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Reterritorialising the Self: Trauma, Displacement, and Healing in Mary Lynn Bracht's *White Chrysanthemum*

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Abstract

Mary Lynn Bracht's *White Chrysanthemum* (2018) brings to light the obscured history of sexual trafficking and slavery under Japanese colonial rule in Korea. The novel interweaves the lives of two sisters, Hana and Emi, from the coastal *hanyeo* community of Jeju-do, fictionalizing the abduction and forced sexual enslavement of young Korean women by the Japanese military and its enduring aftermath. The forced displacement and gendered trauma of the "comfort women"—a politically charged yet historically unrepaired and largely unredressed reality—constitute the central concern of this analysis. This study examines the trauma experienced by the protagonist, Hana, focusing particularly on her displacement into an unfamiliar geographical and cultural space—one estranged both from her Korean origins and from the colonizer's domain. Drawing upon Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's poststructuralist concepts of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation, the paper argues that the traumas of sexual violence, abduction, ostracism, and social isolation are deterritorialised—both literally, through forced displacement from home and community, and metaphorically, through the dissolution of identity, belonging, and bodily integrity—and are subsequently reterritorialized through emergent relations, new spaces of affect, and the creative reconstitution of selfhood that unfold beyond the original sites of traumatic memory and suffering.

Keywords: Trauma, comfort women, Deleuze, deterritorialisation, reterritorialisation

Throughout history, women's experiences of wartime trauma and displacement have been largely overlooked in mainstream war histories and archives. Dominant historical narratives have offered only limited space for these othered experiences, failing to elaborate their specificity, subjectivity, and affective depth. The plight of the "comfort women" exemplifies this marginalization: a war atrocity long buried, ignored, and left officially unredressed, with neither adequate reparations nor formal apology. This article seeks to contribute to the visibility of such minor histories by foregrounding a literary representation of the comfort women's perspectives and experiences of gendered wartime atrocity that challenge dominant historical and literary discourses.

A. Ogoshi argues that the "comfort women" system was "an unprecedented state-approved rape system" (Maki 34). It constituted "a combined form of racial and sexual oppression and exploitation," in which "the Japanese colonial policy allowed the taking of young women from Japanese colonies for sexual slavery in order to prevent the spread of

venereal disease in the military, and at the same time to destroy the reproductive capacity of colonized people" (41). The political silence surrounding this system persisted for decades, until survivors' stories gradually became the foundation of postwar activism that sought to shed light on their experiences and advocate for visibility, recognition, and reparations. Diverse media—including performance, protest, visual art, cinema, and literature—have since participated in foregrounding these narratives, providing multiple avenues for public engagement and historical reckoning.

The importance of historical fiction that imparts the experiences of the "comfort women" cannot be overstated. These narratives bring to light the lives of countless women—many of them mere children at the time of their abduction—who bore the brunt of a hypermasculine and ultranationalist military complex, enduring sexual trauma, forced exile, and even death, only to be erased by dominant narratives that glorify wartime triumphs and losses. Their experiences were systematically desaturated, drowned out, and rendered invisible amid the broader political and historical upheavals that surrounded them. Moreover, the story of the comfort women extends beyond wartime sexual slavery to encompass postwar marginalization as survivors were often treated as traitors, denigrated by their own communities, and subjected to continued suffering and social ostracism. Many of these women effectively disappeared from collective memory, marginalized due to their underprivileged status, their lack of power, and the societal shame imposed upon them for their perceived loss of sexual purity and public face—stigmatized as prostitutes by both colonizers and their own communities. The entwined forces of colonialism and patriarchy stripped these women of agency, dignity, and self-worth, violating, effacing, and displacing their female subjectivity.

