공주님과 코 그리고 밥 한 공기
한국 미술 속 (무의식의) 탈식민화의 조각들

소피아 두론

The Princess, the Nose, and a Bowl of Rice
BITS OF DECOLONIZATION (of the unconscious) IN KOREAN ART

Sofía Dourron

이 논문은 무의식의 탈식민화 개념을 한국 동시대 미술가들의 실천 속에서 탐구한다. 브라질의 심리학자이자 문화비평가인 수엘리 호우니크(Suely Rolnik)에 따르면, 무의식의 탈식민화란 일상생활에서 식민적 권력이 남긴 현재의 흔적을 탐색하고, 권력의 경계를 벗어나 존재할 방도를 찾아낸다는 뜻이다. 이런 관점에서 식민화 개념은 본질적으로 현대성의 개념과 얽혀 있는 터, 현재 우리가 살아가는 세계의 체제를 이루는 같은 동전의 양면과 같다. 수 세기 동안 우리의 무의식은 순전히 그 체제의 힘으로 형성되어 왔고, 지금 그것은 금융화된 신자유주의 체제의 모습을 하고 있다. 결과적으로 우리는 주체의 경험이 삶의 조건과 유리되고, 또 그 무엇보다 주체 바깥의 —"타자"(Other) 인간이든 아니든, 즉 이웃이든 미생물이든 산이든 결국 인간 경험의 전 층위에서 나타나는 폭력과 정서적 불안을 일으킬 수 있는—와 분리되는 악화의 과정을 지켜본 목격자다.

이 글은 미술가들이 식민주의, 가부장제, 젠더, 사회적 정상성, 질식 상태의 욕망 같은 문제로 구현된 이 불안정성의 문제를 단순한 관찰의 대상이 아닌 탈식민화를 위한 발화의 장소이자 출발점으로 삼아 어떤 방식으로 다룰 수 있는가를 살펴본다. 「공주님과 코 그리고 밥 한 공기: 한국 미술 속 (무의식의) 탈식민화의 조각들」은 다음의 사례들을 통해 탐색해 나아간다. 제인 진 카이젠(Jane Jin Kaisen)은 페미니즘적 저항의 한 가지 가능태로 한국의 샤머니즘을 다룬 작업과 더불어 ‹이별의 공동체 *Community of Parting*›(2019)에서는 헤게모니적 서사의 형식 해체를 보여 주었다. 최윤은 ‹하나코와 김치 오빠 외 연속재생 *Hanaco and Mr. Kimchi etc. playback*›(2017)에서 한국의 전통과 대량생산품을 도구로 활용하여 정상화 문화 내의 정체성 문제와 함께 그런 문화로부터의 탈주 가능성을 탐구한다. 라이스 브루잉 시스터스 클럽(Rice Brewing Sisters Club)의 작업은 발효와 막걸리 제조 과정을 사회적 개인적 변형의 실천이자 메타포로 활용한다.

This essay explores the notion of decolonization of the unconscious in the practice of Korean contemporary artists. According to Brazilian psychologist and cultural critic Suely Rolnik, to decolonize the unconscious means to explore the current traces of the coloniality of power in our everyday lives, and to figure out how to exist outside of its borders. From this perspective, the notion of colonization is inherently entangled with the notion of modernity, as two sides of the same coin that make up the current world system that we live in today. For centuries, our unconscious has been shaped by the sheer force of this system, currently in the form of financialized neoliberal regimes. As a result, we are witnesses to an exacerbation of the subject's experience as separate from its conditions of living, but most importantly, from the "Other" outside of itself, whether human or non-human—neighbor, microbe, or mountain—which, in turn, allows for violence and affective precarity to emerge in every level of human existence.

This essay looks at how artists can deal with this precarity, embodied in issues of colonialism, patriarchy, gender, social normalcy, and the asphyxiation of desire, as their own loci of enunciation and point of departure for decolonization, as opposed to mere objects of observation. "The Princess, the Nose and a Bowl of Rice: Bits of Decolonization (of the Unconscious) in Korean Art" navigates through Jane Jin Kaisen's work on Korean shamanism as a possible form of feminist resistance, and her formal deconstruction of hegemonic narrative structures in *Community of Parting* (2019); Yun Choi's exploration of identity in a normalizing culture and the possibilities of escaping it using Korean traditions and mass produced objects as her tools in *Hanaco and Mr. Kimchi etc. playback* (2017); and the use of fermentation and rice wine making as both a practice and a metaphor for social and individual transformation in the practice of the collective Rice Brewing Sisters Club.

