

*Searching for Love Impossible*



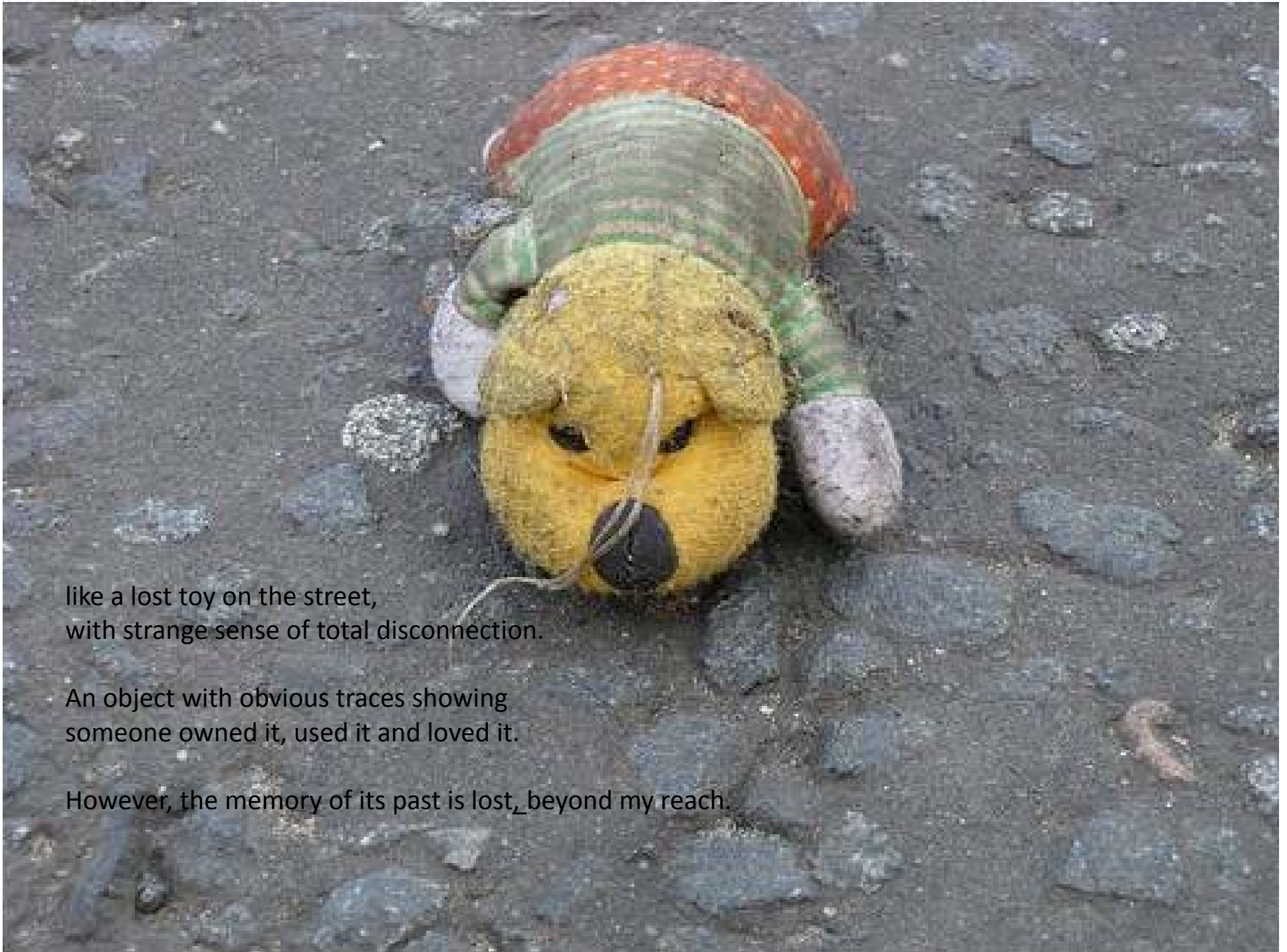
Semi Ryu

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- As a woman raised in a way of traditional Korean culture, I always fear being punished for expressing my love and emotions.
- My love should not be exposed. It must be kept secret all the time.
- Though barred from the actual experience, I am rewarded with imagination, sometimes more vivid than the real, which disappears suddenly when actualized.
- Until then, I could be a great storyteller of my own love story playing endlessly in infinite imaginary space — an experience so vivid it seems tactile, working with the entire body, constructing alternate states of senses, nerves and physicality.

