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Inside the Fault Lines of the Heart: The Poetics of Exile in the works of Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, and Etel Adnan.

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Inside the Fault Lines of the Heart: The Poetics of Exile
In the works of Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, and Etel Adnan.

Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of Language and Literature
of Bard College

by
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Annandale-on-Hudson, New York
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Preface

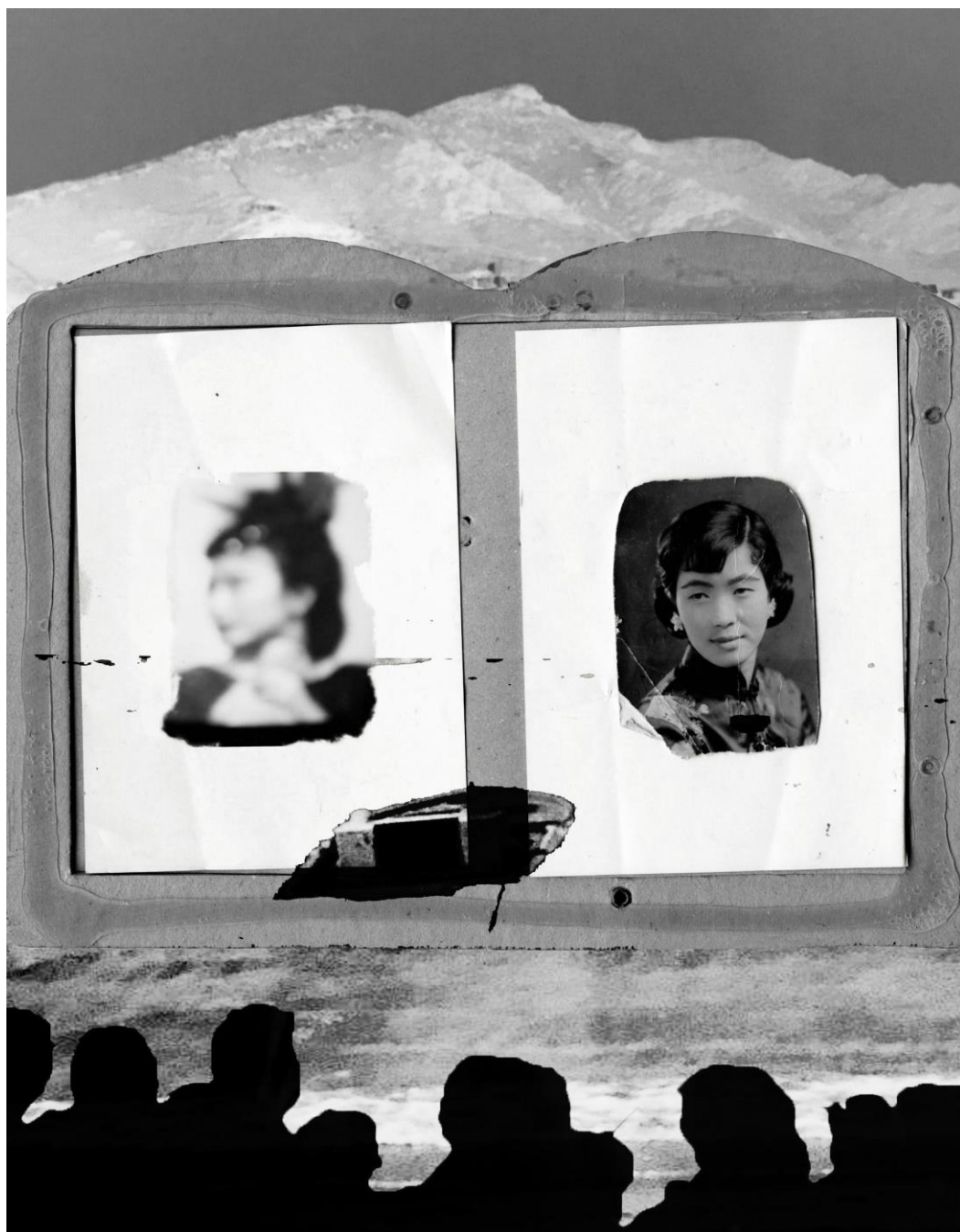
This project began in finding inspiration in works that would speak to my array of academic and leisurely interests in visual art, literature, politics, and science. While I did not specifically go out of my way to look for books that included all the above, I began gravitating to works by writers and artists that expand beyond the limits of *a* medium, and *a* story. When a friend recommended the book *Dictée* by Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, I was immediately captivated by its fragmented form. Written in fragments of poetry, letters, historical documentation, photographs, and furthermore in containing four different languages (English, French, Korean, and Chinese), I thought I had found the perfect book. As I began discovering this book I was also dipping my toes into Ammiel Alcalay's book *A Little History* which made me think deeply about contemporary ways of archiving. In a critique of traditional ways of archiving as exclusionary, "often housed in disparate institutions, remaining unedited, unliked, and out of touch with each other", (8) he urges thinkers to confront the "the exclusions and suppressions that underlie much of what we have been taught is legitimate". (ii) Understanding knowledge as connective by daring to strike conversations between what may be in opposition, or simply geographically, politically, or stylistically different, presents a way of life that confronts historical and present silences. Urging for an "experimental response", (ii) Alcalay sees in poetry the ability to constantly challenge the unidirectional organization of language and knowledge. This confrontation, in my opinion is driven by the force of unrelatability: to choose to implicate oneself in a situation where one does not relate to the place, culture, or ideologies. With this intention, this drive is necessary because it breaks the dangerous cycle of relatability, in which the desire to relate, to affirm oneself by seeing one's own reflection in the crowd, risks

affirming and normalizing “the disastrous rise of misplaced power” (iii) that silence radical differences. Furthermore, in only being aware of what one can relate to blinds one to the infinite channels of possibilities that fall outside insular categories of knowledge and of being. Poetry can be understood as a resistance against the categorization of knowledge because each word can be constantly reconfigured into a different context. The weight of meaning that impregnates a word may tilt it to “relate” to a specific discourse, but poetry has the power to shift its weight into a different realm, infusing it with a different voice. With poetry’s regenerative quality in mind, when I was introduced to the poetic works of Etel Adnan, more specifically her book *In the Heart of the Hart of Another Country*, I immediately felt the perpetual resistance in her words to normative ways of living life and of writing. But after giving so much thought to the danger of relatability I came to understand that my attraction to *Dictée*, beyond its fragmented form, was also due to a strong sense of relatability. Even though I believe that for most people it may be the most un-relatable book, in my case I saw a direct reflection of my family’s history in it. My mother is even the only I person I know who can fluently speak the four languages it is written in. I bring this up because without a strong connection to Etel Adnan through her personal history, I was able to engage with her words on a much deeper level, beyond an immediate reflection of myself. Engaging with her work was very exciting because she has this manner of writing that constantly destabilizes words and absolute claims she asserts herself in.

While the books *Dictée*, and *In the Heart of the Hart of Another Country* deal with different colonial histories and geographies, the first being centered around Korea and the second around Lebanon, both authors express a commitment to uphold plurality against the pain of assimilation when the self is fragmented by a multiplicity of cultures, languages, and positionalities. Often times books and authors from different cultures and geographies are not put

into conversation or taught within the same context. But in my opinion, to understand the scope of world literature is to dare to “move across aesthetic and political lines” (Alcalay, 7).

In addition to the two chapters of this project in which I engage with the two books mentioned above, I have included in Appendix A an echo of my first chapter in art form, and in Appendix B an additional conclusion for chapter 2 in French. Moreover, before the body of this project, and at the beginning of each chapter, I have included photo collages made from photos I have taken, collected, and found in public digital archives. I included all the above for the purpose of demonstrating that different mediums, languages, and ways of thinking about the same themes do not necessarily have to remain separate and unliked from each other.



Introduction

When the heart can't beat beyond the walls of a singular heart, the self is fragmented by fault lines that divide it along different exclusionary categories of being. My project focuses on the tensions, and opportunities created by the fractured self, in the fault lines between exclusionary categories of being. Rather than accepting the borders and colonial ideologies that restrict movement inherent in the self and flatten difference, I explore how one can reclaim the fragmented self by residing within the fault lines. By repositioning of the self between exclusionary spheres of existence, the heart lives in a space of tension but does so to speak in a tongue of accents, and to roam freely between a constellation of other hearts.

My first chapter is dedicated to the book *Dictée*, in which Theresa Hak Kyung Cha accounts for the layers of silence that have become sediments in the process of colonization. Focusing on Japan's colonization of Korea from 1910 to 1945, she demonstrates how Korean history, and the voices of individual people are silenced and subsumed by a Japanese identity. In effect of this silence, the colonized human body is fragmented by feeling neither Korean or Japanese. In resistance to this silence, Cha exposes the pain of speech in a body that is fractured by competing cultural truths. She urges the body to speak from the space of division, from the fault lines between cultures and nations that have riven the body, and estranged it from itself. From this locus, Cha narrates her book in four languages: English, French, Korean, and Chinese to showcase the ability of speech beyond normative categories of identity. She further breaks the wholeness of singular truth by incorporating different symbolic logics in her text such as images, poetry, letters, and historical documentation. Altogether, Cha writes a book that immediately positions the reader in a state of unrelatability to further communicate the silences that have accumulated when treating one culture, narrative, or medium separately.

My second chapter is dedicated to the book *in the heart, of the heart of another country*, in which Etel Adnan counters a colonially imposed unification of difference by speaking through a heart which is endemically fragmented. Reflecting upon herself as the subject, she attempts to uphold her fragmented endemic state of being by oscillating between feeling like an insider wanting to belong, and an outsider too accustomed to the feeling of exile to ever settle. This contrast in Adnan's identity is birthed by her transcultural childhood. Growing up in Beirut with a Christian Greek mother, and a Syrian Muslim father while attending French school, Adnan's endemic state of being lies between cultures and languages—never fully in nor out. Always “*in the heart, of the heart of another country*”. Unlike Cha, the tension that arises in Adnan's pluralistic state of being is not experienced by the silencing of one cultural truth for another, but rather by an imbalance in the positionalities at her disposal. In order for her heart to beat at a regular rate both inside and outside, she reconfigures herself by constantly transgressing geopolitical and celestial boundaries, and by poetically placing her heart *inside the inside of a non-human heart* (outside the human) when being human imposes too many limits on her fluid state of being.