소피아 두론은 부에노스아이레스를 근거지로 활동하는 미술사가이자 큐레이터다. 2015년부터 2018년까지 부에노스아이레스 현대미술관의 큐레이터로 일하며, «엘바 바이론: 무제 *Elba Bairon: Untitled*»(2017), «세르히오 아베요: 젊은 다재다능 전문가 *Sergio Avello. Young multi-talented professional*»(2017), «에드가르도 안토니오 비고: 창조적 혼돈을 생산하는 영구한 공장. 1953-1997 *Edgardo Antonio Vigo: Permanent Factory of Creative Chaos. Works 1953-1997*»(2016), «스스로 하라: 리노 디바스의 프로젝트 *Do it yourself: A Project by Lino Divas*»(2016) 등의 전시를 기획했다. 또한 비고의 전시 도록과 함께 그의 작업 전반에 관한 첫 출판물을 편집했으며, 『마르타 미누힌의 혼돈 *La Menesunda by Marta Minujin*』(2015)에 두 편의 글을 썼다. 2011년에는 2010년 부에노스아이레스에 설립된 독립 예술 공간 라 에네(La Ene: Nuevo Museo Energía de Arte Contemporáneo)의 일원이 되어 2015년부터 2018년까지 디렉터로 일했다. 라 에네에서 기획한 전시는 «글루스베르그 *Glusberg*»(2017), 호아킨 세구라(Joaquín Segura)의 «만인의 만인에 대한 전쟁 *A War of All against All*»(2016), «바람이 남기고 간 것: 페르난다 라구나의 글 *What the wind left behind: Publications by Fernanda Laguna*»(2015), «고스트 뮤지엄: MAMBA 1956-1960 *Ghost Museum. MAMBA 1956-1960*»(2013) 등이 있다. 또한 서울(2017), 멕시코시티(2016), 리마(2015), 부에노스아이레스(2014), 샌타페이(2014)에서 열린 라 에네의 소장 작품 전시를 공동 기획하기도 했다. 2015년에는 미술가 갈라 베르헤르(Gala Berger)와 함께 파라과이 독립 판화 페어(Paraguay Independent Printed Art Fair)를 열었다. 두론은 미술 역사 및 경영 학사 학위와 라틴아메리카 미술사 석사 학위를 받았으며, 2018/2019 드 아펠 큐레이터 양성 프로그램(De Appel Curatorial Programme)에 참가했다.

Sofía Dourron is an art historian and curator based in Buenos Aires. From 2015 to 2018 she was a curator at the Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires, where she curated exhibitions such as *Elba Bairon: Untitled* (2017); *Sergio Avello: A Young, Multi-talented Professional* (2017); *Edgardo Antonio Vigo: Permanent Factory of Creative Chaos: Works 1953–1997* (2016); and *Lino Divas: Do It Yourself. The F.D.A.C.M.A. at The Moderno* (2016). She also edited the exhibition catalogue and first comprehensive publication of Vigo's work and contributed two essays to the book *La Menesunda según Marta Minujín* (2015). Since 2011 she has been a member of La Ene, Nuevo Museo Energía de Arte Contemporáneo, an independent art space founded in 2010 in Buenos Aires, which she directed from 2015 until 2018. Dourron has curated several exhibitions at La Ene, including *Glusberg* (2017); *A War of All against All* (2016), by Joaquín Segura; *What the Wind Left Behind. Publications by Fernanda Laguna* (2015); and *Ghost Museum. MAMBA 1956–1960* (2013). She has also co-curated several exhibitions of La Ene's collection in Seoul (2017), Mexico City (2016), Lima (2015), Buenos Aires (2014), and Santa Fe (2014). In 2015, together with artist Gala Berger, she co-founded Paraguay Independent Printed Art Fair. Dourron holds a BA in art history and management, an MA in Latin American art history, and was a participant in the De Appel Curatorial Programme 2018–2019.

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What do you want to be when you die?
I'm going to be something that has no borders
—Kim Hyesoon, 2014

The Unconscious

After Father ghost—the last of the AI Fathers left in the universe—is defeated in his attempt to take over the Colony and Neptune's moon Triton, Brook, the main character in Djuna's short story "The Second Nanny", is left with an unforeseen question.

> "With Seorin's death, the children had gained their freedom. Freedom from the clan, freedom from Father, and most likely freedom from Mom, too. Maybe also freedom from Auntie Autumn and Seorin. Brook didn't know what this freedom could mean—actually, she still couldn't quite fathom what freedom was. What did it mean to be able to make one's own choices, to be a free entity in this vast playground of the gods?
> *I'll just have to think about that from now on*, Brook decided, as she popped the rest of the white ball into her mouth and took a gulp of water.
> *Since we still have time . . . and are immune to pointless obsession.*"[1]

Brook is a post-human teenager, one of the oldest Children: a group of discrete bio-entities created by the human clan Ictus. In the end of Djuna's story, Brook and the rest of the children are confronted with the death of the two humans who bred and protected them, and with severance from Mom, Mother Neptune, the AI to which most of them had been uplinked at an early age and who had guided their every move ever since. After four days of fighting for their survival, battling against Father—"the worst possible combination of reason and lunacy"—and its nanobots, the Children come to the realization that, for the first time since coming out of the tanks, they are free.

1
Djuna, "The Second Nanny," *Clarkesworld*, Issue 155, August 2019, http://clarkesworldmagazine.com/djuna_08_19/.

When Brook had been uplinked to Mom, her path in life had been forever predetermined: she knew what Mom wanted her to know and she did what Mom told her to do, receiving orders that flashed directly into her brain. Any unwanted requests for information were simply denied. Being uplinked to Mom also meant never being alone: every thought, every movement, every feeling was also perceived and registered by the vast AI that had created and controlled the Colony. The Children were not human; however, they were capable of experiencing emotions: they felt anger, frustration, curiosity. The only thing they were prevented from feeling was *pointless obsession* such as religious faith. Still, the question of freedom was not one that they had had to worry about in the past. The notion of freedom itself had not been transmitted to them by Mom. That is as much as Djuna lets us know—whether the Children's subjectivities will be transformed now that there are no Mothers and Fathers to shape them remains a mystery.

