia as method”—whereby anticolonial political desires remain firmly tethered to the imperial scheme of culture.

In light of Heidegger’s exploration of “invisible shadows” and “secret emitting of light” that haunt “the world as picture,” cinema emerges as a productive site in which conceptualizations of “East Asia” as a metaphysical

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**Mayumo Inoue** is an Associate Professor of Comparative Literature in the Graduate School of Language and Society at Hitotsubashi University. His current work examines the intersection between sensuous forms in literature and cinema and an emergent, critical collectivity within the history of imperial formations across the US and Asia. His essay on Theresa Hak Kyung Cha and cinema appears in *Criticism* while his essay on American poet Charles Olson is forthcoming in *Discourse*. He is also a founding editor of *Las Barcas*, a journal on art and politics in Okinawa collectively run by younger artists and writers. E-mail: m.inoue@r.hit-u.ac.jp

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“picture” or “target” can be undone. The essay looks at two films, Suwa Nobuhiro’s *H Story* (2001) and Lee Changdon’s *Secret Sunshine* (2007), in which historical secrets re-emerge as the instances of newness in the present and release their witnesses from the schema of cultural nationalisms in Japan and South Korea. The paper concludes by suggesting a potential intersection among Heidegger’s reading of Kantian “schema,” Naoki Sakai’s critique of a “schema” of co-figurative nations, and Gilles Deleuze’s notion of “humor” as a “fold” that critically traverses the schematized world.

**Keywords:** Humor, Aesthetics, East Asia, Martin Heidegger, Naoki Sakai, Gilles Deleuze, East Asian Cinema

The term "East Asia" remains imbued with a certain echo of imperialism, a ghostly remainder that reminds us of its genealogical origin in the dominant discourses of Imperial Japan in the 1930s. As many historians of Imperial Japan have already shown, the term was originally popularized by a number of formerly progressive or leftist Japanese intellectuals who, having undergone the state's intense suppression of thoughts and expressions in the 1930s, began to adopt the tropes such as "East Asian alliance" (東亞聯盟) and "East Asian community" (東亞共同体) in order to promote a larval form of imperialism whereby Japan actively cooperates with the local nationalist movements and effectively utilizes the latter as the local agents of the empire's biopolitical arrangements. Aiming to somehow achieve the impossible double feat of reforming Japan's imperial capitalism *and* modernizing the "feudal" social structures in the colonies, various discourses of "East Asian community" in 1930s Japan—promulgated by formerly Marxist or pro-Marxist thinkers such as Miki Kiyoshi, Ozaki Hotsumi, and Royama Masamichi—gave credence to Imperial Japan's expansionist policies that actively incorporated the notions of "local culture" as the necessary components of its biopolitical *dispositif*.<sup>1</sup> It is, therefore, not by chance that Imperial Japan's attempted valorization of "local cultures" in both colonies and invaded territories in the 1930s coincided with its discovery of "societies" that need to be defended as the basic organizing unites of disciplinary and regulatory powers that are indispensable for the production of docile labor.<sup>2</sup>

Such a vision of "East Asia" has outlived the demise of Japanese imperialism and has haunted America's vision of its own trans-pacific hegemony since 1945. Post-1945 America's use of the term "East Asia-Pacific" evinces its attempt to subsume the newly independent nation-states such as the Republic of China and South Korea, US-occupied territory of Okinawa, and duly defeated Japan as an integral part of its economic and military sphere of dominance that now spreads globally. In fact, America's diplomatically dexterous placement of bilateral military treaties with the Philippines (1951), Japan (1952), South Korea (1953) and the Republic of China (1954-1979) cleverly obscured its military's imperial presence in the region through terms of formal equality between the two seemingly sovereign nation-states. As such relations of military domination have continued to this day, an influential security manifesto defines the US military presence in East Asia as a quasi-transcendental order whose necessity and legitimacy cannot be questioned.

<sup>1</sup> For a detailed account of the thinkers who gathered under the banner of "East Asian community" theory (東亞共同体論,) see, for instance, the essays collected in Yonetani *et al.* (2010).

<sup>2</sup> On this issue, see, for example, Arima (2013) and especially the chapter entitled "The Discovery of the Social" (288-339).

The so-called “Nye Report”—officially titled “United States Security Strategy for the East-Asia Pacific Region” (Feb, 1995)—affirms America’s status as “the pre-eminent Pacific power” especially after the end of World War II, arguing that “[s]ecurity is like oxygen” and that “[t]he American security presence has helped provide this ‘oxygen’ for East Asian development” (1). Written during the heyday of “Asia’s new economic success,” Nye’s “East Asia Report” insists on the increasing need for both “U.S. bilateral alliances” and “multilateral security dialogues.” America’s “East Asia” is thus sealed with the “oxygen” of its multinational militarism, an at once invisible, indispensable, and unquestionable horizon that informs the imperial arrangement of the nation-states that cooperate militarily and economically (6, unnumbered preface).

These visions for an “East Asian” community that aggregates the nation-states as part of its collective military and economic arrangements count as part of what Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri call “global sovereign” that operates “as an expansive power in networks.” Functioning as “a tendency and not as an already established and fixed model,” such a globally sovereign power to kill becomes structurally effectuated in its network, organizing a series of encounters which these theorists call “mixed constitution” between the universalist traversal of capital and their particularist effectuations in the legal and cultural apparatuses of the nation-states (Mezzadra 128, Hardt and Negri 166). As Naoki Sakai and Hyong Joo Yoo argue within the more specific context of East Asia, such “global sovereignty” is “irreducible to any single state of old imperialism” and unfolds as a “systematicity of international relationships in which national states are sustained in complicity” (12). Informed by these instances in which the notion of “East Asia” has been constantly put to *imperial* usages, intellectuals today perhaps face the double task of confronting “East Asia” as a conceptual apparatus that provides a spatial legitimation for the historical encounters between capital and the nation-states *and* attempting to open up new routes of solidarity, sympathy, and mutually transformative encounters within and across the space currently designated as “East Asia.” How would such an engagement in critical genealogy and deconstruction allow for an emergence of articulatory relations, a community in which an evocation of a “we” remains a vocative wager for a community with no essence or presupposed commonality?