Chapter 1



In her book *Dictée*, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha exposes the consequences of colonization on the body of the colonized. When one nation imposes itself upon another as a new legitimate truth, it silences the present and the past of the colonized, resulting in a self that is subsumed by an internal superposition of cultural identities. In Cha's work, this self is radically physicalized; it is the body forged by the silencing of Korean culture under Japanese colonial force—a body riven by fault lines. The fault lines, like the fissures that expand along a desert's dry earth, inscribe within the human clay an uneven grid that divides the body into competing truth claims. Cha was born in South Korea in 1951 during the Korean War and then moved to the United States at the age of eleven. In the United States she developed a love for French and studied French literature in College. Beyond being culturally American, Korean and French, Korea's colonial history reveals the involvement of many other socio-political identities within Cha's body.

To give a brief summary of Korea's colonial history, when Japan colonized Korea from 1910 to 1945, it put an end to the Korean Empire's sovereignty and the Joseon Dynasty. In 1919, in response to the Korean people's independence movement on March 1st, Korea then became a Provisional Government with its representation in Shanghai. When Japan is defeated at the end of WWII in 1945 by the United States and the Soviet Union, Korea became the Cold War's first proxy state, divided between the sovereignty of United States and the Soviet Union. In 1948, South Korea was established as the Republic of Korea, and North Korea as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Divided into two separate nation states, the Soviet Union controlled North Korea under Communism, and the United States controlled South Korea under a Democracy. The Korean War spanning from 1950 to 1953, began when the president of North Korea Kim Il-Sung attacked South Korea with the support of the Soviet Union under Stalin, and

China under Mao. So, to speak of herself in the present and historically, Cha uses multiple languages that belong to different cultural fragments of herself presently and historically to write about the difficulty of speech when political and cultural identities attempt to impose themselves upon the colonized human body. The book *Dictée*, like Cha, represents the fragmented physical body in a language that linguistically and culturally draws from different fragments of cultural and political identities. The book is further successfully fragmented by breaking medium specificity through the incorporation of historical documentation, poetry, visual art, and personal letters. This new inclusive plurality accounts for the layers of silences that have become sediments in the process of colonization within the fragmented self.

From 1910 to 1945, Korea was colonized by Japan, during which time any form of Korean identity was suppressed. Cha writes:

Our country, even with 5,000 years of history, has lost it to the Japanese
 Japan at once created an assembly, in the name of the King, for ‘the discussion of everything, great and small, that happened within the realm The Japanese advisers instituted a number of sumptuary laws that stirred the country to its depths, relating to the length of pipes, style of dress, and the attiring of the hair of the people. Pipes were to be short, in place of the long bamboo churchwarden beloved by the Koreans. Sleeves were to be clipped. The top-knot, worn by all the Korean men, was at once to be cut off. Soldiers at the city gates proceeded to enforce this last regulation rigorously. (28-29)

During Japan’s occupation of Korea, any manifestation of Korean identity was politically replaced and culturally limited. When the Korean Empire was annexed by Japan in 1910, Emperor Sunjong who governed the Korean Empire under an absolute monarchy became subordinate to Japanese Ministers whom “in the name of the king” governed Korea. This new political assembly established “sumptuary laws” that reduced and limited any expression of Korean cultural customs: “pipes were to be short”, “sleeves were to be clipped”, and “the top-

knot, worn by all the Korean men, was at once to be cut off'. While "everything, great and small" was reconfigured, a total replacement is impossible considering Korea's 5,000 years of history. While though forced to smoke and dress like the Japanese, the heart of the Koreans still beat with their country's heritage. By this disjunction between internal and external appearance, the Koreans became forcefully split between a Japanese identity and a Korean one.

Faced with the pressure to absorb an imperial identity, Cha communicates the silencing of the colonized human body through the metaphor of blood specimen collection, and blood transfusion.

She takes my left arm, tells me to make a fist, then open. Make a fist then open again She takes the needle with its empty body to the skin.

No sign of flow

Sample extract

Specimen type

Should it appear should it happen to appear all of a sudden, suddenly, begin to flow

....

One empty body waiting to contain. Conceived for a single purpose and for the purpose only. To contain. Made filled. Be full. She pulls out the needle and the skin lifts

Expel. Ne te cache pas. Révèle toi. Sang. (64-65)

The silencing of the colonized human body is demonstrated by its blood that displays "No sign of flow". Its silence is further emphasized by the reduction of its blood to a "sample extract" that reveals a "specimen type". Qualified under scientific language, the colonized body is dehumanized by being reduced to a single variable in a scientific experiment. While the blood, of the colonized is still present, as Cha writes "*should it happen to appear all of a sudden, suddenly, begin to flow*", under the pressure and "single purpose" to fully contain an imperial identity, it remains frozen within the membranes of the body. Emptied of its own bloodline under the

pressure to contain another, Cha urges the colonized to not let its blood become sediments in its own body: she calls this “blood” (from French, “Sang”) to “expel”, to “not hide” (from French, “Ne te cache pas”), to “reveal itself” (from French, “Révèle toi”).

From the cultural sediments that silence themselves within the riven body, Cha exposes the pain of speech in a body that desires to reclaim itself. She writes:

*It murmurs inside. It murmurs. Inside is the pain
of speech the pain to say. Larger still. Greater
than is the pain to say. To not say. Says nothing
against the pain to speak. It festers inside. The wound,
liquid, dust. Must break. Must void. (3)*

In this passage stirs inside the body a painful desire to expel itself from an imposed silence. Cha exposes the pain of speech by charting every stage in the development of a voice. In a fragmented crescendo, as the desire for a voice intensifies it becomes even more painful. The first layer of silence begins with the “*the pain of speech*”, in which “speech” as a noun exhibits one’s ability to express itself. Then, even more strenuous is “*the pain to say*”, where “say” as a verb demonstrates the act of vocalizing. Once the voice becomes active, even more painful is to restrict it, “to not say”. The act of “saying” is further projected into the act of “speaking”, arriving at the last and most painful stage in the progression of the voice, the “*the pain to speak*”. Given this crescendo of voice in stages of increasing pain, when the colonized body is forced to contain a foreign identity it harbors within itself layers of silences. Deeply silenced from itself, the colonized body becomes isolated from itself, hence widening the fault line that has fragmented it.

Cha dramatizes the process of fragmentation by using the exercise of *dictée* as a metaphor for colonization. In doing so she equates the French pedagogic system to Japanese

imperialism, where knowledge, as she exposes in the evaluation of *dictée*, is imposed mechanically and factually to the students; a process similar to Japan's colonization of Korea. Within this metaphor, the fragmented textual body in the exercise of *dictée* represents the fragmented Korean human body. The book *Dictée* is named after a French pedagogic evaluation that is geared to improve students' spelling skills. Every student, every week in their French class participates in this evaluation, during which the teacher recites a text that the students copy down verbatim: without spelling mistakes, without missing a comma or a period, without forgetting to capitalize, and without forgetting to jump to the next line on the lined paper on which they are writing. The text is splintered by the teacher's voice who recites it slowly, uttering each word and each punctuation mark; emphasizing the fault lines between each unit of meaning. In this evaluation, the textual body represents the physical body that is disfigured by an imperial agent. The text's components, like the body's competing cultural truths are isolated from each other. Each body can then only express itself in a progression of silences.

In an analysis of the excerpt below in which Cha recreates the evaluation of *dictée*, I will demonstrate how the text is a fragmented body with silences being exposed at its own fault lines. Cha writes in French then translates in English,

Aller à la ligne C'était le premier jour point
 Elle venait de loin point ce soir au dîner virgule
 les familles demanderaient virgule ouvre les guil-
 lemets Ca s'est bien passé le premier jour point
 d'interrogation ferme les guillemets au moins
 virgule dire le moins possible virgule la réponse
 serait virgule ouvre les guillemets Il n'y a qu'une
 chose point ferme les guillemets ouvre les guille-
 mets Il y a quelqu'une point loin point ferme
 les guillemets.

Open paragraph It was the first day period
 She had come from a far period tonight at dinner
 comma the families would ask comma open
 quotation marks how was the first day interroga-
 tion mark close quotation marks at least to say
 the least of it possible comma the answer would be
 open quotation marks there is but one thing period
 There is someone period from a far period
 close quotation marks. (1)

Cha accentuates the spacing in her text to visually recreate the rhythm and breath of the teacher. This mechanical and slowed down manner of reciting silences and divides the text such that each textual unit exists independently and in isolation from each other. Cha graphically exposes and intensifies this isolation. The first paragraph of the passage begins with an indent and then the words “Aller à la ligne” (to go to the next line) where the verb “Aller” (to go) is in its infinitive form instead of being conjugated as the imperative “Allez”, which is the grammatically correct way of spelling it if the teacher is ordering the students to begin writing on the next line. Cha’s choice of writing “Aller” in an infinitive form fragments the text because a verb in an infinitive form is a basic form of the verb that does not bind itself to the subject of the sentence. As the word “Aller” is not grammatically binded to its sentence, it is isolated and silenced from the its subject. In urging the students to write on the next line, the text is further fragmented because a sentence or word may be truncated in half when shifting from one line to the next, and the students develop a fragmented, line-by-line understanding of the text. In addition to the isolation of words and sentences, if looking at the English translation, the text is increasingly fractured by the isolation of its paragraphs. The English translation begins with the words “Open paragraph”, which, as a conscious choice on Cha’s part, is not a “correct” translation of the French “Aller à la

ligne” (go to the next line). In English, the conjugation of the verb “Open” is not shown in its spelling, so it is unclear whether it is a verb or a noun. If understood as an imperative verb, when the teacher asks the students to “open” the paragraph, Cha implies that it is closed (if one has to open a door, then one assumes that it previously closed). Henceforth, when the text is fragmented in being divided into isolated units, the connective meanings between words, sentences, and paragraphs are silenced by an imperial voice. In Cha’s reconstruction of this evaluation, this voice is not the teachers as one may presume. When “Aller” is written in an infinitive form instead of “Allez”, the teacher’s voice is silenced because she loses her imperative voice. The imperial voice is therefore commanded by the French pedagogic system that imposes upon its students a pre-ordained response which prevents them from grasping the story in its entirety or engaging it in their own terms. Cha writes, “the response is precoded to perform predictably however passively possible. Neutralized to achieve the no-response, to make absorb, to submit to the unidirectional correspondence”. (33) Similar to the neutralization of Korean identity under Japanese imperialism, the students’ passive, hence silent absorption of the text’s story is caused by the fragmentation of the textual body, which is produced by the mechanical and “unidirectional” methodology.

In a second encounter with the text, I reconstruct it with visible punctuation to expose the lost story that narrates the normalization of speech and the neutralization of imperial domination. Without the vocalization of syntactical structuring, the text looks like this:

C’était le premier jour. Elle venait de loin. Ce soir au dîner,
 les familles demanderaient, “Ca c’est bien passé le premier jour?”
 au moins, dire le moins possible, la réponse serait, “Il n’y a
 qu’une chose.” “Il y a quelqu’une. loin.”