- It is new reality, more real than real, the rainbow which cannot be perceived except from a distance.
- The distance challenges me to look over,  
standing on my toes,  
lengthening my neck,  
and narrowing my eyes, very carefully and longingly,  
for my eternal process of loving.

- Oddly my experience of love is not driven by memory or time spent with the beloved.
- It is more about a transient encounter.



like a lost toy on the street,  
with strange sense of total disconnection.

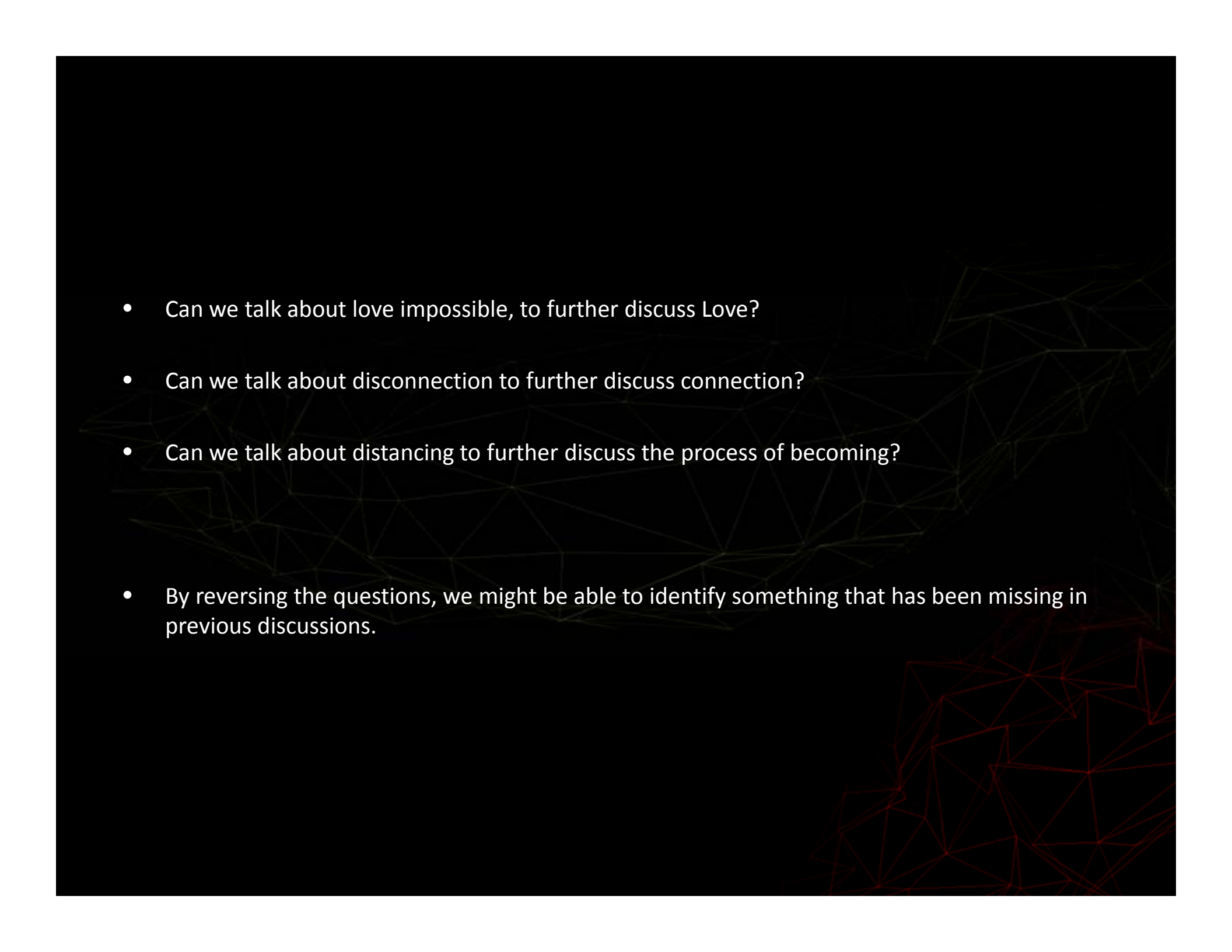
An object with obvious traces showing  
someone owned it, used it and loved it.