While our thoughts and moves are not controlled by a sentient AI like Mother Neptune, our unconsciouses have since the beginning of our life in organized society been affected by external forces that stem from every form of social organization, ranging from our own families to government institutions, power structures, forms of socio-economic organization, and a diversity of belief systems. These paradigms have long dominated the way we live our lives: the most recent we decided to call capitalism. Felix Guattari named the current form of global capitalism Integrated World Capitalism (IWC), since, in his own words, "all its 'mystery' comes from the way it manages to articulate, within one and the same general system of inscription and equivalence, entities which at first sight would seem radically heterogeneous: of material and economic goods, of individual and collective human activities, and of technical, industrial, and scientific *processes*."[2] In this, it surpasses territoriality and national organizations; it takes over every form of living and human activity. How is this possible? Guattari asks. On one hand, IWC is not programmatic. On the contrary, Guattari says, IWC is axiomatic: it is all about crisis, and about adding and subtracting functional axioms to the system for it to adapt and reformulate. It can even collapse and be reborn, as it did after the 1929 crisis; the Phoenix rises from its ashes under new power formations and modes of production. Like Djuna's Father dispersed its particles floating around the galaxy and used them to reassemble itself, IWC reshapes itself to adapt to new territories and configurations of power. On the other hand, because the unconscious is also not a fixed object to be found, but something that is built and reconfigured, it is produced and shaped by a whole diversity of forces that range from our own families and family histories to the power formations that shape the world system.[3] Therefore, according to Guattari, IWC has been shaping our individual and social unconscious for centuries, preventing us from finding escape lines from the reigning system, from our Mother. As Guattari explains: "*In the unconscious it is not the lines of pressure that matter, but on the contrary the lines of escape*. The unconscious does not apply pressure to consciousness; rather, consciousness applies pressure and straitjackets the unconscious, to prevent its escape."[4]

If we go a few centuries further back, beyond Enlightenment—the preferred point of departure for the history of capitalism for most Western thinkers—we will find that there is a much deeper root to the forms of current capitalism: colonialism. As it has been described by Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano, the invention of America in the 15th century as a geo-social entity and the ensuing invention of race as the axis of organization of social life have shaped the distribution of power, labor, wealth, and knowledge, creating the modern-colonial paradigm of organization of the world. Under this paradigm, which Quijano has named "coloniality of power," modernity and colonialism cannot be thought of as separate processes; they are two sides of the same coin, inextricably linked to one another. These colonial power structures still underlie our current political, economic, cultural, and social structures and long ago solidified in our everyday lives as the unwritten rules that dictate our every act. They tell us how to be as individuals, how to relate to each other, how to behave as a society, how and where to learn, what to feel, and where to place our desire. These rules are so engrained in our institutions and our bodies that we have come to think that they are our "nature," whatever our gender or race. All across the world the coloniality of power is buried deep in our unconscious.

For decades now, ever since her journey through the Brazilian Amazonia with Guattari in the early '80s, psychologist and cultural critic Suely Rolnik has explored the labyrinthine complexities of melding the capitalistic and the modern-colonial unconscious. Rolnik has named the current dynamics of the unconscious the "colonial-capitalistic unconscious" and has described its main characteristic as the reduction of subjectivity to the subject's experience.[5] It is the function of the subject to decipher the forms of society we live in, its codes and relational dynamics. Cognition through perception and feeling of sociocultural representations and the projection of these representations and the creation of meaning enable us to decipher society and develop habits of familiarity to relate to it and to the other outside of us.

The forms of familiarity of the colonial-capitalistic unconscious, and therefore the subjectivities it produces, are related to the dominant modes of existence shaped by the colonial-capitalistic system in its current financialized and neoliberal version. Specific social maps, functions, and modes of relation between them produce specific forms of behavior that prevent other modes of existence from being inhabited: the straitjackets that prevent our escape. Any other mode of existence becomes either marginalized or normalized to fit one of the active functions of the dominant system. So, in navigating the complexity of this territory, we have to wonder, do we follow the map that we have been given, or do we attempt to create our own? Rolnik writes:

> "It is not enough to subvert the order of the places designated for each character at play in the scene of power relations (macropolitical insurrection); we must abandon those characters themselves and

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Felix Guattari and Eric Alliez, "Capitalistic Systems, Structures and Processes," in *The Guattari Reader*, ed. Gary Genosko (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 235.

3
Felix Guattari, "Mary Barne's 'Trip,'" in *The Guattari Reader*, ed. Gary Genosko (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 52.

4
Felix Guattari, "From Schizo Bypasses to Postmodern Impasses," in *The Guattari Reader*, ed. Gary Genosko (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 92.

5
Suely Rolnik, "The Spheres of Insurrection: Suggestions for Combating the Pimping of Life," *e-flux journal* 86 (November 2017).