It was the first day. She had come from a far. Tonight at dinner,

the families would ask, “How was the first day ?” at least to say the least of it possible, the answer would be “there is but one thing. There is someone. From a far”

The story is set at a family dinner, depicting a seemingly normative domestic scene, where the parents of families ask their children, “How was your first day of school?”. This is a question inscribed in daily routine, similar to when someone greets you in passing by asking “How are you?”. But in passing, you never truly answer this question, you just respond “I’m good. Thanks. How are you?”. In such a mechanical pre-scripted exchange, people are not really asking you how you are doing, and you don’t usually answer by “I’m not doing very well”. This normalization of speech and daily interaction speaks for the normalization and neutralization of imperial domination that occurs over time in a colonized state, and in the body of the colonized. However, Cha disrupts this normalization in her response to the question “How was the first day ?”, with “there is but one thing. There is someone. From a far”. In her answer, with the emphasis on “but” in “there is but one thing”, Cha is saying that there is something that is anything but one thing, and that “one thing” signals a state of unifying assimilation that occurs when a colonized identity has silenced its own resistance against the absorption of imperial identity. Cha refuses this state of neutralization, because it upholds the present and historical silencing of the colonized human body. The normalization of this state prevents its voice from being roused in resistance. In her response within the normalized conversation at the dinner table, Cha furthers her resistance to imperial normalization by saying “There is someone. From a far”. In answering about “someone” other than herself who is “a far”, Cha creates a shift in perspective that breaks the routine exchange. She does not throw the ball back at the thrower, but further, urging her audience to notice an existence that is “a far”, beyond the safe, normative domestic sphere. At

first glance, one may not notice how Cha writes “a far” with a space between “a” and “far”. By this syntactic alteration, “far” is treated as a noun, which is grammatically impossible. Through this grammatical impossibility, that “someone” becomes intangible, non-existent and silenced. This “someone” refers to the Korean people who feel alienated and distanced from their Korean identity. Referring back to the quoted text, in the French translation Cha writes, “Il n’y a qu’une chose”, “Il y a quelqu’une. loin”. In English, “qu’une chose” is translated as “one thing”, and “quelqu’une” as “someone”. In English, “thing” and “someone” are not gender specific, but in French one could say “quelqu’une” (feminine) or “quelqu’un” (masculin). In Cha’s text, “quelqu’une” (someone) is conjugated in a feminine voice, which challenges the correct way of speech that conjugates the subject in a masculine voice as “quelqu’un”. Therefore, in saying “someone” who is “a far”, Cha is speaking of a woman.

In the political context of Japan’s colonization of Korea, this woman that Cha is speaking of may well be understood as one of the many Korean women who were sent to Japan to become comfort women to serve Japanese soldiers. Once sent away, most were never heard from again. Until the 1990s, Japan covered up this history, and to this day it remains a point of conflict in Korean-Japanese relations. The current prime minister of Japan, Shinzo Abe, refuses to this day to apologize to South Korea for Japan’s horrific treatment Korean women who were sent away as sex slaves between 1910-1945. In *Dictée*, Cha calls out to these women in the present and in the past by quoting Korean Medley songs. These songs, the most popular one being Korea’s unofficial national anthem “Arirang,” are disguised as love songs to speak about the silencing of Korean identity under Japan, and more specifically about the men who were sent away to Japanese work camps and the women sent out as comfort women. Cha writes:

You sing.

Standing in a shadow, Bong Sun flower

*Your form is destitute
 Long and long inside the summer day
 When beautifully flowers bloom
 The lovely young virgins will
 Have played in your honor. (46)*

The song quoted is called “The Bong Sun flower.”¹ In the song, the flower “*Standing in a shadow*” is a metaphor for Korea and its people standing in the shadow of Japan. This shadow from which the flower blooms is cast by a roof’s eave, which along with the house, stand for Japan’s arresting of Korean identity. More specifically, the flower as symbol of femininity symbolizes the women who have left for Japan.

*When beautifully flowers bloom
 The lovely young virgins will
 Have played in your honor.*

In other words, every time a flower blooms the Koreans are reminded of the young virgins who “played” in Japan’s honor.

In this Korean Medley song, Cha is calling to the people who have been left out of history like the Korean comfort women. She writes:

Aborted. Barely. Infant. Seed, germ, sprout, less even. Dormant. Stagnant. Missing
 The decapitated forms. Worn. Marred, recording a past, of previous forms. The present
 form face to face reveals the missing, the absent. Would-be-said remnant, memory. But
 the remnant is the whole. (38)

¹ While reading *Dictée*, I recognized the song because my mother who grew up in South Korea would often sing it to me when I was young along with the song “Arirang.” While I can sing many songs in Korean, I do not speak Korean. My understanding of these songs comes from my mother’s translations.

Cha exposes the people who are forgotten and unaccounted for, dead or alive, stillborn or “still” “born” during Japanese occupation of Korea. Instead of upholding memories of the silenced as painfully fragmented and partially visible, Cha urges to see the “remnant” as the “whole”. While this assertion is paradoxical, to see what is partial as whole displaces the silenced in past and present time from an intangible space that is “a far” to a position that fosters resistance. Fragmentation becomes a celebrated form under which the colonized can be understood and speak from.

Cha further reclaims a state of fragmentation by situating those cast “a far” within the fault lines that have divided them culturally excluded them from history. She writes:

From A Far
 What nationality
 or what kindred and relation
 what blood relation
 what blood ties of blood
 what ancestry
 what race generation
 what house clan tribe stock strain
 what lineage extraction
 what breed sect gender denomination caste
 what stray ejection misplaced
 Tertium Quid neither one thing nor the other
 Tombe des nues de naturalized
 what transplant to dispel upon. (Cha, 20)

Once again we are faced with Cha’s writing of “afar” as “A Far” to speak of the colonized human bodies that are cast away and silenced. From this silent no-space, Cha emphasizes their

estrangement from both Korean and Japanese identities in asking “what nationality, or what kindred and relation”, “what blood relation”, “what blood ties of blood”, “what ancestry”, “what lineage extraction”. Estranged and extracted from any sense of nationality or ancestry, a sense of belonging can be found within the fault line, the sliver of space in between truth claims of identity that compete for representation in the colonized human body. Cha focuses her gaze within the fault lines when she writes:

Tertium Quid neither one thing nor the other
Tombe des nues de naturalized

Under the veil of Japan, standing under its roof’s eave, the Koreans are neither “Korean” or “Japanese”, but in between both nationalities as a “Tertium Quid”. “Tertium Quid” is an ambiguous mixed substance, a third identity positioned in between two predefined identities while feeling estranged from both. In the *Souls of Black Folks*, by W. E. B. Du Bois, the term pejoratively describes black people as something between animal and man. When Cha writes “Tombe des nues de naturalized”, she uses the interplay of French and English language to qualify the Koreans’ double sense of estrangement. “Tombe”, in French, if read as a verb means to fall, but if read as a noun, means a tomb. To speak of their ambiguous position, she qualifies them in French and in English as “de naturalized”: “of” (from “de” in french) “naturalized”. In a the second reading of “de naturalized”, this time only in English, by collapsing the space between “de” and “naturalized”, the bodies become “denaturalized”. So in assembling the pieces of this puzzle, Cha is saying, that from a no-place that is not identifiable because it is so terribly far (“A Far”), falls (“tombe”) naturalized (“de naturalized”) bodies. But through the motion of falling, the second reading is triggered. As the naturalized bodies fall, they are placed into a tomb of denaturalized bodies. In the context of Korea and Japan, the Koreans, despite living on their

own soil, internally do not belong within the boundaries of their national territory that is supposed to affirm their identity. Silenced in their own country, they resist the naturalization of Japanese identity while being denaturalized as Koreans. The process of denaturalization is further emphasized by the French idiom “*tomber des nues*”, which means to fall by the failure of assimilation, and by a reduction of value.

Piercing even further into the position of the *Tertium Quid*, an invalid substance existing between two pre-established truths, Cha claims it as a truth and a position worth speaking from.

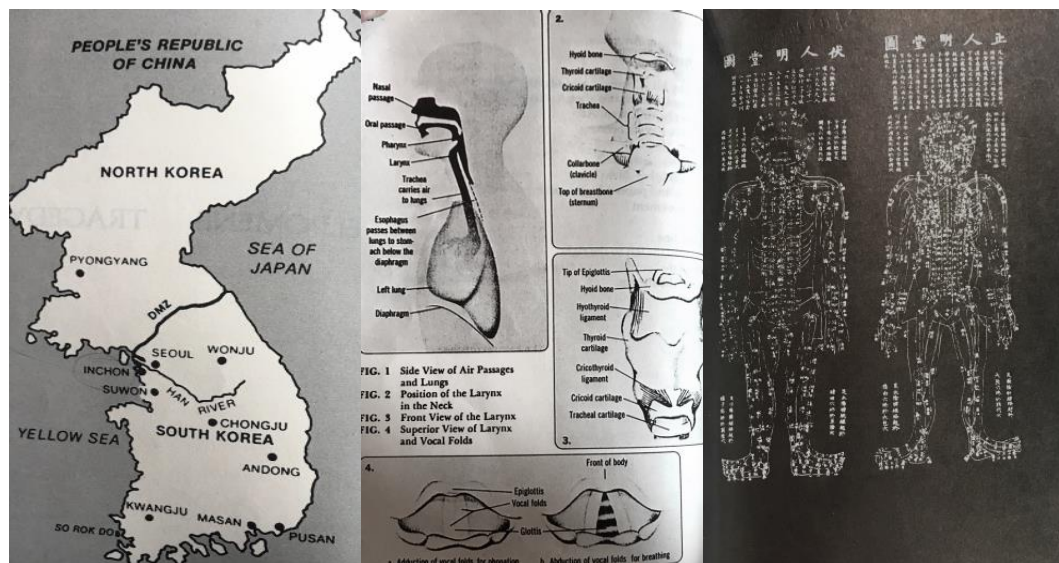
She writes:

Further, Further inside. Further than. To middle.
 Deeper. Without measure. Deeper than. Without
 means of measure. To core. In another tongue. Same
 word. Slight mutation of the same. Undefinable.
 Shift. Shift slightly. Into a different sound. The dif-
 ference. How it discloses the air. Slight. Another
 word. Same. Parts of the same atmosphere. Deeper.
 Center. Without distance. No particular distance
 from center to periphery. Points of measure effaced.
 To begin there. There. *In Media Res*. (157)

Here, Cha is urging the physical body to inhabit the gap of the *Tertium Quid*, to let the estrangement from multiple truths be a new truth. When Cha writes “*Deeper. Without measure. Deeper than. Without means of measure. To core*”, she pierces into the body with an even deeper introspective force, urging the riven self to inhabit this in-between space without measuring itself according to two pre-existing claims of identifications. From this space, “*in media res*”, in the middle—within the fault line, Cha offers the possibility of reclaiming the colonized self with a voice that speaks “*in another tongue*”. This third language accounts for both

the silencing of the colonized identity and the containment of imperial identity. In a “Slight mutation of the” “word”, the voice reclaims its silence by becoming “undefinable”. Then, by shifting “into a different sound”, the voice expels itself from the imperial imposition. In *Dictée*, Cha enacts this resistance linguistically when she uses the interplay of French and English in a same sentence to create a larger meaning beyond each word’s definition in the context of their own language.