Focusing on the character of Hana in Mary Lynn Bracht's *White Chrysanthemum*, this study explores how trauma simultaneously disrupts and reconstructs subjectivity. The novel offers a fictional vignette into the historical and biographical erasure of women who were grouped—and subsequently effaced—under the euphemistic term "comfort women." By situating Hana's suffering within the broader history of wartime atrocities—trafficking, sexual slavery, and systemic violence—during the Second World War and the Japanese occupation of Korea, the narrative exposes a rupture that dislocates her from familial, spatial, and cultural coordinates. The remapping of self within new spatial, geographical, and cultural contexts is thus examined as a form of recovery—one that entails the reconstitution of meaning and the reclamation of agency in the aftermath of trauma. Viewed through a Deleuzian philosophical lens, Hana's story is a site of both dissolution and creation.

Within the Deleuzian-Guattarian framework, the paper examines the processes of survival, healing, and self-discovery that follow experiences of trauma—particularly displacement, exile, and sexual violence—through the concepts of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation. Drawing upon textual analysis, historical context, and philosophical interpretation, it investigates how Hana's experiences of abduction, forced prostitution, and dehumanisation trace a complex passage from dispossession toward a fragile reconfiguration of selfhood. Concurrently, the study also explores how Bracht employs spatial metaphors and geographical markers to map the cartography of gendered trauma, positing these as signifiers of reterritorialisation through which the displaced female subject negotiates meaning, memory, and belonging.

The traumatic events and forced exile endured by Hana reflect a multilayered historical reality—a complex plateau of intersecting power dynamics, social hierarchies, and

gendered oppression—making such experiences vital subjects for critical, feminist, and philosophical inquiry. The precarity and marginalization of the abused victims render them particularly compelling for a Deleuzian-Guattarian reading, as the French philosopher and his collaborator privilege dispossessed, forgotten, and peripheral forms of subjectivity.

For Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, deterritorialisation designates the process through which an entity becomes unmoored from its stable coordinates —whether social, cultural, biological, or linguistic. As Anneke Smelik observes, "Deterritorialisation is a logistical precondition for a process of becoming, which unsettles the familiar territory of demarcated wholes or fixed frameworks" (50). The concept is fundamentally ambivalent, encompassing both violent ruptures and creative transformations. Once forcefully deterritorialised, the subject cannot return to the same terrain of identity, for the coordinates of that terrain—home, nation, body—have already been transformed, or even obliterated, by the very forces that expelled her. Forced deterritorialisation occurs through colonization, exile, and sexual violence, as exemplified by Hana's abduction and prostitution in the novel, while affirmative deterritorialisation signifies the capacity to transform these dislocations into new modalities of being. The process of deterritorialisation is followed by reterritorialisation—the formation of new territories, stabilizations, intensities, and relations. Reterritorialisation is not a simple act of return; rather, it constitutes the creation of new assemblages of meaning, affect, and subjectivity.

Hana's trajectory in the novel embodies both extremes. Her initial deterritorialisation is violently imposed: her identity, bodily autonomy, and sense of national belonging are stripped away. However, her later orientation may be read as a form of reterritorialisation—a tentative reconstitution of self through new spatial, affective, and existential coordinates, wherein belonging is no longer determined by place but by the capacity to define and affirm oneself. This movement from externally imposed identity toward self-elected subjectivity marks the fragile emergence of agency within the ruins of trauma.

The notion of trauma, derived from the Greek *traumatizo* ("to wound"), originally referred to "a blow or shock to the bodily tissues which led to injury or disturbance" and was later extended "to encompass the structures of the mind, developing a broader psychological and social reference" (Leydesdorff 1-2). Trauma entails a disintegration of self that gives rise to ongoing psychic distress, social paralysis, and physical symptoms. For victims, living becomes an undefinable reality of unpredictable horror, as memories of the traumatic event or events become "that [which] could not and did not proceed through to its completion . . . and therefore . . . continues into the present" (169). In the case of sexual trauma, victims often experience a dissociation between reality and psyche, producing what Susan D. Rose calls "the embodied pain and numbness of both being and not being which is part of the experience of violation, [revealing] the layers of meaning that interact with one another, defining and redefining the connections between inner and outer realities" (163). She further notes that "the dream-like quality of experience results from the sense of one's self being so assaulted, so bombarded, that one psychologically 'escapes' in order to avoid destruction. … Over time, one becomes accustomed, even entrained, to follow certain patterns of response, whether dissociating from or acknowledging pain" (167).