### Ex-“East Asians” in “East Asia”

Post-1945 America’s postulation of “East Asia-Pacific” in the wake of Imperial Japan’s defeat corresponds to an inception of the new epoch that Rey

Chow refers to as "the Age of the World Target," wherein the U.S. increasingly determines its politics through the logic of "targeting" in its militarist and epistemic senses. In other words, especially within the context of the Cold War, the logic of targeting has helped to institute a closed loop between the US military's postulation of its enemies to be destroyed in East Asia and its area studies' provision of a classificatory schema that has divided Asia into liberal capitalist allies and communist enemies, both of which, however, need to be constantly surveyed, policed, and controlled (33-43). But if the type of epochal shift in America's military and epistemic hypostatization of "East Asia" which Chow here analyzes under the logic of "target" draws upon an earlier reflection upon the similarly violent epochal shift that Martin Heidegger has called "the age of the world picture," Heidegger's own critique of imperial metaphysics that reduces everything into "picture" and his exploration of beings that remain extraneous to such a schema merit our attention.

Heidegger's 1938 lecture "The Age of the World Picture" mostly devotes itself to an analysis of imperial metaphysics's "enframing" (*gestell*) of the world in a way such that the human beings emerge as the subjects capable of "calculating, planning, and molding," turning literally everything, including the very human subjects, into the representational "pictures" of classifiable types that can be consumed and expended as "resources." However, Heidegger also gestures toward a lurking presence of ghostly beings that haunt the frames of such pictorialized beings and potentially deframe their current figurations and configurations as pictures and resources. In his exploration of a "decisive" point at which the very logic of pictorialization gives way to an occult realm "withdrawn from representation," Heidegger describes how things at such a point appear no longer as pictures but rather as their "invisible shadow[s]," immediately re-describing these shadowy elements through a seemingly paradoxical trope of light, i.e., the "concealed emitting of light" (135, 154). As "a special quality" that exceeds the quantifiable limit of "what is gigantic," Heidegger's "invisible shadows" as "concealed emitting of light" proliferate across the field or the world in which things are indistinguishable from their metaphysical "pictures" and emerge as beings that are irreducible to the instrumentally rational logic of pictorialization.

Transposed upon "East Asia" or "East Asia-Pacific" which Chow argues has been pictorialized as an imperial "target," Heidegger's "shadows" that are paradoxically "bright" might bind a blindfold upon the imperial optics that has been used to represent the local nation-forms as the locally legitimated agents of disciplinary and regulatory biopolitics. At once blurred and brightened, and amorphous and shining, Heidegger's shadowy figures exceed a schema of nationalities that divides and (de)valorizes the bodies and things as the expendable resources

in the area currently pictorialized as “East Asia.” We might even designate these beings as ex-“East Asians” insofar as the prefix “ex-” connotes the logics of temporal overcoming (“no longer”) and spatial exteriority (“outside”).<sup>3</sup>

But such an exploration of a potentially extraneous space within the spatialized logic of “world as picture” and “East Asia as targets” has been hindered by the current resurgence of Asianism that embraces a culturalist notion of intra-regional cooperation as its method for resisting the alleged penetration of the preconstituted “West.” For instance, while Kuan-Hsin Chen’s *Asia as Method: Toward Deimperialization* proposes a series of laudable political goals (e.g., “deimperialization,” “decolonization,” and “de cold war”), its postulation of what Chen calls “revisionist nativism” as the prime methodology against the material and epistemic dominance of “the West” risks replicating a type of naïve metaphysics—which Foucault has famously criticized as “repressive hypothesis”—that ideologically naturalizes the capillary points at which political powers are effectuated and many local elite intellectuals become embodied instances of such powers. Thus, if Chen imagines that “[t]he West has been able to enter and generate real impacts in other geographical spaces without experiencing the same type or intensity of impacts from the outside” while “the global structure of power is uneven, and the geographical and imaginary site of the West is the most dominant and the richest in resources,” his attempted hypostatization of “Asia” as the *pre-imperialist* cultural substrate risks overlooking what Ann Laura Stoler calls a “*circuitous imperial route*” in which imperial discourses of self-mastery were not repressive but, instead, “productive of racial distinctions” in the colonial spaces (6, 8).

Further drawing upon Stoler’s astute relocation of the crucial import of Foucault’s theorization of nexus between sexuality and race in the Dutch East Indies, one could argue that Chen’s assumption of culture that is said to somehow predate an imperial process naturalizes and hence elides the inherently dynamic aspect of the very notion of culture itself and, therefore, further entrenches the “force fields in which imperial knowledge was promoted and desiring subjects were made” (Stoler, 15). As Chen valorizes what he calls “revisionist nativism” as an analytical method and cites Neil Garcia’s description of “traditional *bakra* practices” in the Philippines that are said to temporarily precede and qualitatively differ from the allegedly “Western” homosexuality, Chen’s

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<sup>3</sup> My formulation of “ex-East Asians”, who both overcome and exist as the schema of nationalities in East Asia, is derived from Akira Mizuta Lippit’s notion of “ex-Cinema” that is mobilized to index affective specificities that inhabit and yet are excluded from the filmic frames and the notions of medium specificity (5-6).