Through a deconstructive lens, Cha exposes the consequences of colonization by revealing the fault lines within the fragmented colonized human body and the sedimentary silences that lay within it. In surfacing the silences, under a reconstructive discourse, Cha gives the colonized human body the ability to speak from its fault lines, in “media res” against the pressure of assimilation and the burden of categorical classification. In *Dictée*, Cha visualizes and physicalizes this experience as a body acted upon.



In these three visuals of anatomy, language, and national boundary, Cha displays how one’s understanding of bodies (human and national) are inherently fragmented by words that attempt to classify and define them. Instead of choosing to define herself by either a western or an eastern

conception of the body, or seeing herself only in relation to a nation, she includes different symbolic logics to place herself “in media res”. In between cultures, languages, and nations, Cha can resist being classified by a singular truth claim. Furthermore, in a visual echo between the first and second photo invites one to think about what would happen to the throat if a national identity were to be imposed onto the body during colonization.

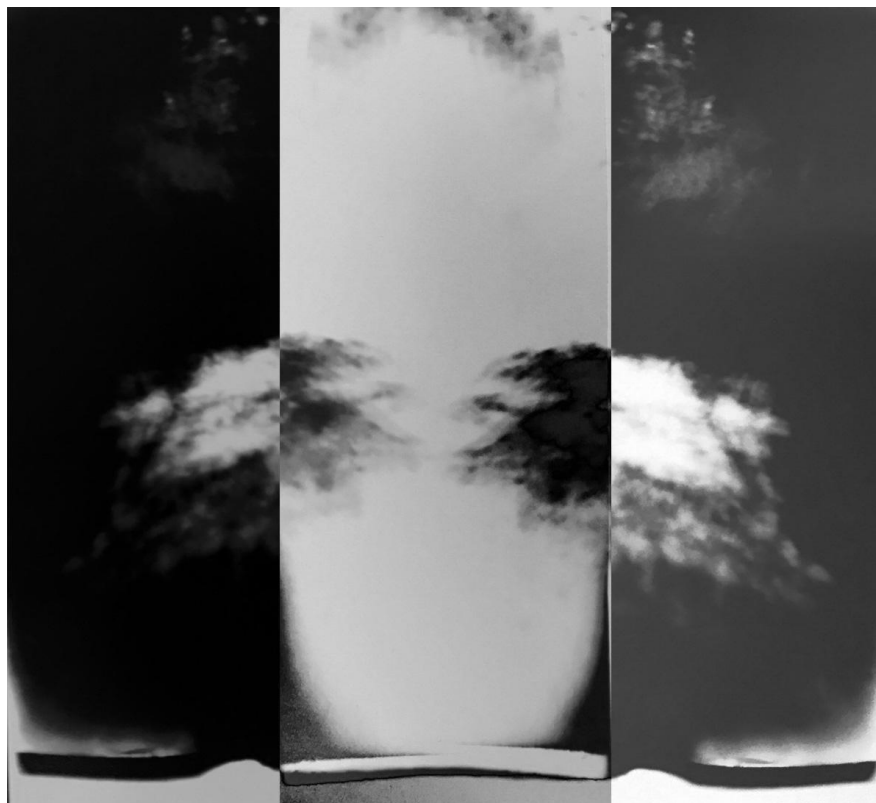


In this visual reconstruction of the first two photos, when the photo of the nation is superimposed over the image of the throat, the latter becomes divided, demonstrating the suppression of voice that occurs when an imperial identity imposes itself upon the colonized body.

With her own selection criteria, and organizational format that incorporates different cultures, narrative forms, and documentation, Cha creates a new form of coherency. While her text is centered around the silences that become sediments in the fragmented colonized body, she does not seek to speak for the silenced, but instead exposes the pain of speech and offers the possibility of a new space from which they can speak. In doing so she veers away from

traditional discourses that seek to display narratives of the marginalized and silenced. In speaking for them, these discourses reinforce the submission of the silenced to an authoritative power. In her own language, Cha seeks to bring awareness to the silenced by placing the reader in such a position. For example, by the usage of multiple languages within one text, an inherent silence is created through the inability to comprehend. The reader, who is not expected to speak all four languages: English, French, Korean, and Chinese, is then subjected to the silence she is trying to reveal in personal and historical narratives.

Chapter 2



In her novel, *In the Heart of the Heart of Another Country*, Etel Adnan paints a voyage of her life in which she weaves herself in and out of cities, countries, universes, humans, and non-humans. By a constant recalibration of her existence, she challenges the concepts of belonging and exile. The form of the book also speaks for her perpetual regeneration of self and landscape by being constructed as a string of individual paragraphs that render it hard to perceive where or when she is speaking from. A constant reference point in a landscape that is always in flux are the titles of each paragraph that repeat themselves: “Another Person,” “Business,” “Church,” “Final Vital Data,” “My Breath, House and Window,” “Weather,” “First Person,” “Place.” While the titles remain visually the same, every time they are repeated they are imagined differently, depending on the time Adnan has written each paragraph. The stable yet unstable nature of the titles reflects itself in Adnan’s identity. Growing up in Beirut in the 1930s, she experiences a transcultural childhood that infuses simultaneously a deep sense of belonging and of estrangement. In a poetic figure of the house, Adnan expresses her need to feel both inside and outside by describing the house as both a womb and an observatory. In learning how to understand and balance her need to occupy both positionalities, we witness conversations between her conflicting selves and between political and ethnic entities that she accepts and rejects. Every time Adnan attempts to be inside, to feel the comfort of a womb, her outsidership demands a shift towards the outside, propelling her across geographical boundaries. As she keeps going further, to yet *another country*, her desire to belong shifts her weight back inside. Returning to Beirut in 1972, she is certain that her return after an enhanced sense of exile will grant her the ease to permanently belong. But in 1975 the Civil War in Beirut begins, and Adnan experiences the limits of being human in a political environment that fails her transculturality. Disenchanted by the human world, Adnan fully turns to her poetic imagination by penetrating

the non-human. Flying in outer outer space, Adnan believes that neither of her two opposing forces will limit the other. However, like her experience on earth, her weight eventually shifts back inside, situating her back on land. Adnan's journey is one of constantly vacillating between opposite stances. Each time she feels the limits of either, she shifts her weight to reconfigure herself. Her deep attention to the tension that arises between oppositions, within the fault lines that draw exclusionary categories of being, propels her on a seemingly never-ending journey that perpetually challenges permanency and a normalization of life.

Before narrating Adnan's vacillations between terrestrial and celestial, human and non-human coordinates, it is important to consider the origins of her tendency toward constant shifting and redefinition. Born in Beirut during the 1930s to a Christian Greek mother and a Muslim Syrian father, Adnan's upbringing was distinctly transcultural. In the house, the family spoke Greek and Turkish, and Adnan went to French school while studying English. It is therefore difficult to qualify which was Adnan's first language, or to claim her as endemic to any one of the cultures that permeate her family. In a revealing conversation with her father, Adnan writes:

ANOTHER PERSON

When I tried to speak Greek with him he answered that he didn't understand the language, and when I showed surprise he laughed, beautifully, and said that he had a nanny from Smyrna who had given him her own accent when he was a child, and that the accent had never left him. His English was Shakespearean and his French from Marseilles and Nice. (52)

It is hard to say where her father is from, as he speaks in a tongue of accents that echo fragments of Greek, English, and French culture, passed down to him by different people and from different places. The young Adnan thus encountered a mosaic of cultures, at once intimate and at several

times removed, each of them resonating inside her at different intensities. Never fully identified with a single place or cultural identity, Adnan came to know herself as both insider and outsider, present and absent—a perpetual exile, as she would later write, “*in the heart of the heart of another country.*”

One of the central ways in which this exilic sense of belonging manifests itself in Adnan’s work is through the figure of the house, one which is alternately confining and permeable, fixed and unstable:

HOUSE, MY BREATH AND WINDOW

A house is a cage, a monument, the mausoleum of all travels, an observatory, the belly of one’s mother. Mine is now full of windows, above a harbor. (13)

Even though Adnan is speaking from her house in California, “full of windows, above a harbor,” this “observatory” exists in tension with the traditional concept of home as a “womb.” It simultaneously stirs in her a feeling of immobility, permanence, and death, as suggested by the figure of the “mausoleum” that raises itself as the death “of all travels.” Moreover, this sense of threatening confinement emerges from the very condition of singularity expressed in the articles Adnan attaches to this chain of disparate nouns: “*a cage,*” “*a monument,*” “*the mausoleum,*” “*an observatory,*” “*the belly of one’s mother.*” Rather than attempting to unify these disparate singularities into a cohesive concept of home, Adnan resides in and, reflexively, must free herself from each of them. Accustomed to having a heartbeat that expands beyond the walls of a singular heart, Adnan must make and unmake her home inside (and outside) many cultures.

Movement is essential for Adnan because it gives her the freedom to vacillate between feeling like an insider and an outsider—inside and outside many places and cultures. In her poetry, when Adnan occupies either position separately for a period of time, her transcultural

consciousness will eventually echo her absence from one or the other. Adnan moves between them not only because they are both endemic to who she is, but more importantly because they are in opposition. In a position outside any fixed states of belonging, Adnan can move freely like a bird in constant migration. But because her outsidership associates being inside (grounded by a desire to belong) pejoratively with stagnation and suffocation, Adnan's mobility is driven by two different forces, moving her at different speeds.

FINAL VITAL DATA

There is a secret about me: my mobility. I go always faster than I go. This is why I am such a stranger to myself. (14)

Adnan's need to move is birthed from an anxiety to do herself justice, to adhere to both her positionalities. When she writes, "I go always faster than I go," there are two consciousnesses operating at the same, one always moving "faster" than the other. The first "I," in conflict with the second, is always one step ahead. It places Adnan always one foot outside the door, ready to disrupt the gravity felt inside by the second "I." While both consciousnesses operate within Adnan, her need to constantly go faster than she may like to makes her feel like a "stranger" to herself.

