

Thomas

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Preface

A man from Galilee in Israel shared the same faith as the wise man from Bethlehem whom he followed. One day, the wise man was killed by those who persecuted their faith. Not long after, news came that the wise man had returned to life. The man went to see for himself whether this man shared the same wounds as the wise man had when he died. It was in character for him: somewhat unexpected, but zealous and upright.

“Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe,” he declared. Even without thrusting his fingers into the wounds, he knew that the man standing before him was the same wise man he had followed. “Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing,” the wise man said. As the man cast aside his doubts and called the wise man’s name, the wise man replied, “Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.”¹

What is doubt? It seems somehow disrespectful to hold lingering doubts about situations such as love, pleasure, and faith where we ought to be full and pure. The doubt is always tormented, since doubt requires an

¹ Recorded in John 20:24–29, this is the best-known story of “doubting Thomas.”

object of doubt and the defiance of what one has relied on. Yet doubt also implies self-awareness, consciousness, and reflection, while manifesting negation, resistance, and reaction. To suggest doubt toward what is already established requires deliberation, but it also demands practice. Doubt is a declaration that we will not turn away from that precipice, even if there is nothing left after our doubt save for pessimism. Doubt becomes possible when we do not concern ourselves with the speed or tides of the world as it flows today – for doubt repeatedly revisits a distant past. Sometimes we may even draw upon a future time that we have yet to experience. As we alternate between past and future, doubt is always oriented toward something fundamental. In that sense, doubt is the same thing as having a powerful belief and attachment toward a pure state.

Thomas consists of an exhibition, publication, and discussions. This composition includes a three-part structure of artist, curator, and critic. Within that framework, there is mutual disruption among three things that hitherto existed robustly as their own separate field: artwork, curation, and criticism. For example, the artist and curator cooperation on all of the planning efforts of the exhibition. This was based on the determination that curating is essentially a form of practice that cannot exist independently as the curator's own authorship. Constructed through the sharing of questions between artist and curator, the curation was transformed into "Thomas," an imaginary critic who exists only

through the written word, without voice or form. Criticism here is a material and form invoked as artistic creation, artistic planning, and artistic practice. The artworks on view in the exhibition are Min Oh's time-based installations *Polyphony of Polyphony*(2021) and *412356*(2020). The artwork here is exclusively the artist's, something that cannot be shared with the curator or critic, fully occupying all of the elements questioned within the exhibition/publication/discussions: the materials, forms, composition, and sense of art. In addition, art researchers were actively invited to provide critiques. Questions were exchanged among the invited researchers, the artist, and the curator. Through these questions, we hope that someone else can take part in wrestling with the questions, "What is art?" and "What sort of doubt does art require?" The invited researchers' voices that we hear in the gallery will repeatedly harmonize and clash with the inaudible voice of Thomas. Though there are questions, there can be no right answers; though the discussion has a beginning, it can never end.

What sort of doubt does art require today?

Min Oh and Suzy Park

***'Now-Here' by Thomas:
An Invitation from a Delayed Incident***

Sooyoung Nam

1. Dear Thomas, or a suspicious greeting from Thomas

Hello, I was invited to the voice of Thomas. I make sound. I speak. I am the owner of the text, but at the same time I cannot say a word without the text.

I write. I deliver words. I am the owner of the text, but at the same time I cannot say a word without the text.

Who am I and where am I?

On the one hand, I am with you as an enunciator. On the other hand, I am the one invited to stay behind this text. Perhaps the difference lies between now-here-and-an absent past.

Therefore, you cannot see me but hear only if seeing and listening are different senses. In other words, you cannot hear me but see.

I guess you already figured it out. There are more than one 'I' here. I am Thomas and the invitee of Thomas at the same time. While my mouth speaks on behalf of the invitee, I was already speaking before the story began. In fact, the person who invited me and the invitee—or me and Thomas—is the artist, and I am a part of the work. Hence, if I have the voice, the question about what I want to say will not be entirely owned by only the invitee. Someone who provided my name and appearance would have had the same question. You may now have the same question in your mind.

2. First Thought: The Ghost of Modernity

It is not a surprise that there is no need for voice and appearance to have the same origin. If we divert our belief from the long-standing fact that humans are the integrated owner, we will encounter a medium (machine) that extends many of the body functions of humans.

Moreover, we will be able to discover that the senses caused by the medium are harmoniously reorganized as if they were one in the first place. The origin of machines that replace humans' bodies and thus even

transcend humankind will be able to extend not only to small tools but also to the cogito that controls humans' ability for thinking. However, the era of media refers to the time when we started mechanically replicating humans, the so-called thinking machines. An extended version of human function that self-operates without any interference from humans, these machines are the reality of the ghost come from the 'modern' aisle created by self-recording media in the 19th century. Modernity moves on its own, copies the ability of humans, and sometimes refers to the coexistence with the transcendent ghost.

Today, it seems no surprise that appearance and voice can be recorded in the same place called "film," a representative medium for modernity. In film, a medium that can reflect the world as it is, there is an invisible hand that perfectly connects various senses and symbols. Through the work of editing and synchronization, the meanings provided by the recorded images are unfolded in the here-and-now of our senses. However, the control of sounds through media that diverts the synchronism (nowness) into past or future is an unexpected result of modernity (newness), film.

I am not trying to repeat this well-known 'trick' of film in the middle of this text because I cannot tell for sure now that I can let Thomas talk freely like my alter ego or a doll. Rather, I imagine that he delivers the voices of other people, artists, and invitees with a hint of my voice placed slightly in between. It is something like a vulnerable entity

that can barely be heard inside the music composed by those multiple voices.

On the other hand, I want to leave something memorable for the listeners. I wonder, is there any way that my story can be an indelible and returning hum inside the harmonious music made by Thomas even as an off-topic portion, as an embarrassment, as a bewilderment, as a question, or as an echo? This intangible music would be evidence of freedom at some point to everyone who hears it, the evidence free from the slick sense of reality, well-established logic, and delicate understanding required by the owners that we cannot hide or stop.

3. Second Thought: The Relationship Between Oral Culture and Character Culture, Movie Media

“I hate *Thomas Alva Edison*, because we owe to him one of the most ghastly of inventions: the *phonograph!*” (Hans Heinz Ewers, Kittler 431)

While the prints represent the things that have grown to be the united culture, each voice can be sensed as an individual who has unique characteristics. That uniqueness is what makes the voice completely belong to the owner. However, the phonograph is the machine that stores the real voice and revives it even in the absence of the owner. In the beginning, there was some disgusted reaction against the phonograph because the reviving voice reminded people of a hidden irrational belief

about a spirit alive even after death. Of course, the record industry, along with the invention of the phonograph, took a role of turning the uniqueness in voice into new cultural value by building a hierarchy around the most ideal sounds, music. The combination of beautiful words and voice was turned into a consumable within the controlled system of recording and playing.

Then has the media of the auto-production of sounds, or the auto-play, always been oppressed? Isn't the sound that dies as soon as it comes out into the world the one that best represents the ruthlessness of time that humans resist? If so, wouldn't the desire of recording the sounds be as huge as that of preserving an existence or the form of an existence?

The first record about voice was made by characters. And the discrepancy lying between the two means a lot. According to the research *Orality and Literacy* by Walter Ong in 1982 that interpreted the breakaway from orality and characters, a natural tool of communication for humans, as a development of human history, the record of voice by characters causes a paradigm shift, or a difference of worldview, of an experience that shakes the concepts of existence and synchronism called "here-now" beyond the simple level of translation between different media. Ong clearly separated characters and writing from speaking and listening as visuals. It seems he indicated the separation between 'the world of sight' evolving around characters and 'the world as an event' around the oral culture (1969) in terms of media as the advent of

symbolism separated from the real events that existed even before memories and records.