attempt to rescue "the analytical value of concepts that existed prior to Western influence" repeats the very *effect* of imperial encounters in which certain sexual practices are *discursively* assembled, coded, and (de)valorized *as* at once temporarily pre-discursive and spatially distinct (222). Such a binarism not only contributes, once again, to the figuration of the centrality of the West as the Other's Other but also risks legitimating the processes of primitive accumulation whereby capital subsumes (and exploits) local labor as the always already particularized beings within the hierarchical distribution of skills and privileges within colonial spaces.<sup>4</sup>

Crucially, Chen's invocation of his "Asia" as "an *emotional signifier*" that may cathect some intellectuals to his culturalist notion of anti-colonialism is made possible through an elision of both genealogical inquiries best exemplified by Foucault and Stoler *and* deconstructive critiques of "co-figurative" complicity between universalism and particularism most notable in the work of Naoki Sakai. When Chen initially valorizes Sakai's essay "Modernity and its Critique: The Problem of Universalism and Particularism" and yet quickly dismisses it as "desperately trying to unpack universalist pretensions [while] universalist still prevails" (218), Chen's implicit characterization of theoretical inquiry in general and deconstruction in particular as amounting only to a merely "desperate" "unpacking" raises a deep concern over the ways in which he institutes a bifurcation between theory and empiricism first and then sets up a corresponding opposition between theorists and non-theorists in his "Asia." Chen's dismissal throughout of both genealogical and deconstructive analyses as somehow merely idealist methods of "unpacking" that do not amount to an allegedly more materialist critique of the entity he hypostatizes as "the West" is possible only if one presumes two untenable hypotheses: so-called theoretical queries are unable to effect change in the hegemonic conceptualization and distribution of colonial difference; and so-called ordinary people are incapable of producing such theoretical knowledge in the midst of their quotidian lives.<sup>5</sup> Chen's "revisionist nativist" notion of "Asia" as uniquely distinct from "the West" performatively legitimates its own preemptive exclusion of theory from politics and people from theory. Such a vision of "Asia" may have to explain how it could mount a challenge

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<sup>4</sup> The intimate relation between postulation of cultural difference and process of primitive accumulation exceeds the parameter of the current paper. For detailed arguments and analyses, see the recent texts of Jason Read, Gavin Walker, and Wendy Matsumura.

<sup>5</sup> Such devalorization of Sakai's "deconstruction of nationality" as somehow materially ineffective overlooks a strong strain of materialist critique in Sakai that has been inspired by Jean-Luc Nancy, Jacques Ranciere, and Ito Jinsai. On a possible articulation of Sakai and Marx/Negri, see, for instance, the essays by Gavin Walker and Sandro Mezzadra.

to culturalism's placement within the global space of knowledge production dominated by orientalism, local process of primitive accumulation wherein a series of cultural differences demanded by capital are immediately naturalized and made unquestionable, and the ensuing worries concerning xenophobia in a local space and foreclosed solidarity with so-called non-Asians both locally and globally.

### **Humors of History across the Schema of Nations: *H Story* and *Secret Sunshine***

From the outset, my reading of Suwa Nobuhiro's film *H Story* (2001) and Lee Changdon's film *Secret Sunshine* (2007) that follows focuses upon the ways in which these films proliferate certain historical secrets as the vibratory humors that permeate and traverse across and against the bounded spaces of East Asian nation-states such as Japan and South Korea. By doing so, historical memories—which have often been acknowledged only as the properties to be commemorated and archived by their respective national subjects or citizens—rematerialize in these films as sensuous forces that potentially unlimit the delimited borders of nationalities, national cultures, and their representative subjects that have heretofore locally subtended the imperially “mixed” coordination of capital and nation. As such, the two films' indications of almost invisible traces of the past that undergo their transfigurations in the present as humors approach “the space withdrawn from representation” that Heidegger and Chow variously seek to locate in the midst of world conceived *and* expended as “picture” or “target” respectively.

More specifically, historical secrets as humors in *H Story* and *Secret Sunshine* interrupt chronological assumptions of not only national histories but film histories that are similarly conceived in terms of the current grid of nationalities. That is, these films' quests for secrets underneath the official historiographies of the nation-states proceed through their revisitings of their more canonical predecessors in which the traces of violent political events are always already coded as either beautiful symbols or sublime allegories that belong to the aestheticized archives of national(ist) histories. To be more precise, *H Story*, on one hand, engages its actors in a project to create a perverse remake of Alain Resnais' *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (1959), a film which risks dialectically subsuming the allegedly unrepresentable traumas of the atomic bombing in Hiroshima in August 1945 as the hidden and unimaginable property of the post-1945 Japanese nation-state. On the other hand, *Secret Sunshine* both thematically and cinematically revisits Lee's own previous film *Peppermint Candy* (2000) and critically revises the latter's tendency to valorize the historical wounds of Kwangju People's Democratic Up-

rising in May 1980 mostly as the potentially beautiful symbols of the nation-form and its male-centered national culture that are somehow free of imperial or heteronomous determinations.

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*H Story* is a film that documents its actors failed and failing attempts to construct a fictitious mimesis of Alain Resnais' 1959 film, *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (referred to hereafter as *Mon Amour*).<sup>6</sup> As such, it implicitly departs from *Mon Amour*'s two-step sublimation and sublation of the traces of the atomic Hiroshima into the properties of post-1945 Japan's national history. As the viewers of Resnais' film might recall, *Mon Amour* goes at length to insist upon the unrepresentability of the bombing's magnitude and then proceeds to distribute such unrepresentability to the man named "Hiroshima" (played by Eiji Okada) and "Nevers" (played by Emmanuel Riva), both of whom are implicated by the logic that enfigures them as the citizens of Japan and France respectively and, therefore, as the hierarchically gradated recipients and proprietors of the unrepresentable Hiroshima. That is to say, the Japanese man in the film is postulated as the exemplary representative of Japanese nation-state who is imagined as more proximate to the inapproachable traces of the bombing than the French woman in the film who is postulated as incapable of approximating the former's proximity to the fact of the bombing.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, in imagining post-1945 notion of French nationality, *Mon Amour* similarly postulates this woman named "Nevers" as one who indexes French citizens' loosely shared sense of being unable to approach the memories of the Holocaust since their relations to the latter remain marked by a series of political betrayals and moral indifferences that led to the establishment of Vichy France. Resnais' co-figuration of the man named "Hiroshima" and the woman named "Nevers" as the two impossible guardians of their respective nation-states' historical archives wittingly or unwittingly puts his film within the debate within Cold War geopolitics concerning the declining status of Japan and France as the two formerly imperial powers in Asia. The two characters thus explore how the moral positions of the nation-states they allegedly represent can be recuperated in the post-1945 Asia-Pacific