While community support and sustained care are essential for a trauma survivor's healing, societal attitudes toward victims are not always conducive to recovery. The imposition of traditional ideals, rigid moral codes, and cultural indifference often fosters silence around certain sensitive forms of trauma—particularly when the trauma bears

exploitative or sexual dimensions, as in cases of rape or sexual slavery. In such contexts, where society, the collective, and the institutional power structures remain apathetic or even antagonistic to the suffering of victims, silence becomes a mechanism of repression and complicity:

> [S]ilence protects both perpetrators and the notion (no matter how illusory) of a harmonious community and family; it also retraumatizes and isolates victims. … Ultimately, recovering from trauma is not just an individual act but a collective process: it demands dialogue. While bearing witness to trauma is a process that involves the listener, many people are unable or unwilling to listen, and trauma survivor narratives often meet with great resistance from the larger society. A backlash against speaking out occurs because it exposes the atrocities in our midst and challenges both those who abuse power and those who stand by as muted witnesses (Leydesdorff 174)

It is therefore imperative to dismantle the barriers of silence and communication that surround the discussion of trauma. In this regard, works of fiction that illuminate the sexual and psychosocial suffering of the "comfort women" function as acts of cultural redressal; they confront erasure and offer a form of collective solidarity against the mechanisms of silencing to which these women have been historically subjected.

The narrative of *White Chrysanthemum* is structured as a *bildungsroman*, juxtaposing the trials and tribulations of its two central female characters while tracing their divergent paths of individual and collective growth within a broader historical frame. It tells the story of two sisters, Hana and Emi, living on Jeju Island during the Japanese occupation of Korea and the Second World War. Their lives unfold under the unrelenting pressures of colonial rule—heavy taxation, the conscription of men into military service, and the abduction of children for forced labour or sexual servitude to Japanese soldiers. The historical tragedy of the "comfort women" is particularized through Hana's story, the elder sister who becomes the object of a Japanese corporal's obsession after sacrificing her own freedom in a desperate attempt to protect her younger sister from the same fate.

Hana belongs to the *hanyeo* community—female sea divers who plunge deep beneath the waves to harvest abalone from the rock beds of the ocean floor. This traditionally female occupation, though situated within an androcentric culture, grants these women a negotiable form of agency over their livelihoods. Despite the long absences of their husbands—who are also men of the sea—the *hanyeo* maintain an economic and social autonomy rarely available to women in early twentieth-century patriarchal Korean society. Although they are expected to continue the male genealogy, they are not confined to the household. Instead, the female community sustains through intergenerational transmission of their diving knowledge: elder women train the younger divers, teaching them to regulate their breath, to swim with precision, and to endure the physical demands of the trade. In turn, the younger women watch over one another as they dive, while the youngest daughters and sisters keep vigil on the shore until they too are old enough to enter the water. This female lineage of labour and care embodies a collective resilience—an informal matrilineal structure that quietly redefines gendered boundaries within a culture otherwise governed by male dominance.

By the summer of 1943, as a young diver, the sixteen-year-old Hana has grown up in a Korea where her connection to native language and culture has been systematically eroded by the Japanese colonial policy. The administration enforces linguistic, political, and cultural assimilation, reducing Koreans to the status of inferior, second-class citizens. The imperial

regime's extractive logic operates on every level— "heavy taxes, forced donations to the war effort, and the taking of men to fight on the front lines and the children to work in factories in Japan" (Bracht 6)—revealing an asymmetric structure of exploitation and domination. The colony functions simultaneously as both resource and labour reserve for the empire, its people subjected to dispossession and servitude: "[f]ew Koreans held official positions, and if they did, they were sympathisers, loyalists to the Japanese government, traitors to their own countrymen" (24).