Even though film became the representative of visual media as it started recording soundless movements, it immediately received a voice, and now from 3D to 4D it grows to be a medium that serves events with a newly created sense of time and space. The fact that the research on film and that on literature are conducted in a similar fashion is related to the origin of movies and their early characteristics, because both film and literature have a common feature in that they are texts visually reorganized. Just like an author who precedes the texts behind a book, the video texts, composed of the images from the reality of past, are experienced as linearly reorganized structures of actions already made in the past. It is a matter of course that the perspective focusing on the cinematic experience itself, an event that goes beyond the traditional interpretation or the semiotic approach, has emerged as film has developed by acquiring sounds on top of images and extending audiences' experiences. It is that we focus on film as the activation of innate cultural technologies summoned by concurring senses instead of a mere text organized for signifying. The growing tendency to find a basic element of film from a pure method, like sounds and body movements escaping from the visual information, and the understanding of an absurd sense of time that people experience a part of the world that has already passed as a belated present, are all parts of this new change

in our perspectives. We no longer go and find an author in the past, but need to focus on the senses finally realized here and now.

4. Third Thought: Re-Experience of Sounds and Returning Truth

“I hate *Thomas Alva Edison*, because we owe to him one of the most ghastly of inventions: the *phonograph*! Yet I love him: he redeemed everything when he returned fantasy to the matter-of-fact world—in the movies!” (Hans Heinz Ewers, Kittler 431)

In the psychoanalytic perspective of film as a visual medium, the images from movies are commonly compared to the imaginary. Typically, Kittler understood movies (images) as the imaginary by introducing the reaction of Ewers as above. Also, Lacan showed that the eyes towards the images of the world and the gaze of desire were being compromised with the imaginary images on the plane of the so-called screen. Ewers also directed an early silent film called *The Student of Prague*, and the quote above implies a separation between the images of film as imaginary and the sounds as an unreproducible entity, and furthermore suggests that this imaginarieness serves the symbolic order.

If we think about how much our sight depends on real sense and distance, it is much easier to grasp an idea of distrust of an old perspective and a perspective that regards video as imaginary; for example, a viewpoint cast by the foreshortening composition, that the camera manages shows us an image filtered with the ideal placement.

This two-dimensional plane of images, or the images on the screen, makes us think that we would see the same scene if we were physically at the place. Regardless of where we actually are with respect to the screen, it allows us to perceive ourselves as we 'imagine' at the place seen on the screen. Here is a gap between our real location and that of our 'imagination.' Just imagine how much the images can be distorted if they are slightly off from the ideal placement in terms of perspective. What's interesting is that we normally, or without any serious concerns, just feel no difference in those distorted images from reality. It is very unfortunate that Korean multiplex cinema today decides to charge extra money depending on the seats by giving up a communal merit of a possible delivery of the identical senses to every seat because that would make the audiences too aware of their physical seats by checking their real visual sensation to focus on the imaginary world beyond the screen. However, in this post-cinema era, the stories about how the hair of a person in front of you blocking your view or the annoying sounds that other people make ruin the movie might already become a part of our nostalgia. The cinematic world can be experienced not only through the screen at a theatre but also through a television screen and mobile devices, and it means that movies are no longer consumed just as a visual excitement. We naturally expand the meanings of the symbols from the movies and recognize them as continuous images by mixing each little part. This is the reason that the images from movies can be called a representative of the imaginary. Frankly, it is unnecessary to use the

psychoanalytic term “imaginary” to understand this phenomenon that imagination, or illusion, is combined with vision by looking at some expressions like “cinema substitutes the real world for one that accords with our desires” by Jean-Luc Godard, from the movie *Le Mépris* in 1962, and the proverb “we don’t see things as they are, we see as we are.”

On the contrary, sound is a special sense that cannot be automatically signified or covered with natural imagination. When we read a text with a few small misspellings and changes of syllables, we sometimes do not even recognize them. In the process of reading, our sense functions with the meanings what we have already known so that it skips the small errors. However, when we recite a text, things change. Especially when ‘hearing’ other people reading out loud instead of reading with our ‘eyes,’ we can more easily focus on the characteristics of sounds regardless of the meaning of the text. The dispositions like the nuances hardly seen in the written text and the characteristics of pronunciations especially by foreigners—for example, it’s hard for Asians to differentiate the pronunciations of R and L—in the realm of ‘sense’ are noticeable. As the actors’ unique voices feel more truthful than visual cues like facial expressions, the voice is usually regarded as a direct barometer of acting ability.

Voice tells the most powerful truth beyond its visual owner. In dramas where everything happens currently here and now, the past that no longer exists is summoned when a crucial truth is revealed. This truth is delivered through the voices of muses. The 2014 movie *Phoenix*,

directed by Christian Petzold, depicts a voice that gives a tragic realization to everyone who wants to avoid the truth. Nelly, a concentration camp survivor who needs plastic surgery because of a deep wound, loses her original face completely. However, she looks for her husband Johnny because she cannot move on, but he tries to seduce her because he cannot recognize that she is Nelly. He also asks her to pretend to be his wife so that he can get inheritance on behalf of dead Nelly by deceiving her family into believing that she is still alive. Nelly stays by Johnny, expecting that one day he will recognize her since he has also missed her, but she is eventually confronted with the harsh truth that it was Johnny who turned her over to the Nazis. Nelly finally decides to take on the role of 'Nelly,' and she visits her own family with Johnny. In this final scene, Nelly sings a song with Johnny's accompaniment, causing him to realize immediately that she is Nelly. The camera uses the close-up to show the memory of pain imprinted on Nelly's body. The calm voice of Nelly and the bewildered face of Johnny are contrasting yet harmonized in a subtle way. **(I have already talked about this movie since I am very fond of the ending.)**

It is the moment when the voice that has stayed the same throughout the film suddenly rises and eats up everything. It reminds me of a story about a hungry hunter catching a nightingale. He cooks the nightingale to eat, but is disappointed by the grilled bird that becomes skinny. "Nightingale, you are nothing without your voice!" Based on this

story, Mladen Dolar titled his book *A Voice and Nothing More*, which presents unrivaled research on voice as a partial object, not as a sign. (In fact, Dolar relates this episode through a nightingale as a subject.) When a thing is nothing without something, it means something is everything; however, 'voice' is too disappointing to be everything because voice cannot have an entity. It is also the reason why voice is a partial object. A subject of desire is also a partial object, and we usually think of it as everything. If we found out that this everything had actually arisen from a misunderstanding, it would make our desire nothing. Nevertheless, that nothing, like an 'absent voice,' is an origin of 'everything'—something intact that we have never had—that would fail in the end even if we pursue it. Nelly in *Phoenix* misses a past that was never true. At the place she comes back to, she is confronted with the subject of her longing, which turns out to be the empty truth.

5. Fourth Thought: Imagination of Sound Record

What do we do when the things that we want to preserve are in fact something uncatchable as it is born and dead at the same time? We already mentioned the phonograph, but the attempt, or the imagination, to preserve and transfer sounds via media was made a long before that. Late in the 18th century (in 1791), Wolfgang von Kempelen invented a 'speaking machine'—the machine that made a voice come out without its owner (speaker, entity)—with a 'chess-playing machine.' Dolar

introduced these machines in his book and argued that the speaking machine was a success different from the chess machine, a mere fraud. The reason why the machine was not a perfect success would be that the sounds from the machine didn't mean anything, so that it was hard to say it "spoke." On the other hand, the similarity between our speech and the machine's sounds lies at the point that any meaning cannot stay clearly in any place where the words are intersecting. One thing certain in oral speech is the "voice, and that is all." Even though this machine can imitate the sounds of human speech, there is no real meaning; it precisely reproduces a voice that cannot have an origin and an owner as an entity.