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<sup>6</sup> Some argue that the "H" in the title *H Story* may in fact refer to "hentai" or perversion. For Suwa's own account of his notions of linguistic and financial poverty that is constitutive of critical filmmaking practice, see my published interview in Japanese with the filmmaker.

<sup>7</sup> Cathy Caruth, in her well-known treatise on traumatic repetition *Unclaimed Experience*, positively discusses the lines in French, which Eiji Okada mechanically memorized without understanding, as the negative indexes of Hiroshima memories which he would otherwise enunciate more freely in Japanese (50).

that is under the hegemonic domination of the U.S. Insofar as the film puts “Hiroshima” and “Nevers” into an eroticized diplomatic relation that transacts an exchange of these negative indexes of national memories, it engages in what Yuko Shibata aptly calls “the Franco-Japanese collaboration in the American shadow.”<sup>8</sup>

To briefly redescribe this logic through terms in aesthetics, *Mon Amour*’s figuration of the unrecuperable traces of the bombing in Hiroshima replicates the Kantian formulation of the sublime, whereby a negative index of an unrepresentable magnitude yields an initially painful sense of inadequacy in the subject, which is thereafter dialectically sublated into a pleasurable confirmation of its own ability to approximate moral reason and its imperatives. As Kant writes in *Third Critique*, if “our Imagination, even in its greatest efforts, in respect of that comprehension . . . of a given object in a whole of intuition . . . exhibits its own limits and inadequacy,” “[t]he feeling of Sublime” initially confers “a feeling of pain, arising from the want of accordance between the aesthetical estimation of magnitude formed by Imagination and the estimation of the same formed by Reason.” As expected, the Kantian subject here immediately sets upon the task of appropriating this very rift between imagination and reason as his own so as to buttress his status as the exemplary moral constituent of a certain political community: “there is at the same time a pleasure thus excited, arising from the correspondence with rational Ideas of this very judgment of the inadequacy of our greatest faculty of Sense” (71-72). *Mon Amour* shows a similarly Kantian tendency to deploy its actors as the representatives of the very rift between their constitutively inadequate imaginings of the past events and their conjectural beliefs in some moral maxims that are incited by the very feelings of inadequacy. The man named “Hiroshima” and the woman named “Nevers” are able to shift his and her senses of imaginative “inadequacy” into “a pleasure thus excited” and emerge as the exemplary representatives of the postwar Japanese and French nation-forms, while these nation-states, by definition, legitimate themselves by simultaneously promising and deferring their realization of substantial equality within their territorial bounds.<sup>9</sup>

Suwa Nobuhiro’s film *H Story* escapes from such a pedagogical aesthetics, which subtends the emergence of nation-forms and their representative historiographers in both Japan and France. Such flight comes to the fore since Suwa, as the film’s director, encourages his actors to divert from *Mon Amour*’s focus upon

<sup>8</sup> As Yuko Shibata draws our attention to, the Japanese protagonist’s main task in the film is to rescue the French woman from another Japanese man who mimics Americanized English in the bar named Casa Blanca.

<sup>9</sup> On the complicitous involvement of the symbolic figuration of beauty and the allegorical indication of the sublime in nationalist and minoritarian project of *bildung*, see David Lloyd’s “Kant’s Examples.”

the logic of the sublime, soliciting their improvised revisions and perversions of the original script written by Marguerite Duras by way of a logic of humor. But, in order to examine the ways in which the logic of the sublime is critically and perversely supplemented by the logic of humor, it is first necessary to note how *H Story* visually foregrounds the images of mobility and vibration by repeatedly underscoring spaces characterized by incessant arrivals of watery undulation and vibration. For instance, the sound and image of a river into which many victims of the bombing plunged on August 6, 1945 supplement the dialogue between Beatrice Dalle (who appears as Dalle herself who constantly fails to provide a mimetic replication of Riva from *Mon Amour*) and Umano Hiroaki (who likewise appears as himself who attempts to imitate the role of Okada) that focuses upon their dissatisfactions toward the overly poetic script for *Mon Amour* written by Duras. Similarly, in another scene set on a beach, an image of ocean waves continues to arrive toward Dalle and Ko Machida—a well-known novelist and punk musician—after the latter has solicited Dalle to botch the film project and taken her on an ad-hoc excursion in Hiroshima.

These images of waves are indicative of a certain cinematic nascence of sense at the border of sight and sound, i.e., the limit organized by the logic of cinema that at once links and delimits the filmed images and the recorded sounds. By oscillating between the waves' images that are devoid of their sounds and the similar images of the waves that emphasize their disquieting sounds, the waves in the scene—as they appear and sound to Dalle and Machida—offer an alternative notion of the sublime that no longer exceeds the realm of experience. Thus, when these waves are *felt* as that which vibrates and agitates upon a sensuous limit where sight and sound in cinema touch one another, the very vibrations remain to the actors as the *empirical* traces of that which transcends their current manners of imagining the self and the other. As Jean-Luc Nancy further theorizes the serially contiguous alignment of infinite finite senses, "[e]ach sensing touches on the rest of sensing as that which it cannot sense" and, as a result, "this zone [of a specific sense]" that is touched by "other zones of sensing" at its limit "ceases being the zone that it is" (*Muses*, 17).