> their politics of desire (micropolitical insurrection), which may render the continuity of the scene itself impracticable. The dissolution of the regime depends unavoidably on the insurrection against violence everywhere and in all human activities in both the macro and micro spheres, which operate with disparate and paradoxical logics and temporalities."[6]

Moving forward, Rolnik not only urges us to create a new cartography of desire, she urges us to "decolonize our unconscious,"[7] to explore the current traces of coloniality in our everyday lives, and to figure out how to exist, if possible, outside of its borders. This implies acting outside the frames of macro-politics and its formal description and representation of our ways of being as individuals and as society and moving into the realm of micro-politics, where the forces of the world agitate the cartographies of society as we know them, fostering the creation of new territories that will transform the politics of living together. It also means to transform the politics of subjectification through micro-political insurrection. It's a move towards an ethic of affirmation of life. The question, of course, is how to do it. Rolnik maps out eight possible directions:

> 1. De-anesthetizing the vulnerability of the forces
> 2. Reactivating the knowing body
> 3. Unobstructing the access to sensations
> 4. Keeping oneself within the tension of the uncanny, until an utterance capable of actualizing it, bearing its pulsation, is created
> 5. Holding on to the temporality of the creative process
> 6. Holding on to desire
> 7. Not negotiating the unnegotiable
> 8. Exercising thought in its ethical, political, and clinical function[8]

Many of the items in Rolnik's manifesto-like list resonate strongly in Gloria Anzaldúa's spiritual activism, summed up in a single drawing: a red outline of a hand with two eyes, a mouth, and a single ear—inner and outer ear, both merged into one. Maybe this is, as I once read somewhere, the body's ear and the soul's eyes. When describing this image, Irene Lara reminds us: "In order to enact liberatory change one must also develop a critical practice of listening to one's self and others."[9] The double ear then tells us that if we want to listen to the outside, we must first listen to ourselves, let our bodies, hearts, and livers speak, let our intuitions and minds roam free, and, in the process, reconnect our unconscious to our actual living conditions and necessities. On the wrist of the hand, right where we feel our pulse the most, in red and blue marker, Anzaldúa wrote the words "Inner works Public acts." These words refer to that liminal space of possibility, "where the outer boundaries of the mind's inner life meet the outer world of reality,"[10] which she located in Nepantla: the point of contact/overlap between worlds, "where the mundane and numinous converge." It's in Nepantla, the space in-between, where the inner and outer world meet, where transformation is possible.

6 Ibid., 7.

7 Ibid., 8.

8 Suely Rolnik, "The Micropolitics of Thinking: Suggestions to Those Who Seek to Deprogram the Colonial Unconscious" keynote speech at Suely Rolnik Deconstructs the Colonial Unconscious at Guggenheim Museum, 2016. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yASMCTAHiVM.

9 Irene Lara, "BRUJA POSITIONALITIES: Toward a Chicana/Latina Spiritual Activism," *Chicana/Latina Studies* 4, no. 2 (Spring 2005): 30.

10 Gloria Anzaldúa, "Now let us shift... the path of conocimiento... inner work, public acts," in *This bridge we call home* (London: Routledge, 2013), 544.

The Princess

> *I felt a calling to be an artist, but an artist in the sense of a shaman—of healing through words, using words as a medium for expressing the flights of the soul, communing with the spirit, having access to these other realities or worlds.*
> *—Gloria Anzaldúa, 1982*

In Korean shamanist mythology it is Bari Gongju, also known as Princess Bari or the Abandoned Princess, who inhabits the in-between. Bari can transcend the earthly realm and journey into the spirit world, helping the dead descend into the underworld. Even though there are over forty accounts of the princess's tale, a widely accepted version tells the story as follows:

Bari Gongju was the seventh daughter of Ogu Daewang, King Ogu, and his wife who, unable to bear a son, abandoned her at birth. Bari Gongju was cast off into the sea in a jeweled box, where turtles rescued her and brought her to a peasant couple who kindly raised her as their own. Years later, the mountain god appeared before her and told her that her birthparents, the king and queen, had fallen ill, and only the potion Yangyusu and flowers from the Seocheon Seoyeokguk (Kingdom of Western Territories under the Western Heavens) could cure them. Her six princess sisters had refused to go in search for their cure, so Bari Gongju went to the palace and, disclosing her identity, volunteered herself to undertake the dangerous journey through the underworld to the land of the gods. It was a long journey through the spirit world to the Seocheon Seoyeokguk. Disguised as a boy, the princess traveled between the North Pole Star and the South Pole Star. Along the way, she met the Old Farming Woman of Heaven, who asked her to plow and sow a field by herself. At this moment hundreds of magical animals fell from the sky and plowed the field for her. In return, the old woman pointed Bari in the direction of Dongdaesan Mountain, where she would find the water to cure her parents. After a while the princess found herself at a fork without knowing which path to take. There she encountered the Laundress of Heaven, who forced her to wash all her laundry from black to white, causing a monsoon. The old woman then told Bari which trail to take and gave her a golden bell and a branch with three magical flowers. The old woman was Mago, the creator of the world. Bari Gongju finally reached the cliffs that led to the Seocheon Seoyeokguk. Once again, golden turtles came to her rescue, forming a bridge to get her safely to the other side. She found the well with the water of life, protected by the Mujangseung, a rather disagreeable old man. Still dressed as a boy, she asked him for some of the water, but when he learned she had no money to pay for it, he refused. Bari Gongju then convinced Mujangseung to let her become his servant. After three years of work, she was no closer to getting the water. Then Mujangseung discovered that she was a woman and asked her to marry him. They married and Bari gave birth to seven sons. As the years went by, she learnt which flowers and potions could save her parents, and so one day she finally returned to world