After this speaking machine, there were ideas and trials regarding various sound machines until the phonograph was invented. Like von Kempelen's speaking machine that imitated the principle of humans' vocal organ, Joseph Faber's machine Euphonia, meaning "pleasant sound," looked like a standing female doll that hid it (its mechanicalness) just like the meaning of its name. It is very interesting that Faber's device not only realized the principle for creating a real voice but also suggested the face (entity) as an existence of the owner of the voice. It does not necessarily mean that sound and image should be identical even though they need each other and are realized as one device. When the owners of an idea cannot speak by themselves, they do not have to conceal the fact that they need a device to speak. We do not disregard Dr. Stephen Hawking's mechanical voice for not being real. A voice cannot

correspond to any form of entity and does not need to be corresponded to. They simply coexist. The belief that we should match the things we see to things we hear may be a phenomenon caused by the development of cinematic devices.

(I will try not to speak in Thomas' voice.)

These days, intersecting vision and hearing has become routine due to text-to-speech and speech-to-text devices. Senses that are not synchronized are coexisting, and they make various multimedia experiences easier. If we believed that sound and text should be synchronized in a movie, it might be because the movie should have proved its use of new functions as an incomplete medium. The easiest way to prove function is to show it. When film, originally a visual medium, started having sound, it considered the technique of synchronization as target of reproduction.

6. Fifth Thought: Foregrounding Music

The world inside the movie created by the camera always extends its way into reality. The little rectangle we make with two thumbs and two forefingers is a preview pane to picture how it would look if this world was captured in video. Imitating a viewfinder with hands is a method that sets a certain view to decide a focal point among many other objects and subjects. The locations of objects that have distinctive

distance can be either the front view or the background depending on where the focal point is, and we can manipulate the priority of our visual perception. Usually we place the thing that we want to emphasize at the most appropriate place in a large scale. Since things closer to us look bigger, our eyes are naturally drawn to them, especially when they are beautifully placed, and we call this foregrounding.

Since the foregrounded visual subjects are blocking what is behind them, they monopolize our vision (at least at this point). Even if vision is monopolistic, blocking is useful. Think about the blinders of racehorses to make them look only forwards by preventing them from looking sideways. Is it possible to foreground the auditory sense? In movies, it is possible to pretend that the sounds of foregrounded images are right here next to us by setting the microphone at the center of the scene instead of putting it next to our eyes (the camera). However, in this case, it is just the foregrounded sounds that are louder and closer than other sounds, but it's hard to say that we hear them exclusively. It is not easy to monopolize the sound and also to completely block out the rest. Of course, we can just mute the machine. Yet we cannot do that for natural sounds in the real world. No matter how much we make the environment silent except for the sounds of the protagonist, we cannot stop the sounds of wind, breathing, walking, and cicada from entering even if we cannot see them.

When sound and video were harmonized for the first time in movies, the movies tried to 'show' those sounds as well. As the

cinematograph and the phonograph were merged in the film industry, the advent of sound film was recorded in the movie *The Jazz Singer* in 1927; however, the experiment of ‘multimedia,’ which visualized music before the technique of synchronizing the imagetrack and the soundtrack had been commercialized, was not unprecedented. The visual music that avant-garde art loved—usually realizing the rhythms expressed by abstract images, mostly in animation—is an exception because it was not aimed at the ‘auditory sense.’ Yet we need to look back more carefully to cases where movements were drawn in accordance with music in the animations of the early 1920s.

It is not only the ‘singing’ videos that ‘show’ the sounds. Without subtitles, there are many examples that show videos well matched to music and change the images in accordance with the rhythm and the flow. As I said earlier, film is art that traps a subject into the frame that the camera can capture to turn it into a main character. Hence, it was possible to invite all the other existing arts to the owner of the eyes. The way that the camera as the owner attracts the eyes of audiences varies by different fields of art; dance, architecture, and artworks centralized the eyes to be foregrounded, whereas plays and literature extended the eyes of the camera as they were expanded into a virtual space called diegesis. Aural art could use both. Words and voices intensified the diegesis by having depth as visual entities, while music could be foregrounded like art and dance. Besides the *Song Car-Tunes*, Disney’s *Fantasia* and other

similar musical animations showed the sounds (music) as a center that led the visual composition, not as a mere background that boosted the mood. The storage of sounds and the playback equipment leads a loose connection between words and voice, but these music animations pursue a clear connection as they systemize the notes as a component of music and visualize the differences between the notes. At this point, the characteristic of music stands out once again. For example, vocal music is different from the role of a note that creates a perfect pitch. The representative examples of how they work in the right place were singing animations. As a symbol, a musical note on a note indicating the pitch itself would suggest a note only to a person who knows how to read it. However, the notes presented along with the movement of the animation linearly visualized the position and order of the notes in time. Music that reveals itself in the place where it should be with the exact rhythm in the flow of time has become a venue for expanding the interest of early avant-gardists in movies as another time art.

7. The Last Platform: Weak Connection and Politics of the Chorus

As I imagined Thomas' existence and the voice that allows one to experience it, I imagined how the sounds and texts he would coordinate would become the absolute notes in their respective clear positions, and how the texts that were absent but that would be called could coexist. Thus, the existence of sounds in this imagination was gathered into

music. The foreground of exaggerated sound and music, which has not yet been refined and seems to have disappeared, will create disharmony in the context of today's highly developed media technologies. However, my text will be tested in this cross-sense music. If my text can be a part of the music in it, it is because the text wants to be a note as an absolute sound by recognizing a place that is still empty and inviting a sense that would fill the place.

Empty seats invite someone or something. Harmony naturally calls the note. Thomas, who has not yet appeared, made me invite myself, but I did not know my place yet, so I could only speak proudly in the form of parentheses symbolizing the words entering and coming out. Even in the text, only in parentheses!

How did the Sirens invite the sailors? Did it induce all human beings who could not stand the void to become the whole as empty seats that do not yet exist? Auditory sense is a primitive sensation that makes you listen because it has nothing. For that very reason, seducing with hearing is sometimes regarded as misleading because its existence is not clear. This is why the story that has been told is not hospitable to the Sirens. The Sirens, whose faces are those of a beautiful person but whose bodies are those of fish, direct animalism, non-purity, and superstition that modern subjects should avoid. This is the opposite of the Muses, the daughters of Mnemosyne, the goddess of memory, known as those who sing the truth in the state of transcending sensory experiences. We refuse

to accept the operations of things that do not exist as things that exist, parts as a whole, and animals as humans. Heterogeneous things and things that cannot be together being together make us anxious because they shake our belief in truth. However, listening to what has not yet come, trying to listen to what you don't know—what else would be as fascinating as this primitive sense!

In order not to be tempted by things that do not exist, we close our eyes or cover our ears, but if we do not know the identity of what should be blocked, it will be impossible to completely block that unknown. It is significant that former boatmen did not cover their ears and eyes to avoid the temptation of the Sirens. This is because it is also a strategy that someone who tries to penetrate Thomas unclearly and weakly should take. I will continue to return to a voice that cannot be completely blocked but can only be delayed, a whisper, and a humming that cannot be suppressed. It's not a topic (motif) but the truth that comes back to the chorus. What do we find in that humming? It would not be content, but the fact that we, I, and Thomas are very desperate to say. We all want to say something, and we shout to hear it.