With an inclination to always move faster, against the force of gravity that grounds her inside, Adnan gains more confidence as an outsider. Her need to be outside is put into motion when she begins to feel trapped by a hyper-awareness of time. The slowness of time begins to feel like a prophecy from the future predicting a sedentary existence with no escape. In this state that she will later qualify as a state of absolute presence, she writes:

WEATHER

In Beirut there is one season and a half. Often the air is still. I get up in the morning and breathe heavily. The winter is damp. My bones ache. (1)

First demonstrated by the short sentences that ground themselves with the weight of their punctuation, Adnan experiences a state of immobilizing pain in reaction to an excess of stagnant time. The stillness of time is expressed when Adnan says that there is only “one season and a half.” With only “half” a season following a first season, this “half” season is truncated and unable to fully realize itself. Flowers are left half-bloomed, leaves are partially green, time is immobilized because the fractional season can’t blossom. With a desire yet inability to regenerate, time is suspended in a painful state that perpetually reaches for plurality and regeneration.

Like a running engine sitting above deflated wheels, Adnan’s outsidership looks at her insidership with disdain. She writes,

THE FIRST PERSON

Is she another person? That enemy of mine has no face, no name, no being. Not even some shadow. But it is the ultimate presence. When I go to the kitchen I go through it, with much difficulty. Then it inhabits my chest. Then it becomes the first person. I mean “I.” “I” follows the wind and the rain with anger. “I” knows what it means to be an Arab: proud, with no reason, humiliated, with no reason. The first person is a monkey who moved to San Francisco, Paris, Marrakesh and Bahrain. In a cage, in the bottom of a merchant boat. Also from bedroom to bedroom, but that’s a later tale. A tale for insomniacs. I am sometimes a first person and sometimes a third. My body takes over and moves like a planet on its own, in the crowded streets of an Arab town. (17)

When referring to herself as “I,” Adnan speaks from outside. She expresses her inability to be consummately defined when she writes that she knows what it means to be “an Arab” “with no reason.” To assertively say that she is Arab would be presumptuous because an ethnicity is too large and vague a label to define oneself by. In this sense, I understand Adnan relating only to

the *concept* of ethnicity. Adnan can only feel her Arabness in abstraction because an Arab ethnicity reflects *a* social group unified under a common national identity that homogenizes and hierarchies cultural and religious differences. In Lebanon, the concept of Arab ethnicity emerged under the French Mandate that governed Lebanon under the ideologies of the nation state. It established in Lebanon a representative government, wherein desiring to represent the people created a national identity by a common link between religious sects. This ideology instigated conflict between the different ethno-religious groups because the common link only spoke for a majority, and those who did not fall within its measurements were deemed minorities. Adnan cannot assertively say that she is *an* Arab because it refers to an ethnicity that would divide her along sectarian lines. Adnan demonstrates her fear of being limited by moving across geopolitical boundaries, to “San Francisco, Paris, Marrakesh and Bahrain” “in the bottom of a merchant boat,” as if her departure from one place to another was instigated by a feeling of entrapment felt in the previous place. Once Adnan begins to feel limited by measurements of being that ask her to conform to *a* citizen *by definition*, she leaves. Adnan’s pattern of displacement is a product of her outsidership, viewing herself as a traveler with a hypermobile nature that feels suffocated by adhering to time and the socio-political expectations of a place. Adnan’s other consciousness as the third person “she” is the first person’s “enemy” because it sinks the first person’s moving anchor indefinitely into a port, forcing Adnan to live in an “ultimate presence” under the quantifications of a place. Adnan expresses her estrangement from this state by an external perception of herself through her “body” that moves independently from the first person, like a “planet on its own.” Under its own speed, Adnan becomes homogenized in the “crowded streets of an Arab town,” as if she were simply another stitch in the tapestry that weaves the landscape of a *given* place and identity.

Adnan's competing positionalities create friction inside her bones that instantiates itself into political and ethnic entities.

POLITICS

I am both an American and an Arab and these identities are sometimes at odds with each other, not every day, not even often, but once in a great while I become a mountain that some terrifying earthquake has split. (71)

When writing, an "American" and an "Arab," Adnan is simultaneously identifying herself with the concept of a *national* identity and the concept of an *ethnic* identity. It is important to consider both as separate *concepts* because neither way of qualifying herself are absolute. Split between both, as an American she lets herself be quantified by the socio-political measurements of a nation and, as an Arab who feels Arab "with no reason," she qualifies herself by her transculturality that does not fit into a specific qualification of being. The disjunction between Adnan's two references causes friction between them, like the collision of two tectonic plates that form her into a "mountain." As this friction increases, the collision intensifies until she is cracked in half. Adnan's crisis is one of belonging to a nation and a culture that speaks to her dichotomous position as an insider and outsider. The width of the mountain's crack, the depth of the fault line in Adnan's heart is not charted by geographical distance, but calculated by the tension between her positionalities.

Stretched between opposite magnetic fields, Adnan experiences a stronger magnetic pull from her outsidership. But to call herself an American implies that she undeniably also lets herself be quantified by the socio-political measurements of a place. So in an attempt to balance her existence, in order to feel a sense of belonging without feeling constantly expelled outwards towards another place or culture, Adnan poetically recalibrates herself to be *in the heart of the heart of a non-human heart*. Based on the same formula that marked the simultaneous

upbringing inside and outside many cultures –”*in the heart of the heart of another country,*” Adnan attempts to be both inside and outside by fusing with the non-human (outside the human). Before we can clearly explain how Adnan poetically redefines herself when torn previously between feeling inside and outside, Adnan has on several occasions referred to herself as a cluster of non-human elements, such as a “planet” or “a mountain.” When being human punctures her heart, splits her in half, Adnan poetically transfers her heart to the heart of a non-human heart.

Growing up in Beirut between 1925 and 1949, as a queer woman Adnan felt outside the gendered qualifications that defined what it commonly meant to be a woman in Beirut. In speaking of her sexuality, she writes, “I couldn’t love a man because I loved the sea. Then, I went away, and the spell broke” (4). Here Adnan poetically replaces the word woman with the “sea.” In doing so, she is reconfiguring her position as an outsider to that of an insider by being *in the heart, of the heart of a non-human heart*: inside the heart of the sea, outside the human heart and gender. She places her heart in that of the sea, because unlike gendered human beings, the sea does not feel pressured to extend its heart to a woman or a man, or to even make any conclusive claims about gender. Instead, like Adnan, the sea is fluid and does not discriminate on which shores its waves wash up. With waves that wash in and out, it never settles, and is always in flux by pulling and mixing sand from many coastlands into its heart. When Adnan writes, “then, I went away, and the spell broke,” she shifts herself back outside the human world, once again moving in geographical space to be “*in the heart of the heart of another country.*” But it is important to remember that as she frees herself by moving to new geographical places, she also does so in physical stillness by reconfiguring herself into non-human elements through poetic imagination: *in the heart of the heart of a non-human heart.*

As inside demands a counter-shift back outside, when Adnan moves to the United States, where she lives for seventeen years after leaving Beirut, she manifests in geographical space an interior experience of exile already felt while living in Beirut. In announcing her return to Beirut, she writes,

PLACE

So I have sailed the seas and come...

to B...

a city by the sea, in Lebanon. It is seventeen years later. My absence has been an exile from an exile. (1)

Adnan returns to Beirut after living for seventeen years in the United States in California.

In announcing her return she writes, “my absence has been an exile from an exile.” Here Adnan positions herself in a double state of exile, outside a previous outside. Her absence from Beirut, therefore referring to her time in California, was triggered by a need to leave Beirut because she felt pressured by measurements of being that she could not adhere to, such as constraints on her sexuality. She therefore experiences a double state of exile, both in relation to Beirut. The first pertains to her time *in* Beirut before she left, and the second refers to her time in California *outside* Beirut. Her first exile is charted by an emotional estrangement and the second by geographical distance. So, back in Beirut, Adnan is *inside the inside of a doubled outside*. Her estrangement from the city is further emphasized by the fact that Adnan does not dare to write “Beirut,” but instead only utters its first letter “B...,” as if she feels so removed from the city that she forgets how to even write its name. While I have focused on her position as an outsider in Beirut, it is important to acknowledge her persistence to be *inside*, a force pushing her to move through two walls that have upheld her alienation from the city. Shifting her weight to be on the inside, Beirut presents itself as the house that is both a womb and a grave.

While Adnan acknowledges her enhanced position as an outsider, she also returns to Beirut in hope of permanently anchoring herself. After being away from Beirut for seventeen years, she writes, “like a salmon I came back here to die” (7). Adnan compares herself to a salmon because she is hoping to follow its same path of migration: being born in a place, leaving, maturing, and then returning to the place of birth to die. So in returning, Adnan hopes to rest her heart in Beirut after a long absence. However, as she has changed, so has the city. Her desire to remain inside is disrupted by the politics of the city that attempt to qualify her transcultural identity. Adnan returns to Beirut in 1972 and experiences the Lebanese civil war that begins in April 1975. During the war, spanning from 1975 to 1990, Lebanon experiences a collapse of its capitalist state economy that was installed during the French Mandate period from 1914 to 1946. What replaces the state economy is a militia economy, in which different militias represent different political groups such as the Lebanese national movement, and the Lebanese Front. The first was a leftist coalition that allied with the Palestinian Liberation Organization, and the second a predominantly Christian anti-leftist coalition that rejected the integration of Lebanon into the Arab World. In the first two years of the war, the fighting between different political and religious groups represented by the militias was centered around the Green line that divided the city between East and West Beirut. In East Beirut the French-speaking Maronites were fighting against the Arabophone leftist Muslim, pro-Palestinian militants of West Beirut. Adnan sides with the leftists, but the city’s divide along political sectarian lines categorize Adnan’s transcultural identity. Like the different ethno-religious groups in Beirut during the war, her different cultures are compartmentalized and set up against each other, forcing Adnan to have to label herself as Francophone or Arabophone or Christian or Muslim. But with a father who is Muslim and a mother who is Christian, Adnan

culturally feels a sense of belonging on both sides of the Green Line. Linguistically, she also transgresses the divide because she was educated in French. In addition to the atrocities of the war, where civilians were killed for simply existing and buildings were bombed for housing the wrong people, Adnan can't live in Beirut because the politics of the city divide her religiously and linguistically and ask her to be endemic to one language or religion.

Expelled completely outside, Adnan criticizes the war and its aftermath for erasing and stabilizing identity. The worst damage the war did to the people, in Adnan's understanding, is the way it came to normalize and stabilize people's existence in the most demonic manner. Upon returning to Beirut, Adnan first criticizes the political climate for normalizing death as it becomes a way of life.