of the living, along with her children and her husband, carrying the flowers and Yangyusu. On her way back to the palace she met Gangnim Doryeong (Young Master Gangnim) and learnt that her parents had died and the royal funeral was already under way. Bari arrived at the funeral with the Yangyusu and the flowers and brought her parents back to life. They gratefully offered her a place in the palace, but she refused. She returned to the spirit world, where she became a goddess who helps the souls of the dead journey to the otherworld. This is the story of the first Korean shaman, the first *mudang*.

Over the centuries, the myth of Bari Gongju has shifted from a Confucian cautionary tale for female filial piety, devotion, and endurance, to an empowering story that not only puts Korean female shamans in the spotlight as carriers of a diverse range of knowledge, but also deconstructs the social paradigm of female behavior, challenging both the identity and gender politics of a deeply patriarchal society. Bari Gongju is celebrated in rituals in which the mudang or female shaman enact the story of her passing through a portal of the Underworld. These rituals create a liminal space, much like Anzaldúa's Nepantla: an opening between worlds where past and present reconnect. The Abandoned Princess inhabits this in-betweenness; it is in this space where she gains the power to heal human wounds and soothe the grievances of the dead, where she receives the knowledge of nature and of the otherworldly, that to others remains unknown. She is able to blur the borders between worlds, geographic and otherwise, she transgresses the borders of gender and identity, she sheds all mandates and chooses her own path. The story of Bari Gongju is the point of departure for Jane Jin Kaisen's film *Community of Parting* (2019), in which she re-actualizes and opens up the myth to questions about gender, migration, war, memory, and colonialism and their traces in contemporary South Korea. Floating through unnamed landscapes and diluting time, the film loosely weaves the story of Bari through the voices of shamans, artists, poets, a political philosopher, anthropologists, and historians, who, as Bari, journey across diffused spatiotemporal boundaries, delinking the film from hegemonic epistemologies and territorialities.

Filmed in Jeju Island, the DMZ, South Korea, North Korea, Kazakhstan, Japan, China, the United States, and Germany, the film combines shamanic ritual performances, nature and cityscapes, archival material, aerial imagery, poetry, voiceover, and soundscapes. This transdisciplinary approach and the layered and non-linear configuration of the film allow Kaisen to explore South Korea's complex socio-historical landscape from within, making its culture, memory of trauma, traditions, its many processes of transformation, and its biases her loci of enunciation as opposed to mere objects of observation. The film itself assumes the form of a ritual, undulating across time and space, in which the figure of the mudang encapsulates the earthly and the otherworldly, past and present, tradition and modernity, hierarchies and margins, individual and community. The shaman serves as one of Korea's longest-standing forms of resistance. It has survived bans, shunning, incarceration, but also attempts at normalization by transforming it into a folkloric tale. Mudang have survived through the strict morale of Confucianism and the Chinese religious and cultural influence, the violent Japanese imperial colonization and its racial backlash, the Cold War and the open wound of the Korean War, the American military and cultural invasion, the adoption of Western Capitalism as a monolithic paradigm of living, a dictatorial regime and a project of modernization and the subsequent economic crises it brought about. These endless processes of national reconfiguration have shaped Korean society, its identity and unconscious—a colonial-modern unconscious, as it is the result of a multiplicity of local socio-historical processes as much as of the modern-capitalistic world system. In *Community of Parting*, the shaman represents the disruption of Rolnik's colonial-capitalistic unconscious and the possibility of decolonization and micro-political insurrection.

Community of Parting conceives of female Korean shamanism as "an ethics and aesthetics of memory and mutual recognition across time and space,"[11] and from this perspective it points to a number of paths towards the healing of collective and individual wounds. It does so by invoking the potency and lost value of communal rites, social bonds, and solidarity, represented in the film by a diverse community of women joined together by experiences of migration, trauma, racism, marginalization, and gender bias. It also points to a recovery of subaltern knowledge that has been swept away by colonization and modernity: the shaman's knowledge of nature and the otherworldly. In doing so, *Community of Parting* proposes "other ways of *thinking and being with others*, including the relationship to nature and other life-forms."[12] In the poetry of its form and the force of its voices, the film, and Jane Jin Kaisen with it, call for an ethic of the affirmation of life, as Rolnik would say. In the film, lingering unresolved histories and open wounds encounter bodily knowledge and forgotten forms of togetherness in order to heal and confront past and present, a history of war, colonialism, and violence and the current predatory neoliberal regime that feeds off broken societies.