We must constantly cover our ears or rub our eyes to reject any dominant sound, any monopolistic image. Then the cry of silence appears. The cry of silence is a cry of declaration without reality, an impossible cry to mute certain sounds that have been dominant so far. This cry can be delayed by recording the sound experienced here and now and become new music by combining it with media of contradictory

nowness (modernity). Just as music covers noise, some cries make logical speech impossible. However, these sounds are by no means exclusive to each other and will free us by bringing out a new sense. Like the music that existed in the most abstract form in ancient times, like the absolute sound indicating a sound that does not yet exist, the void extends to infinity.

(In the void, I was not an invitee but the host.)

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Song Car-Tunes by Fleischer Brothers, 1924–27

“If repetition is possible...”
– Deleuze’s Interpretation of
the Early Performance Video –

Seonryeong Cho

1.

“If repetition is possible, it is by miracles, not by a law.”²

“Only what has undergone deterioration evolves, so to speak; what is rolled inside is unfolded outside. Nightmares are probably some psychological dynamics that neither the awake nor even the dreamer can withstand. Isn’t it just a dynamic that a person who falls into a deep sleep who can’t even dream can endure?”³

² Deleuze, Gilles, *Difference and Repetition*, Minumsa, translated by Sanghwan Kim, 2004, p. 27

³ Gilles Deleuze (2004), p. 268–9

2.

One of the devices that prevented performances that appeared at the time of loss of faith in meaning and reproduction from being understood as a return to the natural body was the existence of performance films. Performance films, which inevitably degrade the “physical co-presentation”⁴ of performers and audiences, as Erika Fischer-Lichte said, played a role in blocking the artist’s body from the myth of origin, which could have been the source on behalf of the external nature, a traditional instruction. Attempts to make the body as it is released from the memory, captured by a machine and going inside the loop of repetition, as the core of the performance are frustrated. The performance film, which can be repeatedly screened, seemed to fundamentally change the way of existence of performing art as one-time presentation. However, the desire to repeatedly capture and record moving bodies has existed since the beginning of video media. The fact that much of the consecutive photographs of Edward Muybridge and Étienne-Jules Marey were taken of gymnasts and dancers and the fact that one of the first films presented by the Lumière brothers was about the movements of workers leaving the factory directly attest to this. As the narrative was combined with the movie, the first desire was diluted,

4 Fischer-Lichte, Erika, *Aesthetics of Performance – The Innovative Transformation of Contemporary Art and New Performance Aesthetics*, translated by Jungsook Kim, Moonji, 2017, p. 110

but there were always attempts to capture movement and time in the history of video media. In this sense, it is not just a coincidence that the era of performance art and that of video art overlap. The fact that many performances of this period were performed on the premise of recording with video or film from the beginning, that is, that they were produced without an actual audience, suggests the close relationship between the two areas.

The meeting between performance and video media informed us that the body is not an obvious foundation for replacing the world of meaning but an unstable area that needs to be continuously explored. Even today, when we no longer believe in the myth of joint reality and regard the difference between video and reality as a matter of degree, there is still an expectation that the meeting between performance and video media will become a deeper area of inquiry. The reason why we are trying to intervene in Gilles Deleuze's theory is because of this expectation. Deleuze talked about movies in two books, but we expect that Deleuze's time theory and ontology as a whole will give us a new perspective on the interpretation of early performance videos, and furthermore that his theories may be able to constitute a philosophical model with the performance film.

Performance films produced from the late 1960s to the early 1970s, such as Bruce Nauman's *Square Dance* and *Bouncing in the Corner, No. 1*, Vito Acconci's *Centers* and *Three Adaptation Studies*, Richard Serra's *Hand Catching Lead*, and Dennis Oppenheim's *Echo*, are representative of

simple early works in the history of video art. Compared to full-scale video art since the 1980s, which revealed the characteristics of the media using technologies such as editing or image synthesis, these are cases of simply using images as a means of recording performance. It is also added that the absence of editing, silent black-and-white screens, and simple compositions without narrative reflect the limitations of the artists' environment and times when sophisticated technology was not accessible. However, in the early performance videos, we would like to find the 'essential' meeting between performance and video media and draw out some aesthetic meanings.

3.

The method of performing until the end of a film or videotape reel with a movie camera or camcorder turned on in the studio is common in early video performances. At this time, the performer often performs simple movements that seem meaningless and empty. For example, in *Square Dance*, Bruce Nauman makes a square with tape on the floor, stands at the center of one side of it, repeatedly hits both legs against both vertices of the square, and then returns to the original place. Vito Acconci further emphasizes the body's tension expressed in violence and pain. In *Centers*, Acconci raises his right arm and points to the camera with his finger for about 20 minutes, and in *Three Adaptation Studies*, he repeats the movement of receiving a flying rubber ball while covering his eyes. Richard Serra produced a video in an extension of the sculpture

work he worked on with a series of ‘verbs’ as a score. *Hand Catching Lead*, filmed in close-up of repeated hand movements trying to catch lead falling for about 30 seconds, is a video translation of the performance-sculpture work that sprays molten lead at the corner of the exhibition hall. Since the speed of holding the lead is slower than the speed at which the lead falls, the hand never catches the lead (even if it is caught, it is soon released), so that this movement is repeated until the film ends.

What these works have in common is that they repeat the same action from beginning to end or continue the same action without change, variation, development, or dramatic transformation. Performers often do not show expressions or faces. It is difficult to find any semantics, and there are only repetitive physical actions. Another common point is that these performances were made in the studio for the purpose of recording them with cameras from the beginning. It was like the recording came first before the performance itself⁵. Writers of early performance videos usually filmed performances with 8 mm or 16 mm movie cameras and then switched to video or played the works recorded directly on videotape on-screen at exhibition halls. At this time,

⁵ Of course, each writer did not strictly draw this boundary. In the works such as *Live-Taped Video Corridor*, Nauman also used the body of the audience as a component of the work in real space, and Acconci also performed a live version in front of the audience. However, in those cases, they avoid the explicit confrontation with their audiences as much as possible. Their performances look theatrical, but they are plays without communication. In this respect, Dan Graham and Joan Jonas, who used the audiences in real space as the agency of the performance, are writers with different tendencies. However, they regarded the role of media as an important factor through the use of devices such as mirrors, camcorders, and screens.

the screening takes the form of loop repetition in accordance with the general customs of the exhibition hall. Repetition of performance in terms of content and repetition of video media in terms of forms. These two repetitions are not two independent terms because the repetition of performance is subordinate to the “automatic mechanical nature of film”⁶ that is distinct from the play.

This repetition of early performance videos is sometimes interpreted as psychoanalytic and sometimes as minimalist gestures. Repetition is understood as a failed repetition of something lost in the former, “the return of the oppressed,” and in the latter as a performative translation of capitalist mass-production logic. Either way, repetition is interpreted as the work of revealing the ‘symptoms’ of modern society. But is this all? Is there any way to go beyond the aesthetics of negativity that builds one’s value through failure? We would like to refer to Deleuze’s theory to interpret the repetition of the body obsessed with the repetition of the video media, found in the early performance video, from an ontological positive perspective, that is, a work that does not require anything else to justify itself. This work is possible because Deleuze is, above all, a philosopher of repetition. But at the same time he is a philosopher of difference.

Repetition takes a special position in Deleuze’s ontology. In the framework of reproduction, in order to think and sense the difference

⁶ Deleuze, Gilles, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, translated by Jungha Lee, Vision and Language, 2002, p. 349

understood only by the denial of identity, it is necessary to enter the inside deeper, not the outside. According to Deleuze, repetition is the entrance to the difference and is *le différentiel* (“the division of difference”).⁷ In general, repetition means the absence of difference, but Deleuze argues that repetition is the key to approaching difference. Repetition literally means repeating the same thing, and it is usually opposite to the creativity of art. However, Deleuze says that the ability of art is repetition. Art “repeats all repetitions through some inner capabilities.”⁸ Deleuze argues about “repetition that encompasses differences,”⁹ special things opposed to ordinary things, and weird repetition that reveals creativity in contrast to habits. What is this repetition and how does it relate to early performance videos? Deleuze’s unique time theory, which sees time repeatedly, is where we should start from.