For women, political subjugation carries an additional layer of precarity. Their already limited rights are further undermined by the persistent threat of sexual violence and gendered exploitation. From a young age, Hana is instilled with the fear of the foreign colonisers and is warned to remain invisible to their gaze. At the same time, she is also taught to protect her younger sister, Emi—to keep her within her sight while diving. This act of vigilance assumes profound symbolic significance; as long as Hana maintains that visual connection, she sustains her link to home, to safety, and to the cultural and familial roots that define her sense of belonging. Even as colonial occupation seeks to sever those ties and erode her native identity, Emi remains "Hana's anchor, to the shore and to life" (9), her constant reminder of what is at stake in a world where "once taken, girls never make it back home" (32).

The gossip Hana overhears about a girl who was taken by the Japanese soldiers and later returned reveals the scale of collective stigma surrounding sexual violence inflicted by the coloniser: the girl is "riddled with illness and driven mad by rape," her father "had to hide her in the house. She's wild now, like an animal," and "no one will have her," since "the shame will follow [her father] to an early grave" (33). The rape of Korean women by Japanese soldiers is described as "more than one act," justified by the perpetrators through their sense of entitlement: "they believe it is their right to release their energy and receive pleasure, even when they are so far from home, because they risk their lives for the emperor on the front lines. They believe so much that they take the girls and ship them all over the world for this purpose" (34). Here, sexual domination becomes a metonym for imperial conquest—the colonised body, like the colonised land, is seized, violated, and rendered disposable. The bodies of women, like the resources of the occupied territory, are transformed into instruments of imperial pleasure and power, stripped of agency and subjectivity.

The novel confronts and allegorically villainizes Japanese colonial power through the figure of the Japanese soldier, whose relentless pursuit of the Korean girl positions her as both the feminine Other and the symbolic representation of the colonized nation. Femininity frequently serves as a national allegory—the woman as the violated body of the nation, stripped of agency and in need of recovery. Hana embodies this dual register: her sexual violation mirrors the subjugation of Korea under imperial rule. Yet, while the Korean nationalist rhetoric sanctifies the nation as a sacred mother in need of protection, this symbolic reverence does not extend to the actual women who suffered under colonial sexual slavery. Survivors were subjected to severe social ostracism and moral condemnation, despite their victimization—a reflection of how entrenched patriarchal structures in postwar Korean society perpetuated their silencing.

Hana is ultimately forced to risk attracting the coloniser's attention in an attempt to protect her younger sister, Emi—and is taken away. She is abducted by a Japanese Corporal who develops an obsessive desire for her, one that seals her fate. Along with a group of other captured girls, Hana is ferried across the island of her birth, and transported like cattle to Manchuria. Even before reaching her destination, she is raped by the abductor. Four other

girls bleed to death after similar assaults. Their bodies are buried hastily along the railway tracks and denied ancestral rites; without which, according to traditional belief the spirits of the dead can never return home.

Zinn and Stanley's observation that "femaleness intensifies homelessness and statelessness" (2) underscores how exile and political displacement functions not merely as a spatial or political condition but as a profoundly embodied and gendered experience. For women, displacement entails more than the loss of territory—it signifies the erosion of bodily sovereignty, social legitimacy, and symbolic belonging. In Hana's case, her displacement is triply inscribed: she is displaced as a colonised Korean subject (politically stateless), as a woman (patriarchally disempowered), and as a comfort woman (sexually violated and socially ostracised). Her homelessness, therefore, extends beyond geography; it becomes ontological. Hana is dispossessed not merely of land and home but of the very conditions of subjectivity—her right to exist as a self-determining being.

The surviving girls are dispersed among different military brothels, stripped of their names, and assigned new ones not of their choosing. Each becomes a number in an assembly line of violation, as soldiers queue outside to "take their turn being serviced." After her first day, bruised and mutilated, Hana can no longer face her reflection: "It is no longer hers; it is now the broken image of a girl called Sakura" (Bracht 94). She becomes, in her own words, "like an item on a menu, perused, purchased, and consumed" (114). Her identity as a *hanyeo*—a strong and independent woman who once defied the odds of nature—is destroyed beyond recognition. The more she resists, the more she is punished.