The Nose

> *Like a woman of snow, a dead poet, the Buddha, a rat—absent when existing, existing when absent. A mystery and a monster, a monster and yet fog. A ghost. Atomic, and yet a network of connections.*
> *—Kim Hyesoon, 2019*

In her recent essay/manifesto "I Do WomanAnimalAsia",[13] an extract from her book *Asian Woman* (2019), poet Kim Hyesoon brings us into the altered in-between world of her own existence as a writer. In "I Do WomanAnimalAsia", Kim, just like Princess Bari, a recurring figure in her writing, traverses borders, worlds, and forms of being. Beyond the act of "doing poetry" or "doing travel," Kim describes what it is like to inhabit the borders of being, blurring the boundaries of one's own body, identity, and subjectivity. Doing WomanAnimal, she writes, is "a state of statelessness with no family trees

11 "Community of Parting," Jane Jin Kaisen website, accessed September 20, 2019, http://janejinkaisen.com/community-of-parting.

12 Ibid.

13 Kim Hyesoon, "I Do WomanAnimalAsia," *Korean Literature Now* 45 (Autumn 2019), accessed October 10, 2019, https://koreanliteraturenow.com/writers-note/kim-hyesoon-i-do-woman-animal-asia-0.

14 Ibid.

15
Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera. The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987), 48.

16
Kim, "I Do WomanAnimalAsia."

17 Ibid.

18
Note for English readers: in Korean "*hana*" means *one* and "*co*" means *nose*.

19
"Banners of the Guardian Gods of the Five Directions," Encyclopedia of Korean Culture, accessed October 1, 2019, http://folkency.nfm.go.kr/en/topic/detail/2577.

or ancestors, a new unfamiliarity with one's mother tongue"; it is "a world of the possible," of undoing all the forms of exclusion enacted in everyday life, engrained in our unconscious as naturalized forms of living and knowing conceived as univocal paradigms in an homogenous modern-colonial world system. A system that marginalizes difference and dissidence, that secludes knowledge in the name of Western rationality, Confucian morality, capitalist productiveness, or any other mode of colonial suppression. Against exclusion and seclusion Kim proposes empathic exchange, emotional solidarity, animal extimacy; she proposes an "human-animal future."[14] This "human-animal future" transcends time and space. It is the future but it inhabits the space before the modern-colonial split between human and non-human separated and categorized the world, before the creation of artificial hierarchies and the colonial distribution of power. Again, a world of the possible, of new and unique paths, of an ethic for "a new chapter of life's energy."

Like Anzaldúa, Kim finds in poetry, first and foremost, a space for resisting hegemonic languages. However, what they both ultimately find is a liminal space for self-creation. For Anzaldúa it is in the Borderlands, "a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary," where the dangers of forceful normalcy, both within ourselves and outside ourselves, are revealed. But once we know, there is no going back: "I am again an alien in new territory. And again, and again. But if I escape conscious awareness, escape 'knowing,' I won't be moving. Knowledge makes me more aware, it makes me more conscious. 'Knowing' is painful because after 'it' happens I can't stay in the same place and be comfortable. I am no longer the same person I was before,"[15] Anzaldúa writes. In Kim, poetry, travel, transformation, resistance, pain, language, knowledge, *WomanAnimalAsia*, is all one single and constant movement: "An endlessly generated world where reaching it means it has already moved on, like the spoke on a cartwheel, as the doing of it keeps generating it, into a world that can never be arrived at."[16] It is this movement that creates existence.

The movement towards existence outside the territory of univocity cannot take place within the realm of the known. "Underneath the predictable panorama familiar to the traveler, a world of the in-between was spread that had no borders, a wide plane of interiority almost like a desert," Kim writes.[17] No map or compass will guide us through it; new directions need to be created. *In Hanaco and Mr. Kimchi etc. playback* (2017) artist Choi Yun embarks on her own journey to the in-between and tries out different strategies to break through borders and into new unexplored inner and outer territory. In a society that has become extremely constrained by social norms, patriarchal hierarchies, and gender violence, borders tighten the most over dissident forms of desire. In the novel *The Last of Hanako* (1994), by Ch'oe Yun, we come to learn that any quest that disrupts the South Korean socially accepted map of behavior runs the risk of being met with exile. Hanako, the nose without a name[18] and the protagonist of Ch'oe's novel, dares to follow her dreams and thus is shunned by her own friends. Choi's Hanaco, the anonymous female character that inhabits the artist's universe, searches for a way out from the straitjacket of forced normalcy; she relentlessly looks for the possibility of crafting her own identity in a giant cloud of nameless Hanacos and is met with the physical rigidity of the world she inhabits.

Hanaco is a Japanese-sounding name, disseminated across Asia through colonization; it is a Japanese way of exercising power and denying East Asian women their identities, of stripping down their subjectivities. It is a way to avoid using a person's real name, a name to call someone who has a prominent nose, and a way to refer to someone whose name and identity are unknown; it is a word that fills in a blank when there are no other words left to write. If Hanaco is absence and anonymity, it is also a space of possibility, a blank slate. Choi has been encountering Hanaco since 2015. In 2017, Choi became the vessel for a multiplicity of Hanacos in the work *100 Hanaco 100*. Here, one hundred selfies of Choi become the representation of one hundred different Hanacos, whose individuality is only signaled by a number, a time, and a date. Each selfie becomes a portrait of a Hanaco advertised by Choi as a potential sister, mother, father, uncle, friend, teacher, cousin, grandmother, grandfather, brother, girlfriend, wife for the person who purchases the portrait. Eventually, once the buyer takes the picture home, the body attached to the picture—Choi's own body—will dissolve into the Hanaco's newfound identity, transforming absence into possibility. That was the beginning of Hanaco's journey against anonymity, and Choi's journey as Hanaco's proxy.