4.

Deleuze borrows the basic framework of his time theory from the theory of Henri-Louis Bergson. Bergson asks in *Matière et mémoire* why we think that the past disappears when we do not doubt that there are things in space even if they are invisible.¹⁰ The past does not disappear,

⁷ Gilles Deleuze (2004), p. 183

⁸ Gilles Deleuze (2004), p. 622

⁹ Gilles Deleuze (2004), p. 71

¹⁰ Bergson, Henri-Louis, *Matter and Memory*, translated by Jongwon Park, Acenet, 2019, p. 244

but it has lost its reality. The past is not realistic (*actuel*), but exists as real (*réel*) and potential (*virtuel*). Bergson calls this potential past *souvenir pur*¹¹ (“pure memory”).¹² Pure memory refers to the entire past we have experienced, and in a potential state, “it preserves all the details of the picture of our mind’s flowing life.”¹³ According to Bergson, memory intervenes not only in recollection but also in all current actions. This is because there is no current point that does not change, and all perceptions are always the past.¹⁴

When we perceive and recognize something, we refer back to all the events we have experienced in the past. However, this is not to summon individual memories but to cross into universal memories at once and repeat the entire past again. Pure memory means this universal memory or the entire past. Currently, pure memory occurs when it ‘shrinks’ to a different level at each moment.

¹¹ Or Bergson calls pure memory “*mémoire*” and uses it as a meaning of memory by separating it from individual memory, “*souvenir*” (Henri-Louis Bergson (2004), p. 261).

¹² Unlike potential pure memory, image memory and habit memory are real memories, and they are the result of realizing pure memory to different levels.

¹³ Henri-Louis Bergson (2019), p. 397. Pure memory is, so to speak, the highest level of resolution. It is present that this resolution has been lowered and contracted. Bergson’s famous conical shape shows pure memory as the highest resolution expansion point (bottom of the cone) and the present (vertex) as its most contracted point as a ‘spatial metaphor’ (Henri-Louis Bergson (2019), p. 275). According to Bergson’s expression, going from the present point to the pure memory point “is as a blurry cluster appears to be divided into a larger and larger number of stars as it is observed with more and more powerful telescopes” (Henri-Louis Bergson (2019), p. 280).

¹⁴ However, this does not mean that memory is the fading of perception. Bergson’s premise is that there is an essential difference between perception and memory.

Deleuze's concept of *passé pur* ("pure past"), a transformed version of Bergson's pure memory, is based on the proposition that the past is the premise and the foundation of the present.¹⁵ As Bergson says, if every moment of the present is the shrinking of the entire past, it can be said that the past repeats at the same time when the present occurs and the past and the present coexist. The present is a repetition of the past and is repeated by the past. The past repeats itself and repeats the present. In this sense, Deleuze says that the present is passing, but it is pure past that makes it pass. In other words, pure past (rather than a faint shadow of the present) is a past that precedes the present. It is a past that has not yet been given a date in the sense that it is not realistic and is a universal past. While pure past is "a collection of entire time"¹⁶ and "immediate aspect of time,"¹⁷ it is not a static entity that can be understood as a spatial metaphor but a movement of differentiation itself that is "persistently becoming different from itself."¹⁸ According to Deleuze, in order to approach the true nature of time, we have to break away from the habit of thinking about time spatially, the way we understand past, present, future as points on a straight line.

¹⁵ Unlike Bergson, who still uses the term memory, even though pure memory is no longer individual memory, Deleuze's pure past no longer has psychological aspects. Pure past does not belong to the entity or the subject. Time is no longer human-like time, and the past is anonymous.

¹⁶ Gilles Deleuze (2004), p. 194

¹⁷ Gilles Deleuze (2004), p. 195

¹⁸ Gilles Deleuze (2004), p. 235

Time is repetition. But time is also a repetition that divides the difference as it changes itself. Deleuze's pure past is summarized as the limit of specificity, fullness, and vividness, just as Bergson's pure memory kept past events intact without damaging individual characteristics. Repetition of pure past means an increase in difference, not a larger gap, but a tighter gap, or a difference sealing itself (which can be explained as a differentiation in mathematics, that is, a motion that continues to divide itself into small pieces in the shortest unthinkable moment). Being realized means that the difference decreases (increasing generality), but the reverse movement in which the difference at each moment of realization is sealed (increasing specificity) occurs at the same time. Thus, time does not flow from the past to the future. Time is generated in both directions. This non-chronological time is the real appearance of time.

5.

In "Performance, Video, and the Rhetoric of Presence¹⁹," Anne M. Wagner addresses Rosalind Krauss's theory, which sees the characteristics of early video art as narcissism, criticizing that it is missing the audience's problem. However, the audience of video art is not an audience that art has historically been taken for granted. This is because the place of the audience is now in front of new media such as

¹⁹ Anne M. Wagner, "Performance, Video, and the Rhetoric of Presence", *October* Vol. 91 (Winter, 2000), pp. 59–80

TV. Wagner argues that the artist's body (formerly hidden behind the work) fully appearing in the video and performance is a gesture that asks questions about the audience's existence, and that many aggressive actions toward the audience, more noticeable in both performances and videos in the 70s, are the signs of this gesture; she presents Vito Acconci's *Pryings* as a prime example. In this video, Acconci tries to forcibly open the eyes of a woman (Kathy Dillon) with his fingers, but continues to fail. According to Wagner, "[h]e fails to make her an audience."²⁰ According to Wagner, the video and performance that show the repetition of this failed attempt mark "a special moment of anxiety that has appeared in the history of contemporary art."²¹

In *Cinema 2: Time Image (Cinéma 2 – L'image-temps)*, Deleuze said, "Modern fact is that we no longer have faith in this world,"²² similar to the situation Wagner described. However, at the point where Wagner spoke of anxiety, Deleuze said, "The artist's share is to believe more in the relationship between humans and the world."²³ However, this belief is not aimed at any metaphysical foundation for restoring distrust. The subject of belief is the collapse of belief itself. Deleuze's ontology has the same purpose with general philosophy as it attempts to find the source,

²⁰ Anne M. Wagner, Same text, p. 79

²¹ Anne M. Wagner, Same text, p. 67

²² Gilles Deleuze (2002), p. 338

²³ Gilles Deleuze (2002), p. 337

but Deleuze thinks the source is nothing more than *effondrement*²⁴ (“collapse,” his own expression) or chaos. What general people call collapse and dissolution is called an increase and generation of strength and intensity by Deleuze. Another name for this ‘origin-that-is-not-origin’, which is chaos, generation, intensity, and difference, is “time.”

6.

Deleuze presents “a play of mask” modeled on Greek tragedy as a spokesperson for art in *Différence et répétition* (“Difference and Repetition,” 1968)²⁵, but *Cinema 2* gives the film media a role in realizing time itself. This is realized through what he called a movie of *image-temps* (“time-image”). If the classic movie is a movie of *image-mouvement* (“movement-image”), the modern movie is a movie of time-image. According to Deleuze, the film of movement-image represented by Sergei M. Eisenstein is related to ‘the whole’ by frame spatially and by montage in time. Here, however, time as a whole is not directly visible, but is only conceptually premised by integration and division. On the other hand, modern films²⁶ reveal the direct manifestation of time because they no longer conceptually presuppose the whole, and each image is only related to the ‘outside’ by its own limitations. However, this outside

²⁴ Gilles Deleuze (2004), p. 163

²⁵ In this respect, *Difference and Repetition* is a reinterpretation of Nietzsche’s *The Birth of Tragedy*.