Such a discovery in the film of what Nancy elsewhere calls "sublimitas"—or that which trembles "just below the limit" which human imagination figurates for itself—is linked to the film's citation of the figures of the bombing's survivors as the *similarly moving* images from a documentary footage shot by U.S. Air Force offices in 1946. In these footages, which are sporadically cited in *H Story*, the survivors of the bombing are shown as persistently mobile as they reassemble their lives in the midst of the wreckage and detritus: a vendor passing by the leveled buildings, a local male student who serves as an ad hoc film clapper holder for the

American filming crew and smiles in front of the camera, and the pedestrians walking around the traffic signal pole heavily bent by the impact of the bombing.<sup>10</sup> The actors who enact their flights from *Hiroshima Mon Amour* seem to re-trace the very tremors of these survivors that are traced in the U.S. military footage by inventing humorous remarks and movements in today's Hiroshima and causing the viewers to undergo similarly spasmodic reverberations.

Thus, Machida and Dalle wander in the roofed arcade of Hiroshima as if they were two flâneurs who have escaped *Mon Amour's* aesthetics of the sublime. Machida then appropriately reinvents the overly melodramatic French sentence that Eiji Okada utters to Emmanuel Riva, i.e., "I cannot see you again" and casually enunciates the same sentence in Japanese to a stray dog that is tied to a pole in the arcade. If Machida's addressing to the dog seems at once maddening and comical, it also prompts Dalle to similarly engage in a mode of address that exceeds a shared norm of significations in a given language. That is, when Dalle seems to enjoy, perhaps for the first time in the film, being in Hiroshima in the ensuing scene in the arcade, she watches two young street musicians play and tells Machida in English that these musicians "look like cartoon." Unable to comprehend the English word "cartoon," Machida replies, "cats?" If Dalle's reference to the musicians as "cartoon" seems already somewhat humorous as she reverses a commonsensical notion of cartoon that imitates reality into its obverse whereby real people look cartoonish, Machida further intensifies Dalle's implicit appreciation of animatedness and displaces it into a more general logic of animality by first speaking to a stray dog in Japanese and then discovering the cartoonish musicians in their resemblance to cats.<sup>11</sup> *H Story's* attempt to critically go beyond or, to be more precise, go right beneath *Mon Amour's* pedagogical aesthetics of the sublime and its diplomatic exchange of sublime national memories culminates with Machida's and Dalle's maddening addresses that turn every person who moves in the arcade of today's Hiroshima into an animated being. The film, by the end, leaves us with a lingering series of vibrating bodies: the survivors in 1946, the actors whose divide their feeling of incoming waves among the senses and across the bodies, and the bodies, including those of the actors, that are moved by asignifying notes of music and sounds of language in today's Hiroshima.

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<sup>10</sup> The American film footage used in *H Story* is part of *Hiroshima, Way of Life* made by the US Air Force in 1946.

<sup>11</sup> My reading of *H Story* in relation to its animal-based perversion of Duras's *Hiroshima Mon Amour* is highly indebted to Akira Mizuta Lippit's reading of both films. Part of Lippit's inventive reading is indicated in his published lecture titled "Like Cats and Dogs: Cinema and Catastrophe."

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Lee Changdon's *Secret Sunshine* opens another circuit of secret, an occult corridor of light that traffics between itself and Lee's own previous film *Peppermint Candy*. By doing so, *Secret Sunshine* revises *Peppermint Candy's* tendency to tether the psychological wounds of an epochal political event in South Korea's *minjung* movement, i.e., Kwangju People's Democratic Uprising, to a largely national optics. If *Secret Sunshine* initially seems to melodramatically recount the travesty of a young female widow who suffered an abduction and murder of her son in the south eastern regional city of Miryang, it nonetheless contrabands the historical secrets from both *Peppermint Candy* and from the city of Kwangju which the latter describes. Thus, the film quietly extends the afterlives of the Kwangju Uprising in a manner that has been foreclosed by the nation-state's commemoration of the same event. *Secret Sunshine* casts a light upon such a passage of secrets between Kwangju and Miryang, the two cities whose semantic affinities become discernible once the viewers of the two films pay attention to the notions of light that the former publicizes to its citizens and the latter conceals as its secret: Kwangju as "a province of light" (光州) and Miryang as "a secret sunshine" (密陽).<sup>12</sup> Titrularly and thematically, *Secret Sunshine* emerges as a certain cryptic afterlife of Kwangju in May, 1980, that is to say, of desires and hopes that remain latent in the officially sanctioned narrative of the event given by the nation-state in which the citizens' lives were said to be sacrificed for both South Korea's achievement of merely formal democracy and, in fact, the very notion of sacrificial death for the nation-form.