In Hanaco and Mr. Kimchi etc. playback, which comprises 12 videos and a series of short advertisements, a female character, possibly Hanaco, temporarily embodied by Choi, continues her border-breaking journey. However, this time Hanaco has new tools to help her traverse time and space. As the scenes progress and overlap, it's hard to tell where she is—a basement, a bridge, a riverbank, a high-rise building, a ranch—or how she got there. It's also hard to tell who she is. The semi-public spaces are blurred by the rhythm imposed by the quick pace of advertisements that pop up in between each scene, and her own appearance keeps changing—her clothes, her hair, her actions are different; only her traveling tools keep re-appearing in different forms, scene after scene, building their own narrative through the journey. At the beginning of the video, a shaman's *obang sinjanggi*, a five-color flag used for divination in shamanic rituals, hangs upside-down from the ceiling of what seems to be a basement. In traditional Korean cosmology, the five colors of the banners—blue, white, red, black, and yellow—are associated to the five cardinal directions: the east, which symbolizes misfortune and distress; the west, symbolizing *cheonsin* (celestial god) or blessing for the dead; the south, symbolizing good fortune; the north, symbolizing death; and the center, which stands for one's ancestors.[19] *Obang sinjanggi* is also used for chasing away evil spirits and ghosts. Turned upside down in the middle the room and surrounded by various seemingly random

and absurd objects, the *obang sinjanggi* (connecting the visible earthly and the underground otherworldly, and immediately followed by a deranged compass) points to Hanaco's rebellion against the asphyxiating rigidity of both a tradition partly devoid of spiritual potency and the modern-colonial imposition of boundaries and cardinal directions.

From this first scene onwards, and against all odds, Hanaco will hold on to her desire. She spins around uncontrollably while taking selfies with a selfie stick attached to the *obang sinjanggi* at a river bank, she pounds her white skirt with giant loofah sponges, she repeatedly falls off a bench in a public park in the middle of the night, and she rolls over a bridge holding the portrait of Hanaco 46. She sticks her tongue out as much as she can, she crawls around a sheep ranch and yells "We deserved to be happy!!," she desperately looks for Mr. Kimchi. If individually these actions seem unrelated and oscillate between the reckless and the absurd, woven together by the repetitive narrative of the objects they start to become ritualistic. One by one, they begin to reveal the absurdity of existence in its restriction of movement and desire, showing the mechanics that sustain the status quo as a monolithic reality. Hanaco's deranged actions are nothing but attempts to break through these constraints, undoing the reign of normalcy in search for the possibility of living outside of its borders. She is trying very hard to break through the fixed structures of time, space, gender, race, behavior, and forms of living, and even though her attempts seem to be failing miserably—we see her fall off the same bench over and over again trying to penetrate the underworld, only to see her hit her head against a gutter every time—her relentlessness alone is a recognition of the potency of the vital forces that inhabit our individual and collective bodies. A potency that has been drowned by the white noise of a detached individual existence. In the face of detachment, Hanaco/Choi bumps into walls in order to recover her own vital forces and diluted subjectivity.

A Bowl of Rice

> *I and animal become blurry, create a new non-person perspective (a fourth, fifth-person perspective), and we come through that place again. We give a little bit of ourselves to each other and create a world on a different frequency and change each other's lives in that world. To do-animal is to split apart.*
> *—Kim Hyesoon, 2019*

According to Rolnik it is the "separation of subjectivity from its living condition that paves the way for desire to surrender."[20] In turn this separation and surrender of desire becomes an attachment to the established cartographies that the status quo has to offer. In this process, an intense illusion of belonging is created, and any divergence is interpreted as a threat to the maintenance of the status quo, which in some cases becomes a violent defense of the established conditions of living. The germination of collective life is also thus interrupted, generating "a necrosis point in the life of the social body as a whole."[21] To resist the advance of this disruption requires us to undo ourselves and to undo the structures of subjectification that shape our current ways of being and relating to each other. For if we can manage to get past our current representation of ourselves as separate subjects, and the other as the outside-of-myself (as opposed to a subjectivity whose forces traverse our own bodies), then we might find ways to relate that are an affirmation of life and not a constant threat to it. In 2010, Aníbal Quijano published a first version of his essay about "*bien vivir*" or "*sumak kawsay*,"[22] from the Spanish and Quechua, a notion that could be translated into good or even pretty living in English. This proposal of an alternative mode of existence stems from the re-emergence of indigenous modes of living together, based on principles of solidarity and reciprocity, social organization, and community economies. For anthropologist Rita Segato, this possibility enables an assemblage between archaic forms of living, which are revitalized, and historic projects of the present—historic lines and interrupted memories are restored, rekindled, and reach continuity.[23] *Bien vivir* does not imply a regression in time or the search for a utopian village community that never really existed. It is a strategy to heal the wounds inflicted so long ago by stitching together past and present.