BUSINESS

Money and death are intermingled....They beat a prisoner to death to get his shirt even though they can just take it. But they like to kill him. (18)

When Adnan writes "money and death are intermingled," death is capitalized: to kill generates capital and death becomes a currency that increases in value by the extermination of life. By the capitalization of death, death is normalized because killing someone is even more casual an affair than buying an object, as the killers "take" the prisoner's shirt. To kill a person is as easy as tossing a coin in the air, a game of heads or tails in which either face of the coin will result in death. Adnan continues to expose the obliterations of life in Beirut after the civil war in the manner in which Arab women transformed themselves to look like French women.

BUSINESS

During my last stay in Beirut, Lebanon, it wasn't the war and the damage it did to people and things that pained me the most but, rather, what people are currently doing to their faces.... Faces are being transformed at a scary pace. There's something demonic about

the surgeries which give, for example, French noses to some heavily built Arab women.... They need a change they will tell you; if it's impossible to move into a new house (or a new morality) then move away from your old appearance, remodel your ears, get rid of your wrinkles, raise your eyebrows, permanently swell your lips and spray yellow hues on your hair. (27)

In this passage, Adnan speaks about the women in Beirut to communicate a larger acceptance of colonial "morality." After the war people had to reconstruct their lives, rebuild their homes, reunite the hearts of lovers torn apart by the political divide. But what pained Adnan the most was how people reconfigured themselves not by making a drastic change against colonial influence, not by remembering their "old appearance," but, like the Arab women, by adopting a new appearance that wove into their faces the reflection of a colonizing identity. Adnan criticizes Arabs who have adopted a defined unifying identity, a definition of an ethnicity that erases difference, as they are letting themselves be permanently injected with a single common national identity which looks French. Under the metaphor of plastic surgery, everyone looks the same, one can't even look for the minutest detail of difference, not even in one's wrinkles because they have been erased.

In addition to the inherent misery Adnan experiences in Beirut, where blood runs out of faucets instead of water, what turns her in the direction of another oasis, to another country, is the order arising out of the war's misery – the normalization of death and the stabilization of identity. In speaking of this dream of order embedded within the darkness and chaos of political warfare, she writes:

BUSINESS

When would some anarchy ever erupt in this chartered, measured, and parceled world where living has become theater? Of course, there's misery, plenty of it.... But misery

does not create creative chaos; on the contrary, it dreams of order, rows of bread, straight lines of water, well-defined bank accounts. (53)

Despite the corrosion of homes and bodies during the civil war in Beirut, Adnan is saddened by the order that shapes the remaining parcels of life into coherent organized states of being. Instead of grasping onto the chaos of the war to redefine and skew the delineations that measure life along political and sectarian lines, the parcels of life that are left to fall into categorizations of identity. To better understand a re-ordering of life during the civil war, beyond sectarian lines, the militias would purposefully destroy pre-existing common infrastructure that connected communities in Beirut for the purpose of establishing their territories. With new infrastructure that was built exclusively within the territories controlled by the militia, the militias were producing the very conditions of destruction to legitimate themselves. Perceiving life to be fluid and in flux like the ocean, Adnan left Beirut once again because the order that arose from the chaos straightened ocean currents into “lines of water”.

In Beirut, Adnan’s desire to be an insider is threatened by the measurements of a place that want to confine her and others to a defined way of being. As it seems impossible to be human in Beirut, Adnan demonstrates her struggle to be both inside and outside by once again reconfiguring herself poetically, placing herself in the hearts of non-human organisms, outside the human heart. Speaking from a non-human heart she writes:

ANOTHER PERSON

I am an amoeba in the dark aquarium which is this city, reaching for acids, stretching and shrinking. I am a fish. My scales rub against the top of the buildings and get torn. My gills absorb all the oil that there is in the water. I keep coming to the surface, but the sky is absent. (15)

In this passage, Adnan uses poetry to redesign herself in a reality that she has felt expelled from. To shift her weight back inside, she becomes an “amoeba” in the city that is a “dark aquarium.” Adnan chooses to become an amoeba because they model her very human desires to be freely transform without being categorized. Amoeba are unicellular organisms that can mutate into different shapes by the movement of the pseudopods (a projection of their cellular membrane), and cannot be qualified to fit into any single taxonomic group. Inheriting from the amoeba the freedom to transform, Adnan stretches and shrinks into a fish. But as she becomes a fish, the environment of the aquarium shifts back into the infrastructure of the city and limits her existence as non-human: her “scales rub against the top of the buildings and get torn,” her gills “absorb all the oil that there is in the water.” Adnan, desperate to keep her mobility and identity as a fish, keeps dwelling in this state, absorbing the toxins of the city, and “coming to the surface” to try to break the glass of the aquarium, as if wanting to return to the sea. But even this battle to escape becomes hopeless because “the sky is absent.” Without the sky, not even a reflection of the sea can be felt. In losing sight of the emblem of her vitality, she experiences a full-on sense of entrapment. When the landscape of the city begins to permeate her poetic recalibration, Adnan feels the limits of her imagination and the limits imposed on humans during civil war.

Every time Adnan struggles to be inside and outside, she either physically moves to another geographical place or poetically mutates into a non-human element such as a planet, a mountain, the sea, a fish, or an amoeba. But every place seems to eventually cage her in, and her non-human heart eventually fades back into the human. Even as an amoeba, an organism that gives her the freedom to mutate into anything by its nature, does not offer her the freedom of being inside and outside: *inside, the inside of an outside*. When she attempts to strike a balance

in geographical space by being “*in the heart, of the heart of another country,*” the place that is *other*, seemingly far and un-constraining, eventually closes in upon her. *There* begins to feel like *here*, outside closes into inside. What sustains *another* place as outside is the amount of distance Adnan creates between herself and the place. When entering a new place, Adnan writes that she “carried [her] own space and fearlessly looked out” (29). With only her “space” in focus, she can sustain a subjective distance from the place despite being inside. She can dive into the smallest alleys, caressing the facades of buildings to feel their pulse without being afraid of the buildings’ edges splintering her skin. But after some time, the edges of a place will come into focus, Adnan’s feet will begin to feel a grid that arises beneath the ocean to square her into unifying categories of belonging. She comes to realize that every voyage to the heart of *another* place will eventually cage her in and she will have to move again. Will another city succeed at mending her fragmented state of being, or will it only perpetuate the cycle and intensify the tension between belonging and exile? In speaking of this anxiety of placelessness, Adnan writes,

PLACE

My place is at the center of things, I am writing from within the nucleus of an atom.
 Blood beating in my ears. Dry heat radiating from my nerves. A pressure trying to push my eyes ahead of me; they want to travel on their own. My place: highways, trains, cars.
 One road after another, from ocean shore to ocean shore. From Beirut to the Red Sea.
 From Aden to Algiers. From Oregon to La Paz. I keep going, prisoner of a body, and my brain is just a radio station emitting messages to outer space. Angels, astronauts all dressed in white, I would like some strange being to take me somewhere where no disease blurs my perception. I will grow wings and fly. (11)

Placing herself at the “center of things,” Adnan wants to dive into experience, into large cosmopolitan cities that hold the loudest and most chaotic heartbeats. In large cities with seemingly infinite possibilities—nooks and cracks she can twist herself into, she expresses herself

“from within the nucleus of an atom.” As the smallest constituent of matter that makes up everything human and non-human, Adnan can mutate into an infinity of things that range from microscopic to infinitely large, from a seed to a plant, a shoe, an ant, or even an elephant. But the outsider in Adnan slams on the breaks of the insider’s dive, suspending it in the air, sucking all the gravity out of its bone marrow to expel Adnan back out, into her “body,” onto “highways, trains, cars” that will bring her “from Beirut to the Red Sea. From Aden to Algiers. From Oregon to La Paz.” When a place, initially *outside*, closes itself upon her, when it begins to feel like a suffocating existence, Adnan’s mobility, instigated by her outsidership, snaps Adnan out to move her to a new place. But after many cities, many recalibrations of being, many exiles, in no place can Adnan exist as both an insider and an outsider. Even in Beirut, where she believed that a desire for permanency would be balanced by her double state of exile, eventually fails. So where can she go if all places seem to have pre-written guidebooks that she cannot follow? Staying on earth does not seem adequate enough for Adnan to move according to her own waves. So, in order to free herself from the constraints of geographical places, in desperation for breath, her brain becomes a “radio station emitting messages to outer space.” In order for outside not to close into inside, she calls to move above and beyond the places on earth, transgressing the tropospheric and stratospheric borders of the atmosphere, where she can “grow wings and fly.” While Adnan’s poetic reconfigurations have not always offered her a permanent balance between being inside and outside, she hopes that her poetic voyage to outer outer space will propel her far enough for her to comfortably belong. *Inside the heart of another universe*, she writes:

VITAL DATA

I have established sound relations with the universe. Of that, I’m sure. I move freely between the sun and the moon, I go further, I plunge into black holes and emerge intact. I ride on comets, count galaxies. I’m on speaking terms with light-years, all this since I

traveled in a matter of seconds to the Universe's edge and suspected that the strange movement that I've witnessed, once there, was the beginning of an abyss. (41)

In titling her time in outer outer space "Final vital data," Adnan is sure that this poetic transgression will allow her to be both inside and outside. A balance between Adnan's consciousnesses in outer outer space is demonstrated by her movement that is not driven from the tension between her dual state of being, but from a sublime ultimate freedom, as she can "move freely between the sun and the moon." Moving between the "sun" and the "moon," and "further" by plunging into "black holes" while emerging intact," Adnan can explore seemingly infinite coordinates, always undefeated. In outer space she simply exists, she just *is*, free from any measurements of being, even time, speed, and distance. By surviving a black hole, where time is completely suspended at its heart, Adnan is impermeable to the passage of time. And when she travels "in a matter of seconds," on "terms with light-years," she moves at the speed of light, so fast that it becomes hard to calculate her rate of speed. So without any notion of time nor speed, even distance can't be calculated ($\text{distance} = \text{rate of speed} \times \text{time}$). However, by the end of the passage, Adnan's initial certainty regarding her freedom in outer outer space is shattered when she reaches the "universe's edge." On this edge, Adnan comes to understand that the universe is not ever-expansive. Even the most liberating experiences have a limit and an "abyss" into which one can crash. She is not invincible, as even "comets" can extinguish themselves. A comet is not a divine phenomenon as believed by Aristotle, but a definable substance with a nucleus that contains earthly minerals such as rock and ice, and organic compounds such as amino acids that are also the building blocks of proteins in humans. Occasionally, the comet will react to the solar system's gravitational pull and form an ion tail that just might create a trail back to earth, where it will crash. Following the comet's trajectory,

from the Kuiper Belt to the solar system, down its trail of ions back to earth, Adnan is forced to acknowledge that the celestial realm does not exist independently from the terrestrial realm. This scientific explanation is not to negate the imagination of the universal or the terrestrial, but to demonstrate that they are not mutually exclusive from one another.