However, the memory of its past is lost, beyond my reach.

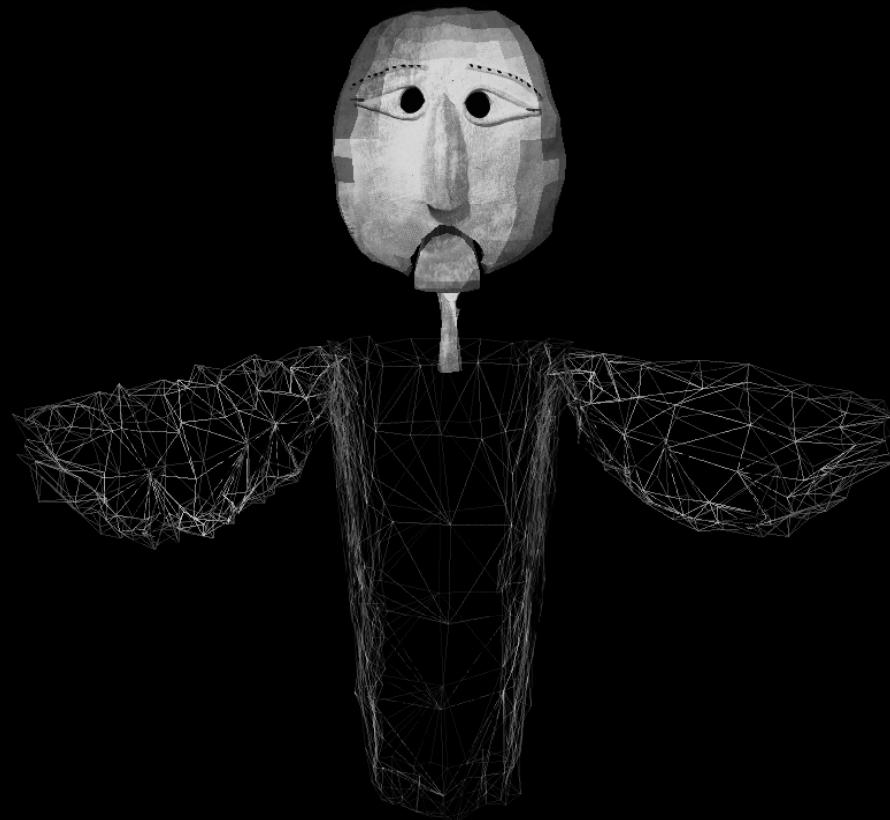
- This sense of disconnection appears even more powerful with objects seen from the window of moving train.
- Distant objects like a red brick warehouse or a strangely gnarled black tree pass by and gradually slip further away.
- Sensing the unbridgeable distance, I feel an urge to run out of the train to touch, smell and even devour them.