The film's effort to encrypt these desires and hopes that remain unattended within the officially approved and spectacularized representations of the uprising, which reduce the event into a part of the larger developmental effort to recuperate the capitalist nation-form, necessarily proceeds via Lee's revisionist critique of his own preceding work, *Peppermint Candy*. While often hailed for its strikingly sincere depiction of both the pervasive ethos that subtended the student and labor movements and the emotional interiority of a young male protagonist who could not join these movements due to his poverty and lack of education during South Korea's authoritarian developmentalist era in the late 1970s and

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<sup>12</sup> Lee himself notes in a published interview that the short story "An Insect's Tale" ("벌레 이야기," [1988]) by Lee Chong-jun on which the film's script was based made him think of Kwangju in 1980 despite the story's thematic difference. Because the short story problematizes the logic whereby "the perpetrators forgive themselves and demand reconciliation," the filmmaker thinks that the story implicitly questions the Korean state's handling of the Kwangju perpetrators that fails to attend to the victims' own desires.

the 1980s, the narrative of *Peppermint Candy* attempts to resolve the irresolvable desires of these people to seek egalitarian social articulations by treating these desires as nostalgically valorizable instances of beauty that are largely formal and thus depoliticized. The film, therefore, attempts to recruit these occasions of beauty as the properties of the imagined nationality that is somehow free of heteronomous and foreign influences.<sup>13</sup> For instance, the film's male protagonist Yongho's continuous obsession with the white color and the pure taste of peppermint candy speaks for the film's overall yearning for nationhood as a beautiful object that symbolizes a depoliticized vision of social harmony and unity. Quite expectedly perhaps, the film posits a highly gendered notion of the nation as a beautiful object that is more natural than cultural and more feminine than masculine. This is why the young Yongho's desires to photograph a "nameless flower," to savor the allegedly pure taste of a peppermint candy, and to fall in love with Sunmin—a female factory worker who he imagines to be an instantiation of the same beauty and purity—are more or less interchangeable indexes of his naïve wish to be a cultural representative of such naturalized and feminized instances of harmony and unity which are said to preexist politics. While Yongho's conscription into the military and his unwitting killing of an innocent female student in Kwangju in May, 1980 serve to ostracize him from such a project to hypostatize an imagined nation that somehow precedes politics and discourse, Yongho's subsequent and deliberate taking up of jobs that seem to him morally corrupt, e.g., police officer and *nouveau riche* businessman, in the economically booming 1990s reveals the extent to which he strives to reserve a distance between his currently corrupt status and his past aspiration to represent the imagined nation in its alleged purity.

*Peppermint Candy*, however, also contains a potentially productive rift between its visible appraisal of Yongho's male-centered cultural nationalism and its somewhat attenuated yet persistently legible indication of other desires. In fact, such desires are most notably instantiated by none other than Sunmin who, as a factory worker, produces the very peppermint candy not merely as a gift to her lover but as a commodity produced through her exploitable factory work. As if to encapsulate the overdetermined crystallizations of desires that mutually contend and cannot be sutured, the candy Sunmin produces in a factory and Yongho receives from her at a river outlines both a female laborer's desire to somehow protest the logic of the patriarchal nation-state that imposes exploitative terms of production and reproduction on female bodies and a male culturalist's desire to represent

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<sup>13</sup> Of course, these refer to Sunman Lee, Park Chon Hee, and Chon Do Hwang.

a pristine national culture and its gendered terms of social harmony. While Yongho's culturalism ultimately risks subscribing to capitalist socius that requires a cultural grid of particularized subjectivities, Sunmin's critique of the gendered process of exploitation and its facilitation by the authoritarian state seeks to interrupt a nexus of power that triangulates the nation (culture), the state (law), and capital.

*Secret Sunshine* takes up Sunmin's critique of the complicitous circuit of power formed between the quasi-universalist logic of capital and the particularist logic of the nation-state by allowing its female protagonist Shine-ae to seek a secret refuge, which opens up after she has lost her claims to both the family as a site of reproduction and jobs as the sites of production and exchange. The film narratively traces a series of displacements whereby Shin-ae only appears in her constantly precarious transit from one type of economically valorizable subjectivity to another: from a housewife to a good widow, from a piano teacher to a wealthy investor, from an investor to a generous forgiver of sinners who even forgives a man who murdered her son. By the time of her desperate conversion to evangelical Christianity, Shin-ae finds herself trapped, as Rey Chow astutely observes, "in the open, flexible networks of circulation—of spreading, verbalizing, and physical performing [forgiveness] to and by all and sundry" in the economically ruined, regional urban space of Miryang (229). But, here, parallel to the film's narrative disclosure of such a metonymically displaced series of performed subjectivities which Shin-ae hopes will facilitate her economic survival, there is also a cinematic intrusion of light into the scenes of Shin-ae's subjections as the economic subject. It wafts around her body, as if to open a space that is both different and distanced from the logic of exploitation and commodification. *Secret Sunshine* opens this window to a light that is otherwise withdrawn within the space of the nation and capital.

Thus, if Shin-ae's inability to exit "an unending series of human transactions in which one-upmanship is always possible but never permanent" sets her on a path toward becoming "a madwoman," *Secret Sunshine* seeks to transfigure such a space of "madness" into a place that is at once amorphous and unlimited and traversed by the intrusions of light and humor (Chow 227). In fact, both light and humor appear as peristaltic vibrations and movements that are effectuated by that which do not count as part of the dominant structure that otherwise dictates—both imagistically and narratively—Shin-ae's subjectivity as commodity. In other words, the elements of both light and humor wrap the bodies that have heretofore been subjectivated, releasing them into an emergent field of sympathetic trembling that traverses the plural bodies.

One such instance of humor's traversal across and transformation of plural

bodies occurs when Shin-ae returns from the mental institution and comes across a woman who runs a small boutique in her neighborhood. As this female neighbor briefly looks at Shin-ae's unevenly cut hair and realizes that she has just run away from a hair salon in a fit of anger, she utters to Shin-ae a colloquial expression (in Korean), "Have you gone mad?" as a joke. The woman begins to laugh as she immediately notices both cruelty and inappropriateness in her asking Shin-ae to gauge her madness. But if Shin-ae who has been deemed as "mad" is asked to diagnose her own madness, such a logic brings about a more radical notion of madness that is no longer detectable in its distance from social norms but is instead immanent to itself and productive of its own continuous self-deviation. The woman's unwittingly cruel joke opens such a zone of immanent madness that is in no way indebted to the logic that may force Shin-ae to reproduce or produce for others. This is why Shin-ae also begins to laugh at the woman's joke although she does so somewhat more briefly and sadly, as if to be exhilarated by an opening of such an alternative space and to note the ephemeral nature of the very opening itself. In this fleeting moment, however, Shin-ae and the female neighbor, who runs a financially struggling boutique, stand side-by-side like two islands within the larger field of humor where the logic of nonsense does not rely upon a set of preexisting truths but rhythmically bounces and sounds forth its own grammatical and syntactical vibrations. Solitary yet contiguous, they are mutually vibrated because each woman is somehow capable of at once protecting her madly singular uniqueness from the logic of indebtedness to the market and the nation and proliferating it across the city.