During her imprisonment, Hana's only refuge lies in memory: she dreams of the sea: "The memories distress her and yet sustain her" (119). These dreams become her psychic tether to her lost world, an inner oceanic expanse that resists complete annihilation. Within the brothel, a muted camaraderie develops among the girls—a shared endurance in the face of systemic brutality. Together, they navigate fear, illness, and exhaustion: the terror of venereal disease, unwanted pregnancies, beatings, mutilations by drunken officers, and humiliating medical inspections. Many succumb to suicide, madness, or addiction, numbing themselves with opium to dull the pain. Nights are filled with screams that collapse into silence, the echoes of trauma reverberating in the hollow corridors of the "comfort station."

The confinement of women within the pleasure cabins, where soldiers lined up to violate them in turns, offers a stark and visceral image of wartime sexual violence. The female body is rendered a utilitarian object, stripped of autonomy and reduced to the sexuate mechanical function within the machinery of war. The horror operates on multiple registers: the women's bodies become sites of disease, exhaustion, and brutality, while their minds bear the psychological scars of trauma, alienation, and suicidal despair. The novel presents trauma as total estrangement—from the self, from one's surroundings, and from one's social world. Even the landscape mirrors this condition: the violated terrain parallels the violated body, fusing the physical and symbolic dimensions of occupation.

When Hana finally escapes across the border into Mongolia, the relationship between body, self, and geography begins to shift for the first time. Although the land remains scarred by the same war and geopolitical forces—Japan, China, the US and the Soviet Union—it becomes, for Hana, a site of asylum. Among a nomadic Mongolian tribe, she encounters a new form of community grounded in reciprocity and care. Here, she forms relationships that exist beyond the labels of victimhood or prostitution, and she begins to reconstruct an identity that is fresh, autonomous, and unjudged. In this community, she can finally reveal her real

name—Hana—thus symbolically overwriting the imposed name, Sakura, that marked her as a sexual slave.

The Mongolian landscape, with its vast mountains and expansive skies, evokes a renewed sense of belonging—one not tied to blood or nation but to affective and ecological connection. Despite linguistic barriers, Hana experiences genuine kindness and mutual protection among the nomads. For the first time, she learns to accept care without suspicion and to reciprocate love freely. Life among the nomads—uncertain, mobile, yet rooted in mutual trust—contrasts sharply with the captivity of the brothel. This nomadic existence becomes a process of reterritorialisation, where displacement is transformed into a form of freedom.

The tribe quite literally helps Hana unearth herself, to bury her past and rediscover the self that trauma had obliterated. In this new geography—a "land-locked region," an inversion of the sea-locked island of her childhood—Hana finds continuity between the past and present. At Lake Uvs— "once a great sea before the land appeared around it, separating it from the oceans" (294)—she rediscovers the rhythm of her former life as a *hanyeo*. The scene at the lake marks a metaphysical return to the sea, where memory and becoming converge:

> Turning her attention back towards the lake, Hana continues on her trek to the blue and green waters behind the wetland reeds. Gulls float on the placid lake, calling to their mates hovering above them on a cold winter wind… her boots sink into the sandy earth with each step. She is once again walking on a beach. The wind rushes through her hair; the fur pelt around her shoulders tickles her neck. She breathes in the salty air, and memories wash through her mind. Her first taste of the sea, her first dive, her mother's *sumbisori* whistle after each plunge… the call of the sea overpowers her (205).

The lake becomes both a mirror and an inversion of the ocean. In this space, Hana's exile transforms from *forced* to *chosen*; her alienation becomes habitation. She acknowledges that "returning home would never have been safe… If she suddenly appeared at her mother's house, there would be questions… If they found her, they could ship her back to the brothel in Manchuria, or somewhere even worse" (295–96). Yet, this recognition does not signify despair. Instead, it signifies release: "The realization that she is content to stay with them relieves a burden from her bones… Altan is the light summoning her toward the surface of the water—the light that will chase away the darkness she has endured for too long" (296).