- These unattainable things become, under my gaze, the ritual objects for my process of love impossible.
- My gaze and interest creates and re-confirms the distance, coordinating the Z axis and marking the depth between subject and object.
- The act of distancing always happens on Z axis, creating the genuine moment when the beloved and I solemnly face each other.
- Everything is parting on Z, starting from my gaze, my interest, and my love, turning to the next story of love impossible.
- In Korean culture it is common to find many such sad stories, music, and songs dealing with love impossible. These stories conform to a structure of the Korean cultural psyche called 한 Han (恨). *Han* provides a useful model to explain this paradoxical aspect of human experience.

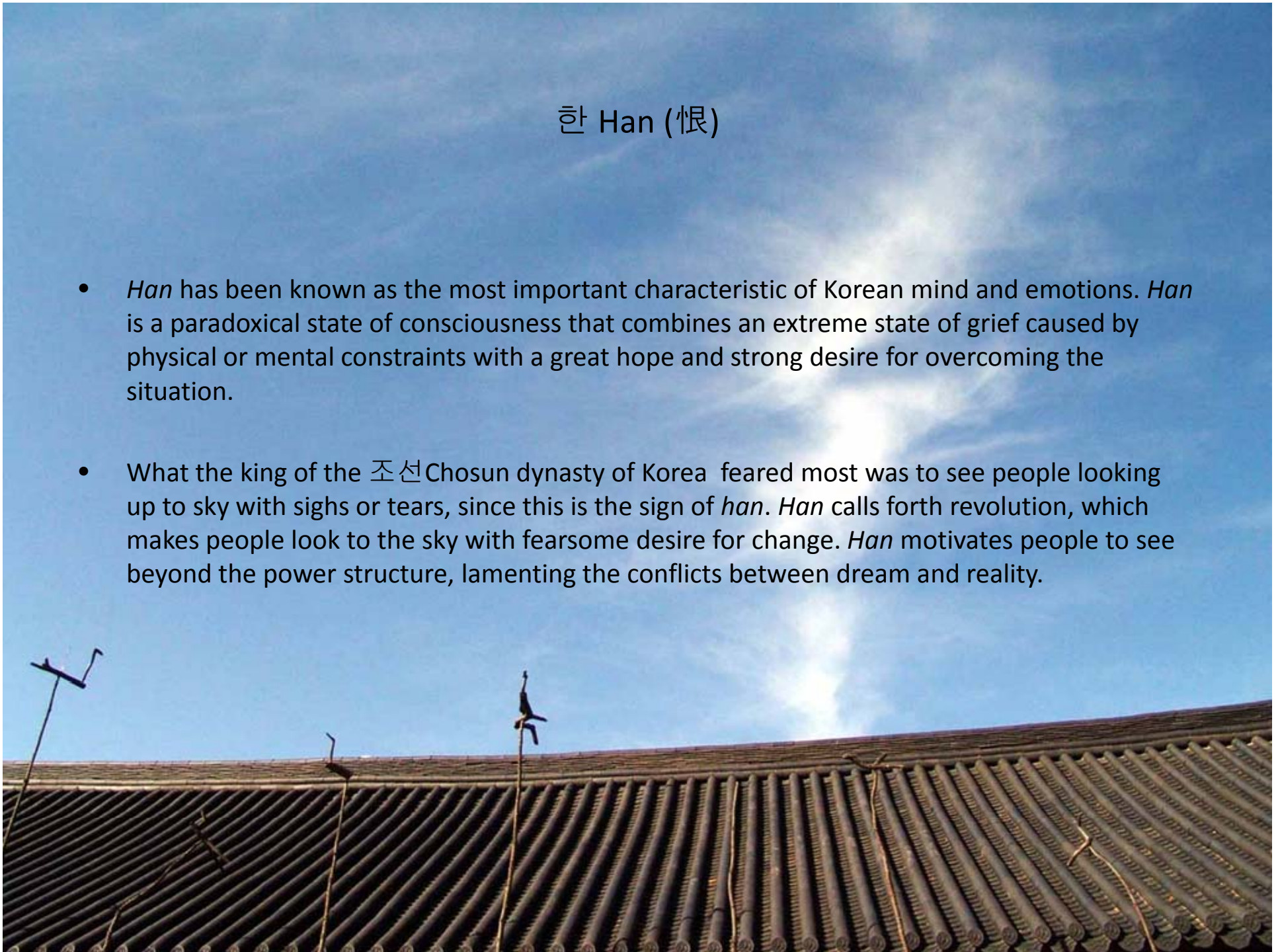
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- Can we talk about love impossible, to further discuss Love?
  - Can we talk about disconnection to further discuss connection?
  - Can we talk about distancing to further discuss the process of becoming?
  