### **Unknown Routes/Roots of Humor as the Folds of History**

The humorous forces that traverse in *H Story* and *Secret Sunshine* release their protagonists from the cultural nationalist spaces of Japan and South Korea, the spheres wherein historical memories have been invariably appropriated as the properties of the respective nations' developmental self-narrations. Insofar as these humorous addresses that transpire between the actors in *H Story* and *Secret Sunshine* no longer presuppose the current grid of national or cultural subjects and, instead, instantiate the emergences of singular beings that are at once immanent, solitary, and yet expository to one another, they also provide an instance of what Sakai memorably calls "a nonaggregate community of foreigners" who commune and communicate across and against the current "schema of co-figuration" with which the images of more than two nationalities are sustained in complicity (9, 52).

But how can one extend Sakai's analysis of such an aleatory poiesis of relations across and against the schematism of nationalities to the linguistic transmissions of humor or humorous vibration that similarly exceed and disrupt schematism's production of complicitous links between image and knowledge? Quite tellingly, one might surmise that Sakai's critique of "schema of co-figurative" nationalities through aleatory social acts he calls "heterolingual address" draws upon Heidegger's underscoring of an "abyssal" "root" within human imagination, one that remains irreducible to the schema's ability to organize images as that which visually instantiate the given concepts. Therefore, Sakai's critique of "schema of co-figuration" (of nations) does cite Heidegger's close-reading of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. As Sakai writes,

As Heidegger clearly understood with regard to Kantian schematism, the representing of the rule is the schema. And, as far as the regime of translation is concerned, the rule thus represented is an inversion in retrospection. (54)<sup>14</sup>

Since such a passage points to an implicit affinity between Sakai's critique of schematism of nationalities and Heidegger's critique of Kantian schematism, Sakai's notion of "heterolingual address" as a form of *aleatory* address that at once traverses and resists being represented within the schematized space of the nations also resonates with Heidegger's discussion of the "root" that is "unknown" in human imagination and its retention of "something disquieting" in the midst of the objects otherwise classified and valorized according to the schema.

This original, essential constitution of humankind, 'rooted' in the transcendental power of imagination, is the 'unknown' into which Kant must have looked [in the so-called *Version A of the First Critique*] if he spoke of the 'root unknown to us,' for the unknown is not that of which we simply know nothing. Rather, it is what pushes us as something disquieting in what is known." (Heidegger 112)

Heidegger's meticulous reading of Kant's discussion of schema thus discloses the largely "unknown" but certainly "disquieting" underside of schematism. Such an underside, which he refers to inventively as "something disquieting in what is known," lies just underneath the metaphorical bridge Kant institutes between imagination and understanding in order to render images as the objects that can merely be recognized by these two different faculties. Two questions might arise from Heidegger's attestation to such a secretive underside in the

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<sup>14</sup> In an important footnote, Sakai summarizes his critical assessment of Tanabe Hajime's critique of Heidegger's reading of the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Tanabe's departure from Heidegger led to his spatialization of world historical time and resulted in his infamous "logic of species" that helped to legitimate Japanese national subjects' allegedly superior status vis-à-vis the other human "species" in Asia (note 11, 202-203).

Kantian notion of schema. First, how might one activate “the transcendental power of imagination” as that which moves us spatially (“what pushes us”) and aurally (“something disquieting”) beyond the currently hegemonic parameters of encoding and understanding experience? Second, if such a transcendental “root” of imagination does not remain fixed through categories of understanding but exists only as a constantly modifiable effect of one’s being touched spatially and aurally by the exterior being that of the sensible, can we reconceptualize the very “root” and “abyss” which still adhere to the conventionally elitist notions of depth and height as an interfacial opening or orifice that is inscribed superficially upon or at the limits of one’s skin? Can we, then, reconceptualize the seemingly paradoxical notion of “transcendental experience” as not being *rooted* in the solitary depth of the bound individual but instead *routed* in a myriad of aleatory encounters with other beings that are not individual but singular?<sup>15</sup>

This is where we encounter a type of logic which Gilles Deleuze calls “the solution of humor” that differs “from the romantic irony of the person still founded upon the identity of contraries” and appears to be a mode of being that enables one to selectively participate in the event of eternal return as an occasion that is constitutive of one’s own individuation as singularity (205). By citing Pierre Klossowski, Deleuze explains how such a recursion of what is both individuating and singular occurs as an event, exposing one to inappropriable “oscillations that upset him,” a series of “fortuitous” or aleatory vibrations that are offered from other beings (204). Having been liberated from romantic irony that remains captivated by the notion of “either depth or height,” such inappropriable oscillations correspond more or less to Heidegger’s “disquieting something” and provide to us “*the facts of the surface*” or, as Deleuze explains by way of Simondon’s equally suggestive formulation, “membranes” as the interfaces where “the entire content of internal space is topologically in contact with the content of external space *on the limits of the living*” (emphasis mine, 225-226).