Standing on the edge of the universe, looking down into an “abyss,” Adnan assertively writes, “I was central and became peripheral” (29). In this position of disenchantment, she writes, “I have the sadness of a meteor” (15). Like the meteor, after flying around for what seems to be infinite time, in infinite space, she begins to feel the limits of outer outer space by the gravitational pull of the solar system, connecting her back to earth, back into the fault line that holds the tension between insider and outsider. Disenchanted, with her feet back on land, Adnan writes, “it’s always a matter of salvation at the price of destruction” (91). From the tension between her outsidership and insidership, Adnan always experiences one at the price of the other—one is always saved by the destruction of the other. Even though she attempts to stabilize them by being *inside, the inside of an outside*, the outside eventually becomes an inside from which she has to propel herself with a force that extinguishes her position of belonging. This constant vacillation between inside and outside repeats itself in a cycle between the hearts of different cities, universes, and non-human elements.

There comes a point, however, when Adnan eventually let’s go of this tension. She writes:

CHURCH

Suddenly, one day, the breeze flew horizontally, touched my ear, surrounded me; I shivered, my heart quivered, made itself forgotten, then I felt soft, bodiless, weightless, lost sense of self and non-self. I became pure living substance, indefinable existence, and the breeze changed direction, blew softly to the opposite side, and it brought Resurrection....I experienced a simultaneity of past and present, I lived the miracle of

being a child and an adult, innocent and yet hyperconscious, I was in April and in December in some absolute reality which was no abstraction....I was breathing in air as a child and as an adult, in a climate redoubled into spring and winter, like me, all of this already gone by the time it was noticed. (98)

One day, Adnan experiences the softness of a “breeze” that gently kisses both of her ears, reconciling her crisis of being. In this moment, freed from the tornado that has perpetuated her dynamic cycle of existence, she can hear her voice sung in a single pitch, no longer split between different octaves and keys. Instead defining herself as an insider or an outsider, she becomes “indefinable existence” because the dichotomous forces that previously defined her can be understood as being a singular force. Once they are understood as such, both of her conflicting positions disappear. To better explain the dissolution of Adnan’s conflict, I turn to the theory of centripetal and centrifugal forces in quantum physics. Both forces are responsible for rotating Adnan in a cyclical movement. The centripetal force of her insiderness exerts an inertial force onto the Adnan that places her at the center of the cycle. In her poetry she occupies this position when she is “at the center of things,” writing from “within the nucleus of an atom.” A second force, called centrifugal, counters the insider’s position by exerting a force outward. Adnan experiences this force every time she feels like outside closes into inside. To further explain how they limit each other, the outsider force (centrifugal) prevents Adnan from collapsing herself into a state of absolute stillness, and the insider force (centripetal) prevents Adnan from flying forever in outer outer space. What halts each force from fulfilling itself is their collision, the friction they create which swings Adnan in a cyclical movement around the world through many hearts. While their friction makes Adnan feel their difference, the tension between is also a sign of their equalness, because the friction is produced by their reaction to one another. Once Adnan comes to realize that they are interdependent, she miraculously experiences their “simultaneity”

that gives her a feeling of being unified. In this “absolute” state, dichotomies are dissolved by the conjunction “and” that exhibits a symbiotic relationship between disparate states that were previously in opposition. She miraculously can claim that she is “a child *and* an adult, innocent *and* yet hyperconscious, . . . in April *and* in December.” In this spectacular moment, Adnan reaches a place where she does not have to save herself from destruction. It would, however, be presumptuous to accept a permanency of unification, as Adnan’s transcultural identity, and voyage *inside the inside of and outside* has proven to be a rejection of a unified whole. Like every outside she ventures into that eventually closes into and inside, this sudden feeling dissolves itself when she says, “like me, all of this already gone by the time it was noticed.” In this instance, when Adnan regains consciousness, she experiences the fleetingness of this moment, as if she had just been awakened from an out-of-body experience.

A state of absolute freedom dissolves itself by the act of noticing, bringing Adnan back down into the tension of the fault line, similarly to when she became disenchanted at the edge of the universe when she became aware of the limits of outer outer space. In this case, once she becomes *conscious* of the simultaneity of her internal forces, she inherently also becomes aware of their opposition, because her insider force is both equal *and* opposite to her outsider force. Here the conjunction “and” expresses not only the inherent connection between the two forces, but also introduces an opposition that interjects unity. Once any place, culture, time, or identity that Adnan qualifies as *outside* can be consciously perceived, it becomes an *inside*.

Adnan’s voyage is one of coming to her own understanding of cultural multiplicity. From the fault lines that divide her culturally, she simultaneously experiences the feeling of being an insider and an outsider, but struggles to experience them equally. Through the imagery of the house, we see Adnan attempting to sustain multiplicity, as she describes it both as a womb and a

tomb, a place where she can both look out and feel self-enclosed. In geographical space as an adult traveling from city to city, Adnan takes increasingly adventurist risks to understand her internal struggle. Through her travels, Adnan develops an inclination towards her outsidership, a state that gives her absolute freedom of movement, always independent from the socio-political qualifications of a place. But Adnan's outsidership does not sustain itself independently, as she expels herself outward in order to counter qualifications of being that would certify her as an insider. Every time she enters a new place, hoping to experience something new, she is eventually disenchanted when she becomes conscious of measurements, standards, categories of being, or imposed identities that would categorize her. In Beirut, for example, the civil war imposes limits on the identities of human beings and restricts Adnan's transculturalism. In effect, she attempts to poetically strike a balance between inside and outside by placing herself inside *the inside of a non-hum heart*, or *inside the inside of another universe*. But even her poetic reconfigurations eventually fade once she becomes conscious of its connection to the human world. Consequently, outside eventually always becomes inside, any kind of certainty seems to always be unbalanced by a little screw that is missing. Adnan then has a strange vision of what it would be to be at peace, but she knows it won't last, because consciousness won't allow it. Her cycle of constantly vacillating between inside and outside will begin again. The simultaneity of her two forces only assumes their innateness within Adnan. Under the spell of consciousness, she will always be aware of their opposition, which renders it impossible to strike a balance between them. It is not a yearning for peace that upholds Adnan's cycle, but instead, the endless regenerating drive to contain divergence, to be in and out simultaneously. To place oneself within the fault line that divides the self, contending to oppositions that generate energy, one constantly has to rethink and reconfigure categories.

This persistence is a force that qualifies Adnan as a poet. Constantly transgressing geographical boundaries within the human world and the borders between the human and non-human, Adnan dares to disrupt and transgress a given sense of a word, and of the world. Adnan's impulse to constantly move calls for an inclusion of everything, for the possibility of infinite realities: absolutes, contingents, and, even more importantly, the mutations of realities that occur between the overlap of opposing realities. However, it is important to understand that her inclusion of different cities, universes, humans, and non-humans does not imply a romanticized unification that strives for a totalizing equal whole. Adnan's expansive voyage seeks rather to counter this exact unification, because inclusion can only fulfill itself by noticing the limits and inhabiting differences.

To better explain poetry's persistent revolution, I turn to Maurice Blanchot, who in his essay, *Literature and the Right to Death*, writes that poetry has the ability to explore an "infinite source of new realities" (314). Just as Adnan demonstrates in her poetry, Blanchot qualifies poetry's persistent regeneration to be an effect of one's perpetual consciousness. New imaginations of realities, he writes, are generated by the "disqualification" of previous ones when an "absence" (316) is felt within it. To notice the absence of meaning in a word, or an experience is to see its limits, which then generate a new conception of reality. Every time Adnan shifts between insider and outsider, whenever she uproots herself from one place to another, from one heart to another, she does so because each state that precedes her regenerations presents limits that echo her absence from her plural state of being. To understand Adnan as a poet is to read her words and understand how she lives her life: never comfortable with states of permanency or a normalization of differences.

Appendix A

While writing my first chapter I was also creating alongside it an archival photo project that reflects a story told in a fragmented form. Beginning on the next page is a digitized version of the book I created.

This project began when I rediscovered a box of old and more recent photographs of my family. Amongst the numerous photos of me and my sister as children, there were predominantly photos of my mother and her family from when she lived in South Korea until 1975, with scattered diary entries layered in between from her time in the US in the 1980s. My mother, despite being one of my best friends, remains an enigma to me. In this project I attempt to archive her past in a fragmented form to avoid a way of narrating a story that seeks to wrap the past within a crystalized, non-permeable membrane. To speak in a fragmented form allows the past to become permeable to the present. It is a way of storytelling that leaves room for memory to breathe, for feelings to seep in, and lets historical silences ring. Without the pressure to reach a totalizing end, one can jump into the story in *Media Res*, into the fault lines that whisper songs from different people, places, and times.

Inspired by Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's book *Dictée*, this project is further fragmented by constructing a story that weaves historical documentation, visual art and poetry. This hybrid narrative breaks medium specificity which desires to enclose a story within a pre-coded structure.

To Sing



아리랑, 아리랑, 아라리요...
아리랑 고개로 넘어간다
나를 버리고 가시는님은
십리도 못가서 발병난다.
청천하늘엔 잔별도 많고
우리네 가슴엔 희망도 많다.
저기 저 산이 백두산이라지
동지 설달에도 꽃만 핀다.



To Sing

아리랑, 아리랑, 아라리요...
Arirang, Arirang, Arariyo...
아리랑 고개로 넘어간다
You are going over Arirang hill
나를 버리고 가시는님은
My love, you are leaving me
십리도 못가서 발병난다.
Your feet will be sore before you go ten *miles*
청천하늘엔 잔별도 많고
Just as there are many stars in the clear sky,
우리네 가슴엔 희망도 많다.
There, over there, that mountain is Baekdu
Mountainn
동지 설달에도 꽃만 핀다.
Where, even in the middle of winter days, flowers
bloom.



아리랑, 아리랑, 아라리요...
Arirang, Arirang, Arariyo...
아리랑 고개로 넘어간다

Arirang is the unofficial Korean national anthem sung by the Koreans during Japan's occupation of Korea in 1910.

The song sing's about a man and a woman yearning for each other in the shadow of a mountain that divides them. While this song sings of love it is also an anthem of political resistance against the Japanese occupation of Korea. Between 1910-1945 men were sent to Japan to work in camps and the women were shipped of to be "comfort women", most were never heard from again, silenced by Japan's revision of History.

Aug. 14, 1991

Kim Hak-sun is the first Korean comfort woman to speak up.

When Kim Hak-sun was 17 years old (1941), she traveled with her stepfather to Beijing, and was snatched by a group of Japanese troops and taken to a Chinese town.

200,000 Asian women were sent away or kidnapped into being sex slaves.





Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, Korean American.