Altan, the young Mongolian man who rescues and protects her, symbolically replaces Emi as Hana's "anchor." He becomes not a saviour but a relational point of renewal—a figure through whom she reconstitutes her sense of self, intimacy, and belonging. The forced exile to a foreign land is thus overwritten by a chosen exile, marking the movement from forced deterritorialisation to affirmative reterritorialisation. Through this shift, Bracht transforms Hana's displacement into a Deleuzian passage of becoming—an emergent subjectivity rooted in relation, resilience, and the possibility of life beyond trauma, using geographical and spatial metaphors.

The female body, as the locus of sexual trauma, becomes symbolically equated with the earth—the material ground of boundaries that are crossed, conquered, and possessed by those who violate her. The assertion of rights over land and over the female body parallels the patriarchal and colonial impulse to dominate and subjugate: to render the woman subservient, to bend her will and body to masculine control. Statelessness of women rupture her autonomy

through displacement and forced exile. Exile intersects with the violence of sexualisation, prostitution, and systemic abuse that reduces women to "pleasure bodies," stripping them of agency and collapsing their identities under the weight of forced sexual labour and repeated violation. In this way, the *hanyeo* identity—once anchored in self-reliance and communion with the sea—is severed for Hana. The motif of the shore functions both literally and metaphorically: it signifies home, return, and safety, a threshold between freedom and captivity.

Hana's eventual escape to Mongolia, where she forges new personal and social relations far removed from both the land of her birth and the site of her abuse, represents a literal and figurative displacement of territory—geographical, cultural, linguistic, and psychological. While she retains the memory of her past and her identity as a *hanyeo* to survive the pressures of captivity and trauma, the subject-position of the "comfort woman" remains destabilized. It is only through complete exile and spatial renewal that she begins to reconstitute herself—disentangled from both her natal roots and the oppressive identity imposed upon her within the colonizer's domain. Her previous being—the child of Jeju, bound to the Sea of her childhood—is gradually remade through the process of deterritorialisation. What initially impresses as an exilic disappearance transforms into an act of self-discovery: a reterritorialisation through new relations, new affects, and new modes of belonging.

Susan D. Rose captures this transformative dimension of displacement for the trauma survivors as,

> The adventure that leads one into new encounters [and] stimulates the senses by challenging them with new sounds, smells, sensations. When one leaves behind familiar territory and enters new terrain, adrenalin rushes to prepare one to meet the unknown, the unfamiliar, the stranger who is potentially an enemy but also potentially a friend. The 'alter-adventure' of engaging past trauma may likewise lead one into unexpected, though strangely familiar territory… the journey invokes risk but also opportunity. By expanding and exploring new boundaries, the adventure/alter-adventure can revitalize (Leydesdorff 166)

Hana's journey thus becomes an "alter-adventure" of trauma and becoming: her flight from captivity is not merely an escape from the site of violence but an immersion into the unknown—a renewal of self through the affective and sensory intensities of new terrain. In Deleuzian terms, this movement from forced deterritorialisation to affirmative reterritorialisation constitutes a transformation of being: an emergence of subjectivity that affirms life through relation, openness, and the creative reconfiguration of pain into possibility.

From a Deleuzian perspective, de-alienation does not signify restoration or return but the creation of difference. Hana cannot recover a lost wholeness; instead, she must compose a new one. Her life in Mongolia, though marked by estrangement, becomes a new assemblage—a reterritorialisation in difference, shaped through new language, new land, and new affective bonds. This constitutes a minor reterritorialisation: not reconciliation with the past, but the affirmation of survival through transformation. Hana's self-exile becomes productive when it ceases to seek restitution and instead affirms its own lines of flight—movements that elude the coordinates of nation, gender, and trauma. Her de-alienation, then, lies not in reclaiming an original identity, but in inventing a new form of subjectivity that exceeds the limits imposed by patriarchy, nationalism, and victimisation.