Such skins and membranes are not the sites upon which preexisting events of the past merely wait for their different actualizations, a process which Deleuze calls “static genesis” whereby a residual notion of essentialist historicism is still retained. Rather, a previously unimaginable event that erupts in the present materializes not simply *upon* but rather *as* the very orifices, the singular points of exposition at which an image of the self remains fundamentally dehesive, inva-

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<sup>15</sup> For an extended analysis of the constitutive difference between the logic of singularity and that of the individual, see Jean-Luc Nancy’s *Inoperative Community*, esp. pp. 33-35, 72-73. My reading of Heidegger’s notion of “root” of transcendental imagination as always already “routed” is indebted to Masato Goda’s reading of the same notion in his treatise on Heidegger and Japanese philosopher Hajime Tanabe.

ginated, and open to the outside. In fact, the event itself is productive of "the dynamic formation of a surface space around a singularity constituted by the orifice." Interpreted in this context as an implicit translation of Heidegger's "something disquieting" at "the root" of imagination, Deleuze's discussion of the event as productive of "dynamic genesis" also brings with it a novel understanding of the evental space that is borne or created in such a genesis. That is, Heidegger's "root" is redescribed here as a composite that joins "surface" and "orifice" and, therefore, constitutes a "fold" of force. Deleuze's notion of "fold" therefore aptly illustrates a nascent zone where depth and surface are mutually contaminated and ultimately indistinguishable, inscribing a limit upon which the bounded self as such is always already invaginated by the sensuous peculiarities of the outside. In Deleuze's own words, an orifice, which may initially seem abyssal or rooted, is, in fact, "a local orifice . . . hemmed in at the surface" or "a fold more or less easily undone" that emerges in its "joining up" with the events of time (214, 225-226).

Deleuze thus reconfigures the transcendental "root" of imagination "unknown to us" (Heidegger) into the routes of rhizomes and their orifices and folds that arise from the larval encounters of senses including humor. "The solution of humor" inscribes historical wounds as the lines, limits, and "linings" that enfold constitutively exterior sense into the heretofore subjectivated bodies and thus re-substantiate the same bodies as already traversed and outlined by the "lines of [collective] flight." These enfolded lines or linings at once reserve and proliferate the humorously nonsensical vibrations right underneath and upon the schema that figurates nationalities. For Deleuze, "the humorous actor" can withstand the ironist's temptation to hypostatize the truth beyond the current categories and, instead, engage in a task that is at once more everyday and liberating: "the actor delimits the original, disengages from it an abstract line, and keeps from the event only its contour and its splendor, becoming thereby the actor of one's own events—a *counter-actualization*" (171).

*H Story* and *Secret Sunshine* give birth to these beings whom Deleuze calls "humor actors," carrying the vibratory folds of history within and often against the "mixed constitution" that sustains both universalist capital and particularist nation-states in mutual complicity. In *H Story*, when the humor actors re-trace the traces of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and address their experiences of being wounded by such traces to one another, they do so no longer as the citizens of the nations or even human beings, but as cats and dogs. In *Secret Sunshine*, the humor-actors make one another laugh and cry as they exchange their solitary experiences of being a "madwoman" within the market logic that equates respectability and valorizability. These solitary women are nevertheless connected sympathetically to one another precisely because the lines and the

folds that tremble on their laughing faces retrace the wounding traces of power that have subjectivated and subjugated other bodies.

As Deleuze notices in the writing of Joe Bousquet, a poet who was maimed during the First World War, a wound by nature is a double inscription upon which the violent logic that delimits us as the subjects can be rhythmically and vibrantly unlimited by the proliferation of a certain “splendor and brightness” that emanate from the very sites of subjectivation and subjugation (170). A wound describes the social structure and, precisely at the same time, traces the outer limit of the same socius whereby other senses and images the latter attempts to foreclose erupt forth and traverse across. Perhaps the lesson to be drawn from these films comes down to this: humor allows us to laugh at and upon the limits of socius collectively and ethically, and it also produces the incomplete subjects of laughing who partake in the eventual return of history as secrets.

Humor is history’s double inscription, the latter’s “eternal truth” which, “like the fire upon which it is fed,” proliferates the unlimiting oscillations capable of deconstructing and destructing the delimited socius that is overdetermined by the logics of capital, state, and nation. When the routes of such double wounds traverse East Asia, we might inhabit or travel in this region that is no longer imaged as an aggregate of imagined nations and cultures. Instead, East Asia is only a temporary signifier that can be mobilized and utilized insofar as it might help us to see, hear, and, in fact, be touched by the routes of secrets that traverse underneath it, the folds of history’s secrets in their vibratory recursions and becomings that constitute and reconstitute their witnesses to come.

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## 電影褶皺下的「東亞」：《廣島別戀》 和《密陽》中滑稽的歷史軌跡

### 摘要

自1930年代開始，「東亞」做為一種空間想像，長期以來漸漸被日本帝國和美國當作是建置國家基礎網絡的形式，成為實行在地生命掌控的媒介。對於現今的知識份子而言，以一種具批判性的出離「東亞」做為民族國家的帝國網絡，實屬必要；該方法必須尋求另一種政治和藝術的途徑，在此同時，國族、文化和殖民差異的範疇將被解構。

本論文首先處理「東亞」一詞於1930年代日本帝國主義的系譜來源，接著思考兩種批判形而上假說的理論如何處理帝國意識形態合理化的文化現象：馬丁·海德格的〈世界影像的時代〉，以及周蕾的《世界標靶的時代》。倘若海德格和周蕾兩人皆強調以「理論」做為一種實踐的重要性，他們也清楚地揭示出一種轉向當今東亞非理論的文化主義徵兆，其中最為顯著的例子即是「亞洲即理論」一詞。在此其中，反殖民的政治欲望仍舊受到帝國文化範疇的束縛。

**關鍵字：**幽默、美學、東亞、海德格、酒井直樹、德勒茲、東亞電影