"Less and less least of all
 things
 of lesser
 thing shadows certain.
 certain times. definite. definite times.
 least of all shadows at most at most
 certain times.
 Here. to have happened. unavoidably
 spectre uniformly scattered uniformly lit
 exact. without defining. defining all the same."
 (Cha, 47)

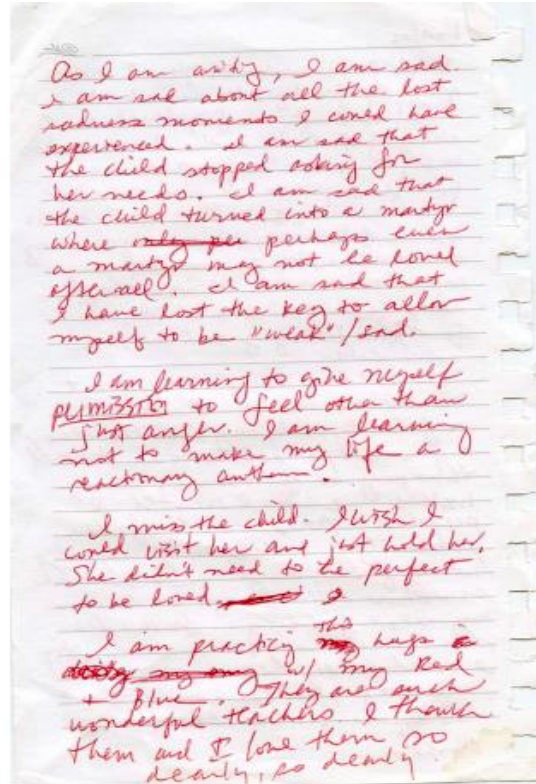




"my mother's
 my father's.
 my mother's mother father.
 my father's father mother.
 if i had children theirs as well
 if the conditions were such.
 in search of through which finally my own proper
 identity can be retrieved. through the enforcement
 of identity here the doubling of identity
 the double estrangement.
 asset: invisibility of another tongue the tongue
 now permanently forgotten would be no shame to
 have
 to have known. to have had to have utilized."

(Cha, 64)





Shawna Lee, Chinese Korean American.

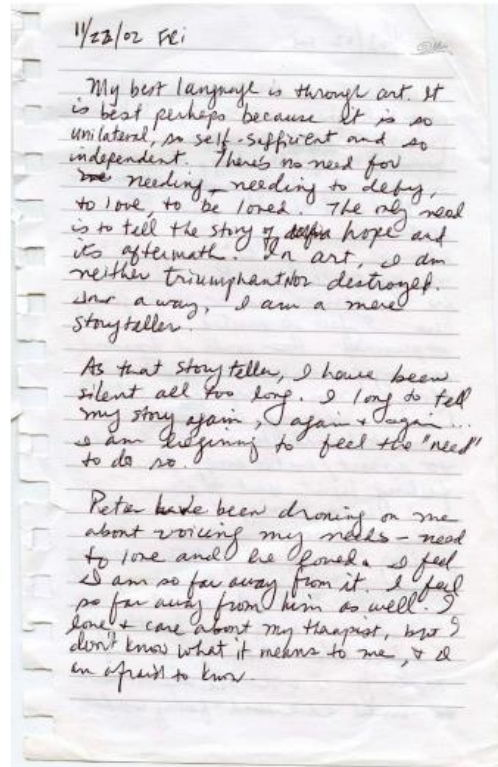
"Growing up in the house of Lee's has been unbearable for a child."

"As I am waiting, I am sad. I am sad about all the lost sadness moments I could have experienced. I am sad about that the child turned into a martyr where perhaps even a martyr may not be loved after all.

I miss the child. I wish I could visit her and just hold her. She didn't need to be perfect to be love."







Shawna Lee, Chinese Korean American.

"My best language
is through ART.

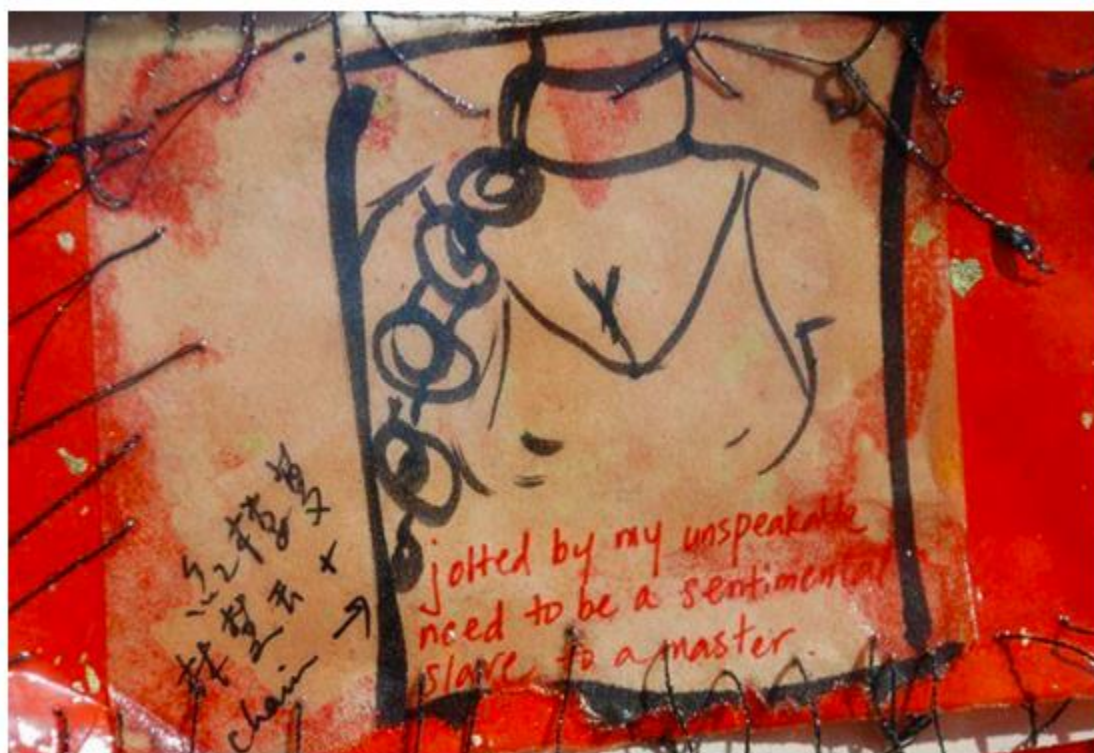
It is best perhaps because it is so unilateral, so self-sufficient and so independent.

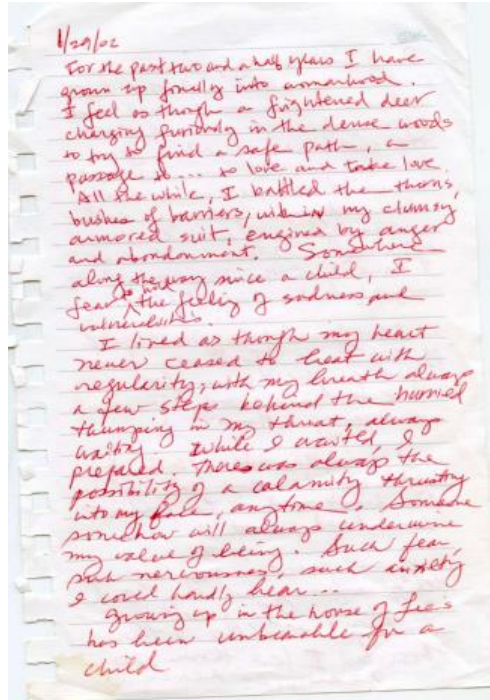
There's no need for needing needing
to defy to love to be loved.

The only need is to tell a story of hope and its aftermath.
In art, I am neither triumphant NOR destroyed. In a way, I
am a mere storyteller.

As that Storyteller, I have been silent all too long. I long to
tell my story again, again and again...
I am beginning to feel the "need" to do so."







"For the past two and a half years I have grown up finally into womanhood. I feel as though a frightened deer charging furiously in the dense woods to try to find a safe path, a passage to.... TO LOVE and take love. All the while, I battled the thorn's bushes of barriers, within my clumsy armored suit, engined by anger and abandonment. Somewhere along the way since a child, I fear to hold feelings of sadness and vulnerability.

I lived as though my heart never ceased to beat with regularity; with my breath always a few steps behind the hurried thumping in my throat, always waiting. While I waited, I prepared. There was always the possibility of a calamity thrusting into my face, anytime. Such fear, such nervousness, such anxiety,

I COULD HARDLY HEAR..."



"孤独的小女人，依偎在门前
红红的夕阳，沈下山的后边
灰灰的长发，飘呀飘
等待着等待着，在摇椅上睡着了
小女人睡着了

啊。。。啊。。。
小女人在等待。"

"Little Queen is waiting on the front porch, watching the red
red sun turns to grey
The lacy curtain wraps her hair the silver hair,
Singing a lullaby, fast asleep 1,2,3. 1,2,3...
Ah...Ah...Little Queen is waiting"

To Sing

아리랑, 아리랑, 아라리요...
아리랑 고개로 넘어간다
나를 버리고 가시는 님은
십리도 못가서 발병난다.
청천하늘엔 잔별도 많고
우리네 가슴엔 희망도 많다.
저기 저 산이 백두산이라지
동지 설달에도 꽃만 핀다.



Appendix B

In the process of writing my conclusion for Chapter 2, I first wrote a summary of it in French in order to develop more clarity in my writing in English. This conclusion does not directly translate itself into my conclusion in English, but I have decided to leave it in its original form to support my claim about the transcultural self, and furthermore to simply to display the different workings of my mind in different languages.

Etel Adnan nous montre que la poésie porte la capacité de résister contre l'uniformisation du monde. En persistant contre l'unification de forces opposées, Adnan encourage le coeur de battre à des intensités différentes pour qu'on résiste à une trajectoire sans nuances. C'est par tout ce qui s'absente qu'elle devient consciente des limites de l'absolue et qu'elle porte un coeur perméable aux mutations de tout ce qui n'est pas humain. Voyageant sur les vagues de la dérive, Adnan se rapproche aux horizons qui nous semblent éternellement loins, et éveille notre sensibilité à chaque battement de cils, aux fourmis qui se perdent dans nos parquets, aux chats vagabonds du monde entier. Elle nous fait tourner la tête en éclatant les serrures des portes verrouillés, et nous fait sentir les racines qui s'étendent aux deux côtés d'un grillage qui risque de trancher le monde, aussi bien que l'individu, en fragments de propriétés privées. A l'écrit, ou par la force de nos pieds, la poésie nous donne l'opportunité de tracer nos propres chemins sans jamais céder à la fixation ou à l'absolue figé qui nous aveugle aux réalités inconnues.

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