²⁶ Deleuze referred to various directors; among them, the most important are Alain Resnais, Michelangelo Antonioni, and Jean-Luc Godard.

should actually be called inside or rather depth, because outside means the time itself that is realized and at the same time latent through an endless exercise of differentiation.

Deleuze presents the crossover or indistinguishable nature of realistic images and potential images in *Cinema 2* by showing time itself, citing the mirror room scene from Orson Welles' *The Lady from Shanghai*.²⁷ In a sense, however, this scene still looks like a scene of a difference based on contradiction and confrontation that Deleuze saw as trapped in the logic of representation. This is because the confrontation between a real person and its mirror pair can be assumed. Rather, wouldn't the early performance video, which only has a continuous movement of returning to the same place, be more like this indistinguishable movement? This is because we cannot talk about confrontation in the leg movement from *Square Dance*, the movement of the hand hitting the wall in *Echo*, and the movement to catch the ball in *Three Adaptation Studies*. These movements are not segmented movements with conflicts, but merely repeated actions without ending.

The relationship between the realistic images and potential images in *Cinema 2* belongs to the relationship between *répétition nue* ("bare repetition") and *répétition vêtue* ("covered repetition") in *Difference and Repetition*. Bare repetition means a repetition of the same thing or a

²⁷ Gilles Deleuze (2002), p. 152

mechanical repetition.²⁸ It is the repetition of the present and the repetition of the component. According to Deleuze, this bare repetition is “either an outer shell or an external envelope”²⁹, and in its depth is always the covered repetition.³⁰ Covered repetition is the repetition of the past and the repetition of the whole; it is no longer an empirical situation but a transcendental movement, the repetition of specificity that shows the capacity of existence and the repetition of time itself. Bare repetition and covered repetition are not independent, but two layers of repetition that occur at the same time. Since covered repetition causes bare repetition, the latter cannot occur without the former. However, the fact that there are two layers of repetition and the fact that they are sensed are different. It can be said that the ability of art is to make the covered repetition a subject of sense.

The repetition of the early video performance has a bare appearance in that it is performed according to the mechanical time of the video media and screened through mechanical repetition. Performers are passively subordinated to mechanical repetition and are obsessed with it. In the early performance videos, the fatigue, exhaustion, pain, and boredom of the body often serve as important motifs. However,

²⁸ However, technically, repetition at the materialistic and mechanical level cannot support itself. The repetition should involve the expectation that the same thing will come next, and for this reason, the spirit Deleuze calls “gaze” should intervene (Gilles Deleuze (2004), pp. 175–180).

²⁹ Gilles Deleuze (2004), p. 182

³⁰ Turning over the usual idea that there is a bare body in clothes, Deleuze says there is covered repetition inside bare repetition.

fatigue and exhaustion occur not only because they repeat the same behavior over and over again. This is because the motion is tailored to mechanical repetition. How long is it going to be repeated? This is until the reel of the videotape or the film is finished. But this is not the end either, because as long as there is the video, it can be repeatedly screened. In addition, since the video is repeated while the exhibition hall is open, the repetition occurs even during the exhibition. The time the audiences stand or sit in front of the monitor or screen of the early performance videos is often summarized as “boredom,” because the audiences’ bodies, like the performer’s body, are also subordinate to the mechanical device.

When the organic body is passively subordinated to the repeatability of the mechanical device, dizziness, chaos, pathology, “an obsessional ceremony or a schizophrenic stereotype,”³¹ and the movement of a “marionette, puppet”³² occur. However, when the covered repetition is emerging at the point where the bare repetition reaches its internal limit, this pathology of repetition is reversed to a positive power. This does not happen easily, but is an unusual occasion when the bare repetition is extremely repeated, and when its intensity reaches its peak. Deleuze describes it as “carrying the first time to the *n*th power.”³³ However, this occurs by imitation, wearing a mask, or *déguisement*

³¹ Gilles Deleuze (2004), p. 59

³² Gilles Deleuze (2002), p. 524

³³ Gilles Deleuze (2004), p. 24

(“disguise”) and *déplacement* (“displacement”). According to Deleuze, disguise and displacement are “the first and last elements of repetition.”³⁴ These terms, which Deleuze borrowed from Sigmund Freud, can be understood as the movement of difference that continues to change into different shapes without the original. Imitating the mechanical repeatability until the bare repetition explodes, the non-reproducible differences appear and the body is exhausted; repeating the imitation until “the extreme point where the image is overturned and turned into a false image.”³⁵ Through this, revealing “the world where the depth calls the false images and goes beyond the reproduction and the true nature of nothingness is revealed.”³⁶

If one accepts this view of Deleuze, he/she will be able to have different opinions from the interpretation that the repetition of early performance videos is a return to the oppressed or a reflection of the logic of mass production. Meaningless hand movements to catch the lead, the act of holding up your arms, and the movement of continuously returning to the original place. Wouldn't these extreme repetitions that exhaust and tire the body be a repetition of specificity that operates under the ordinary repetitions, a repetition of pure past that operates behind a repetition of the present, and a movement of time itself?

³⁴ Gilles Deleuze (2004), p. 610

³⁵ Gilles Deleuze (2004), p. 209

³⁶ Gilles Deleuze (2004), p. 589

7.

The proposition that time is a repetition of the past is not Deleuze's final word. Deleuze says repetition is a "repetition of the future"³⁷ at its deepest level. The pure past, which is the general past that has never been given a date, is the past that has never been the present because it is the future that has not yet come. Deleuze also describes the time that repeats the future as "the time when the latch is released."³⁸ Deleuze refers to Nietzsche's concept of *éternel retour* ("eternal return") to explain the repetition of the future. The eternal return does not mean a steady cycle of nature. It is the creation of something entirely new. Time as the eternal return is an infinite repetition of the same thing (the appearance of identity), and at the same time the arrival of "absolutely new"³⁹ (the difference of continuing to differ from oneself). In this respect, the eternal return is not a circle, but rather a straight line.⁴⁰ The chronological time of the past, present, and future is rather virtual, and the real appearance of time is the eternal return as the repetition of the future.

From this point of view, we could replace the aesthetics of negativity about the early performance video with the aesthetics of positivity because the repetition of the past in the eternal return means

³⁷ Gilles Deleuze (2004), p. 217

³⁸ Gilles Deleuze (2004), p. 632

³⁹ Gilles Deleuze (2004), p. 213

⁴⁰ Deleuze says that if the eternal return is a circle, it will be a distorted circle that occurs at the end of this straight line (Gilles (2004), p. 631).

the arrival of something new. However, this new thing does not arrive through any active action. The tired and exhausted body during the practice and viewing of the performance is not opposed to creativity, but rather becomes its condition. The body's passivity refers to the ability to withstand the movement of time and the intensity that differentiates the differences that cannot be explained by the logic of identity. According to Deleuze, there is an intensity that only the *sujet larvaire* ("caterpillar-subject")⁴¹, the subject of the body, not the subject of the brain, can withstand. The subject of the cogito cannot bear it. This caterpillar-subject is not one individual. It is the "former individual uniqueness... somebody anonymous (*on*)".⁴² Senses no longer belong to individuals. According to Deleuze, art allows us to sense plays without actors, anonymous senses, and inorganic lives. Here, wouldn't we be able to derive a tentative proposition that performing this through the body obsessed with the mechanical device is the capability of the performance film? At this point, the screen will be something "like the past and the future, and the meninges where the inside and the outside are facing."⁴³

⁴¹ Gilles Deleuze (2004), p. 187

⁴² Gilles Deleuze (2004), p. 589

⁴³ Gilles Deleuze (2002), p. 244

Music or the fact that there is music

Yeasul Shin

The following article describes a relaxing and peaceful landscape of a beach, but behind it is a very urgent and serious problem shared by the world.