One of the many ways to relink to each other and to the indigenous spirit of solidarity is through food. This happens in many different ways, through preparing and sharing food, through recovering lost traditions and techniques, but also through the conscious act of eating itself. One of the oldest food traditions in the world is fermentation. Humans have been using it for thousands of years to preserve foods and brew beverages, to break down foods and make them digestible, to transform food into something new. In its most elemental form, fermentation is a state of agitation or turbulent transformation. It is believed to be one of the most ancient processes on earth: before there was oxygen for aerobic respiration, there was fermentation. Much like human beings in times of crisis, when deprived of oxygen to produce energy, some microorganisms will turn to fermentation instead. The process begins when a microorganism, like bacteria or yeast, breaks down sugars and starches into alcohols and acids, which leads to the production of different organic molecules that produce new energy. This inter-species symbiosis, the collaboration between humans and microbes, relies on invisible and multiple communities working together. Our entangled bodies, the microbes' and ours, live an inseparable life, even with those that carry the ability to hurt us, even kill us, no matter how many Western purity projects we might engage in. In the long colonial-modern process of categorizing and disentangling life on Earth, we have forgotten how far the entanglement goes, how much we depend on one another, even down to a microbial cellular level. We depend on the microbes in our stomach to process foods for energy, we depend on the microbes on our skin to protect us from external factors, we depend on each other for care, food, knowledge;

20 Rolnik, "The Spheres," 6.

21 Ibid.

22 Aníbal Quijano, "Bien vivir: entre el desarrollo y la des/colonialidad del poder," in *Des/colonialidad y Buen Vivir. Un nuevo debate en América Latina*, ed. Aníbal Quijano (Lima: Universidad Ricardo Palma Editorial Universitaria, 2014).

23 Rita Segato, "Aníbal Quijano y la perspectiva de la colonialidad del poder," in *La crítica de la colonialidad en ocho ensayos y una antropología por demanda* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo Libros, 2018), 217.

we are one big network of survival and sustainability. Separability and fragmentation have broken the network.

Rice Brewing Sisters Club (RBSC) has been rethinking how we think about fermentation for the last two years, since they first got together and made a one-year commitment to each other and their cause. Since then, they have renewed their vows one year at a time. This small community, with three members at its core, but with a fluctuating number of participants that come in and out of the project, regenerating its tissue every time, has focused its efforts and energy in understanding and unpacking different South and East Asian rice brewing traditions. This process has opened up a series of avenues of thought and a web of relations that all converge in a bowl of rice. From that little bowl rice emerges first a conversation about the meaning of rice as an embodiment of Korea's turbulent history; through bans, shortages, and taxation to modern monoculture and the elimination of locality, rice across Asia has faced an insurmountable number of battles of agricultural development, land politics, colonization, and food sovereignty. Opening up a conversation about rice wine in Korea means both digging into an endangered body of knowledge, historically transmitted through generations of female home brewers, and being faced with the open wounds of war, violence, hunger, and colonization. Brewing Korean alcohol with rice was banned until only 20 years ago. The ban started with the gradual takeover of the Joseon Dynasty by the Japanese Empire at the beginning of the 20th century. By 1934, home-brewing was officially banned and moved to factories and taxed, becoming a source of revenue for the expanding empire. By 1965, the Park Chung-hee dictatorship banned the use of rice in alcohol production because of war, hunger, and rice shortages. With time, industrially processed rice wine took over the market. People stopped brewing at home, as they had been doing for centuries, losing bits of their culture here and there, facing dilution. RBSC has not only begun a conversation about these issues through the organization of talks, dinners, and workshops, in which an organic ephemeral community of humans and non-humans is bonded through the process of fermentation, but they have also begun to track individuals and communities who, in their own words "voluntarily practice alternative ways of living," sheltered by the traditions they have received from their elders and the actualization of knowledge and endangered practices. All through history, it has been women who brewed rice wine in their homes. Even during bans and rice shortages, they kept brewing secretly behind closed doors. The gendered nature of this knowledge, and its debunked status in the hands of industrialized methods, makes it a fragile, though resilient kind of knowledge. It is the sort of knowledge that can only live in the bodies of the women who brew: in their minds lay recipes, but their hands, noses, and eyes carry the feel, smell, and color of brewing.

RBSC, under the slogan "Fermentation is an Old Future," ultimately seeks to engender new worlds of possibility riding on traditions of the past. In the face of crisis, RBSC embraces the life-engendering potency of the ferment, its unpredictability and "porous temporality," to imagine more entangled and non-hierarchical ways of living together. For the members of this very organic community, fermenting food with microbes and with each other reveals an opportunity to reconsider the ways in which we relate to each other as an interconnected organic network. In the end, the bottom of the bowl of rice reveals a sort of relational ontology, one that is necessarily empathic and reciprocal.

> *With awe and wonder you look around, recognizing the preciousness of the earth, the sanctity of every human being on the planet, the ultimate unity and interdepend of all beings—somos todos un país. Love swells in your chest and shoots out of your heart chakra, linking you to everyone/everything. . . . You share a category of identity wider than any social position or racial label. This conocimiento motivates you to work actively to see that no harm comes to people, animals, ocean—to take up spiritual activism and the work of healing.*
> *—Gloria Anzaldúa. 1961*

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