Thus, Hana's exile can be mapped across a Deleuzian schema of displacement and transformation, wherein exile itself signifies a forced deterritorialisation—colonial, sexual, and patriarchal in nature. Her inability to return marks the impossibility of reterritorialisation upon the same plane, for the original coordinates of identity, nation, and body have been irreversibly altered by trauma and dispossession. Yet within this rupture lies the potential for reterritorialisation through difference—a creative becoming that enables Hana to forge new connections and modes of existence beyond the constraints of her former identity.

The novel dives deeply into the political contestations between Japanese and Korean national identities, and its sustained attention to spatial and bodily boundaries provides fertile ground for a Deleuzian reading. The notion of deterritorialisation becomes a productive philosophical lens through which to examine what remains implicit—the lingering trauma of isolation, displacement, and stigma that continues long after physical violence has ended. Within this framework, the physical deterritorialisation of the Korean people—the loss of autonomy over land, body, and cultural identity through colonisation and imperial violence—constitutes the first stage of trauma, one that is simultaneously historical, cultural, political, and geographical.

The second stage unfolds with the Korean female subject's forced removal from her home and her subsequent confinement to the comfort station, where she is repeatedly violated, dehumanised, and reduced to a reproductive vessel for the occupying forces—her body becoming the colonised territory itself. The third and final stage of deterritorialisation occurs through the female subject's escape and resettlement in an alien space, where she assumes a new identity, culture, and geography. This movement is not only literal but also philosophical: an unbinding from imposed identities and oppressive affiliations, and the emergence of a self-constituted subjectivity beyond the category of the "comfort woman." It is only through this final displacement that Hana achieves a fragile yet affirmative reterritorialisation—one that allows her to reimagine herself outside the coordinates of colonial violence and patriarchal subjugation.

For Hana, the homeland no longer exists as a coherent territorial or emotional reality, fractured as it is by colonial occupation and personal trauma. The body that could return bears the indelible traces of violation, marking it as alien even to itself. Moreover, the community that might have welcomed her has symbolically repudiated women like her, branding them impure and unassimilable. In Deleuzian terms, therefore, Hana's return to Jeju—or to a prelapsarian, un-traumatised self—is ontologically impossible. Her transformation, once initiated, is irreversible. The novel thus closes not on restoration but on transformation—an affirmation of life through change, through the continuous remaking of the self across shifting territories of memory, desire, and survival.

The novel's engagement with history and its reconfiguration of Hana's past exemplify the intersection of fiction and philosophy, particularly through the Deleuzian-Guattarian lens. From a literary perspective, the narrative translates historical trauma into an intimate, affective story grounded in sisterly love and personal endurance. Conversely, the philosophical framework of deterritorialisation enables to conceptualize Hana's trajectory—her personal trauma, displacement, and eventual adaptation—as a process of reterritorialisation; a reconstruction of selfhood after its fragmentation, in which new relationalities and spaces of agency emerge beyond the original sites of suffering.

While the novel engages deeply with the political dimensions of patriarchal ostracism and the gendered violence inflicted upon the women, it does not fully explore their

reintegration—or lack thereof—within their own communities. Hana does not return to reunite with Emi; instead, she relocates into an entirely new geography and existence, detached from her past and national history. In doing so, Bracht departs from a purely historical narrative toward a philosophical resolution: exile becomes not a failure of return but a site of becoming. Although the collective political aftermath of the comfort women's experiences remains largely unaddressed, the narrative concludes with a relatively affirmative closure—one that gestures toward reconciliation and tentative peace. This resolution is not the restoration of what was lost but the creation of new forms of life and connection. Through the formation of new relationalities, Hana negotiates her trauma and reconstitutes her subjectivity in a space beyond the coordinates of prior violence, embodying what Deleuze might call a reterritorialisation in difference: an affirmation of survival through transformation.

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