Imagine a beach—you within it, or better: watching from above—the burning sun, sunscreen and bright bathing suits and sweaty palms and legs. Tired limbs sprawled lazily across a mosaic of towels. Imagine the occasional squeal of children, laughter, the sound of an ice cream van in the distance. The musical rhythm of waves on the surf, a soothing sound (on this particular beach, not elsewhere). The crinkling of plastic bags whirling in the air, their silent floating, jellyfish-like, below the waterline. The rumble of a volcano, or of an airplane, or a speedboat. Then a chorus of songs: everyday

*songs, songs of worry and of boredom, songs of almost nothing. And below them: the slow creaking of an exhausted Earth, a gasp.*⁴⁴

*Sun and Sea (Marina)*⁴⁵ was an opera-performance in which the vocalists lay still, moved, or sang at an artificial seaside. In this performance, which the audience could freely enter and exit like an exhibition, the vocalists restlessly sang by taking turns, and the audiences left the space again, witnessing the center of the opera where the beginning and the end were unclear. The realization of spectacles in which the music continues to flow in the scene like a living motion picture seems quite exciting and great by itself.

Looking at the introduction above and the criticisms so far, it seems that their real purpose is to let the audience listen to “a gasp of Earth” through this song. Now that the heat is getting extreme, islands of garbage wander the sea, and lightning is striking in the Arctic, an important imperative is given to the issue of the climate crisis. Here there is no doubt at all. In addition, *Sun and Sea (Marina)*, which showed

⁴⁴ Pietroiusti, Lucia, *Sun and Sea (Marina)*, Introduction. <https://sunandsea.lt/en>

⁴⁵ This is an opera-performance presented at the Lithuania Hall of the 2019 Venice Biennale. Composer Lina Lapelytė was in charge of music, playwright Vaiva Grainytė was in charge of libretto, and Rugilė Barzdžiukaitė was in charge of directing and set design. On the official website of *Sun and Sea*, they call it an “opera-performance.”

the scenery of a getaway and the fine cracks in it through opera, was evaluated as having expressed this problematic situation allegorically.⁴⁶

But will it be okay if the story ends like this? This global problem absorbs everything around it like a black hole. As it becomes an increasingly urgent agenda shared globally, the topic itself of this work does not leave room for pros and cons. As long as it arrives safely at something that is both a subject and a conclusion, it seems that the purpose of all experiences is fulfilled. But it may be necessary to think about the form of ‘opera-performance’ and the material ‘music’ they chose by resisting this power for a while. One of the factors that make us see this work and watch it longer, that make it interesting, is the use of music. I’m curious about these things.

How is music used in *Sun and Sea (Marina)*?

Why is *Sun and Sea (Marina)* an opera-performance but not an opera?

How is the music of *Sun and Sea (Marina)* related to other components?

And these questions are not limited to this case. In the works created by the artists of different genres or combined with different media, a good balance of power is achieved, a power imbalance is implicitly tolerated, or a power imbalance exists, but they pretend not to be. And such state can be assumed by looking at what is considered a

⁴⁶ Erika Balsom, at the end of her writing about *Sun and Sea (Marina)*, comments that “[p]erhaps *Sun & Sea (Marina)* is not an opera after all, but a requiem.” <https://www.artforum.com/print/201907/venice-2019-80531>

material for the work, the way creators view the material, the way they express it, how they name the form, and what they extract and emphasize in the process of verbalizing the work.

Music

Presumably, this music had several goals. One is that music melts into the scenery of *Sun and Sea (Marina)*. While bringing the form of opera that strongly reveals the presence of music, the creators seemed to have adjusted several variables to prevent music from covering other materials. There is nothing like a large-scale orchestra used in typical operas or aria that maximizes the skills of vocalists. The breathing of the song is short, no one sings enthusiastically, and a simple monophony of synthesizer is played, or a duet or chorus is sporadically heard. These songs are no burden regardless of when, where, and how they appear, and are not awkward whenever, wherever, and however they disappear. Without looking closely, it is even hard to know who is singing right away.

The other goal is to make it possible to listen comfortably. Any unfamiliar sound materials that make us nervous and troubled rarely appear here. Composer Lina Lapelytė writes rhythms that are always simple and repeats them frequently to let the listeners quickly recognize the patterns. It uses a major and minor system formed in the Western European tradition, widely used in popular culture today, and most of the

chords used in the song consist of ratios of simple integers.⁴⁷ This music consists of materials that are relatively familiar to many people and are not complicated.

Another goal is to make people listen to the lyrics. Music is the most convenient tool to carry a 'message' that this opera-performance aims at. It is not too fast or complicated, and the repetitive rhythm is good for repeating and emphasizing certain words. As the easily read pattern is eventually no longer recognized as new information at some point, it does not particularly bother people who try to focus on language. The structure of this music is simple enough to be transparent, making it easy to grasp the words and stories in the lyrics.

Music does not stand out and melts into a relaxing landscape. It does not use unfamiliar or particularly difficult expressions to hear. Sometimes it is useful to listen to the lyrics. I do not know the common purpose in the process of work, but about 20 vocalists appear and sing restlessly in this opera-performance, allowing music to continue to pass by itself. Or, it seems that music plays an important role but tries its best not to be revealed. Why is the music stepping back in this way even if it is a half opera?

At this point, we will briefly look at the old stories about the confrontation and harmony of the components that make music.

⁴⁷ Pythagoras believed that if the ratio of the frequencies between two notes had a ratio of integers as small as 1:2 or 2:3, it would sound harmonious, and the more complicated this ratio became, the more discordant it would sound. This belief is still in use in some ways.

Owner and servant

... About the second composition, Giulio Cesare Monteverdi says that music follows its own rules in the first composition that Zarlino systemized, whereas the music follows the lyrics in the second composition.

... Harmony, the owner of the word, becomes the servant of the word, and the word becomes the owner of the harmony. This is the second composition, or the way contemporary composition flows.⁴⁸

They examine the owner–servant relationship between word and music in the realm of theory and composition. The character Monteverdi says that the lyrics become the owner of the music (the second composition), deviating from the old music (the first composition) where music has followed its own rules. Sometimes in the experience of music, the two cannot be separated, but it must have been quite a serious problem for a creator choosing either logic to construct music. This is a problem linked to the nature of song, music that has lyrics. These questions may then

⁴⁸ Grout, Donald J. and other authors, *Reading the Original Text: Music as the Servant of Word, A History of Western Music (First Half)*, translated by Eunki Min and others, E&B Plus, 2007, 327.

follow: Is a song made to speak musically? Is it made just to be sung?
What is the method and purpose of a song? What is more important in a song?

A collection of elements

On the other hand, some people did not view the relationship between music and lyrics as an owner–servant relationship, but rather argued that everything was totally important. Wagner called his opera a musical play and elaborated on its attributes with the term “total artwork.” He was a composer, but in his musical plays, music exists for dramatic expression (not for the music itself). It is a way to set the objects and characters from the story as specific motifs inside the music, and almost synchronize the play with the music. For example, when a love potion appears on stage or is mentioned in the lyrics, the motif of a love potion is also played through the music. In Wagner’s case, it is certain that at least the lyrics and music share the same flow, and there is a clear intersection between the two.

What he hoped was not for one to dictate everything else, but for several elements to form a single assembly to create an original play. The collection of elements Wagner thought of were as follows: music, poetry, dance, painting, architecture, stage equipment, costumes, lighting, and other effects. Of course, it is not guaranteed that there will be no hierarchy between them. Some may not have been able to become one of

them. In fact, there are a variety of opinions as to whether this is total or whether it really exists as a 'collection' rather than one that stands out. But here, it may be a little more useful to recognize the fact that he pursued this kind of status and what value he took by first clarifying that status through a clear language.

Not related

There are some cases where the lyrics have no concrete meaning even if they have the form of an opera, such as the opera *Einstein on the Beach* by Philip Glass.

First performed at the Metropolitan Opera House in 1976, the one-act opera *Einstein on the Beach*, which lasts four and a half hours, is a collaboration with the avant-garde director Robert Wilson, who wrote the scenario. There is no clear story in this opera, only solfège syllables are the lyrics, and the stage movements are almost meaningless. The music consists mainly of repetitive forms of sounds, most of which are in the form of broken chords of triads, and are played by an orchestra consisting of electronic keyboard, woodwind, and solo violin.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Grout, Donald J. and other authors, *A History of Western Music (Latter Half)*, translated by Eunki Min and others, E&B Plus, 2009, 408.

It is not only the solfège at every moment of *Einstein on the Beach*. It does not seem very easy to grasp exactly what role music plays throughout this opera and to what extent it is important. However, at least within the limited scope of the relationship between lyrics and music, the lyrics do not seem to lead the music in terms of meaning. Perhaps the lyrics here can be seen as a support for vocalization for tone or acoustic effects. I assume that the lyrics and music here are not related, or that the lyrics belong to the music.

‘Opera-Performance’

Unlike older cases, the relationship between music and lyrics in *Sun and Sea (Marina)* seems quite unclear. (It doesn’t seem to be music \subset lyrics, music \cap lyrics, or music \supset lyrics.) The two move independently without being matched or bound to the owner–servant relationship, but are sung at the same time.

Perhaps this state is the most essential and interesting part that penetrates this opera-performance. The music and the scenery of the beach are peaceful. Creators suspect that this seemingly relentless scene may put the world today in huge danger. While they separate the sense of surface and the ulterior motive and let the peaceful surface flow, they allow people to glimpse the meaning that has been in their minds. The ulterior motive is hidden in familiar complaints that appear in the lyrics just as one is about to forget, much like everyday trash lying so naturally

on the beach. Music exists as a background space where hints hidden in the lyrics can be naturally placed, rather than having a special meaning combined with the lyrics. In that sense, music seems similar to the artificial beach as the stage and the background of *Sun and Sea (Marina)*. The music attracts viewers to the scene like the Siren's song, but soon disappears from attention and melts into the background. Nothing stands out there. This seems to be related to the fact that the creators named the performance "opera-performance" instead of opera. They place the components of this work in the order by which they aim to draw out a performance where the boundaries between the center and the surroundings are relatively open. Perhaps they try to closely examine the relationship between the center and the surroundings, check the weight of the various materials constituting this work, and achieve their own balance without any one being too prominent. They seem to pursue a state in which pluralistic materials coexist. The word "performance" added after "opera," the traditional genre, is seemingly related to the sense of balance that this work has pursued.

But is there a reason why this is (half) opera? Does it naturally become opera if the vocalists sing several songs in *bel canto* style? There is no reason to deny that this is never an opera, but I am not sure if there was a reason to specify "opera," the music-oriented genre, in front of the word "performance." Why didn't the form of opera disappear in this work? I get the impression that music is one of the many materials in *Sun and Sea (Marina)*, and that music seems to seek many strategies to

balance power with other elements. However, the dual naming of “opera-performance” unnecessarily makes me reflect on the balance of power I assumed while sensing this work. A small question remains as to what symbol they would gain from calling this work “opera-performance.” Or, before all these questions, maybe they should have asked why they were singing in the first place?

Performance

This is how I understand the perplexing word “performance.” There will be an event; it has not yet been decided what is the center. Several materials will achieve a unique order suitable for this event. For some performances, each element is configured to be in the most equivalent state. The reason why it is called “performance” rather than “music,” “dance,” or “play” may be that it pursues freedom from the hierarchy of grammar or elements formed in the existing genre.

Here, creators can decide from the beginning what to define as performance and what materials to use: sound, movement, body, space, time, audience, lighting, costumes, etc. In addition, when creators of various fields make a performance together, they can review and balance each other’s unique areas in the process of production. However, the performances which deviate from existing grammar, customs, and hierarchies and aim for an independent state where these do not use each other as a tool make me face difficult questions.

How is a performance in which anything never becomes a tool possible?
How can a state be created where neither means nor purpose exist? From
where to where are the materials? How should the area of 'others, etc.' be
managed? How should we overcome when more important and less
important things naturally arise? Is there a performance without a
center? Is it possible that the surroundings really do not exist? Is
'performance' a formality? Or is it an attitude?
Can the audiences recognize everything used as a material for
performance? Do they need to be aware of it? What do they see, hear,
sense, or experience? Should they look at the relationship between the
materials? Should they look at the unique order created by each
performance? Or is it a top priority to abandon the direction of
experience? Should reflecting on the verbalized knowledge and the
embodied senses be preceded? Should they experience losing something
old, not gaining something new? Should they not assume anything?

Polyphony and Heterophony

Among these numerous questions, it is difficult to easily divide between
the more important and the less important, and to arrive at a simple
conclusion. However, you cannot just let go of this open state forever
without any effort. There is a need for thinking tools that allow you to
look closer at this condition. Whether the pluralistic state is a deviation
from the dominant logic, is not limited to the grammar of a particular

genre, is equally related to multiple materials, and is oriented toward a texture without center... Perhaps we can think of them from the perspective of polymorphism.

In Western traditional music, the entanglement of voices has been explained in the states such as monophony, polyphony, homophony, and heterophony. Either there is a single voice (mono), several voices pass by at their own pace (poly), several voices ring at the same time (homo), or several voices move flexibly as a state with no center (hetero). I understand these ‘-phonies’ as a state that occurs at time rather than as an absolute composition principle. To make this state, there must be a clear voice that can be called a “part.”

Among them, the states of polyphony and heterophony are somewhat related to the state of pluralism. What is interesting to me in polyphony’s state is to see different voices coexisting in multiple lines, or to see what happens when they meet in a ‘point-to-point’ at some point. While heterophony deals with an identical or similar topic, it moves like a cluster without a center and is freely entangled depending on the situation as less-planned. Both states meet and disperse without making each other a tool while maintaining polymorphism.

Therefore, looking at pluralism as polymorphism means thinking about whether materials can be recognized as subjects with unique voices. Of course, the balance of these voices will change from time to time, but I want to see if it is considered at least one of the voices, not a decorative sound or accompaniment. It will be impossible to find a performance

that maintains an equal relationship until the end without turning anything into a tool; however, it will be meaningful to examine whether the component can establish itself as a voice.

It is necessary to take a closer look at the state of numerous materials and actively talk about each material: why something is there, what is structured or intertwined in this way, why something is not there, why something is said to be there, and why something is not said to be there. Whether the nature of something is important, or if the fact that something exists is important.

『THOMAS』

Compiled by Suzy Park · Min Oh

Written by Harry C. H. Choi, Sooyoung Nam, Yeasul Shin, Seonryeong Cho, Min Oh,
Suzy Park

Thomas

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Concept and Composition : Suzy Park, Min Oh

Art works : Min Oh

Text and Discussion : Sooyoung Nam, Yeasul Shin, Seonryeong Cho, Harry C.
H. Choi

Cooperation : Total Museum of Contemporary Art

Director Juneui Noh

Chef Curator Nathalie Boseul Shin

Coordinator Sooeon Jeong

Educator Haeun Lee

Intern Sunkyung Yeo, Heera Seon

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