  - By reversing the questions, we might be able to identify something that has been missing in previous discussions.

My Virtual Puppet in the context of distance, disconnection, love impossible..



## 한 Han (恨)

- *Han* has been known as the most important characteristic of Korean mind and emotions. *Han* is a paradoxical state of consciousness that combines an extreme state of grief caused by physical or mental constraints with a great hope and strong desire for overcoming the situation.
- What the king of the 조선 Chosun dynasty of Korea feared most was to see people looking up to sky with sighs or tears, since this is the sign of *han*. *Han* calls forth revolution, which makes people look to the sky with fearsome desire for change. *Han* motivates people to see beyond the power structure, lamenting the conflicts between dream and reality.



# The form of Ritual

## **Agent**

Tragedy of Separation (polar opposites): sky/earth, spiritual/mundane, object/life, puppet/puppeteer...

## **Channels of Mediators**

Shaman object, Shaman, another shaman, group of shamans...

## **Process**

Interaction grows to its highest level and becomes Interpenetration.

In this state, polar opposites exchange their position through membrane and create new separation starting for a new ritual

## **Byproduct**

This ritual is for process itself, not for the product. The unexpected Hybrid is created as byproduct.

## **Driving force (*han*)**

Extreme emotional state of grief caused by physical or mental constraints, with strong wishes to overcome the situation

- In the moment of recognizing this irremediable distance, we confirm our own tragedy in the mode of *han*, with extreme grief but with strong will to overcome.
- Interestingly, ritual returns us back to another tragedy: another separation, another set of polar opposites.
- The ritual does not resolve any problem. The ritual does not erase the distance. However, the distance will prompt the next iteration of the ritual. The heart of the ritual is process, not product.

## 한 Han (恨)

- *Han* is never resolved, but is rather released by ritual, whereas another emotional state observed in Eastern Asian culture, 원 *won* (怨,) is one that must be resolved.
- *Won* tries to overcome a distressing situation by eliminating the source of the problem. Therefore, *won* often culminates in revenge, animosity, and resentment; or, alternatively, gratitude for a blessing or kindness. *Won* commonly drives East Asian heroic literature. Quite distinct from *won*, *han* is mind of “non-objective.”
- It is reversed attitude to project all source of reason towards oneself, attending to one’s own participation of the situation. It creates extreme state of grief, weakness, self-accusation, and a sense of futility.
- It may sound very passive, and it is true *han* has been primarily discussed negatively in Korea, related with the tragic Korean history of never-ending invasions from neighborhood countries. But *han* reflects a quantum mind that positions itself as part of a problematic interconnected system.

## Difference between Han and Won

Han (恨): never resolved, but is rather released by ritual, without eliminating actual sources of reasons: Paradoxical, infinite process of eliminating

Won (怨, 冤): eliminating the source of the problem. often culminates in revenge, animosity, and resentment. East Asian heroic literature: linear process

## Passive Activeness

- 김지하 Ji-ha Kim highlights the essential quality of *han* as “Passive Activeness” in his book “Hwang-To,” where he uses a lotus flower as a metaphor for endless flow of love.
- He wrote:
- “The lotus flower is born in morasses of mud. It has hidden meaning of life, transparent, endless wandering, disappointment, frustration, and discouragement. It is always abandoned but always loves with endless passion toward the world, toward human, toward all things...”
- It is endless flow of love and process, through constant pain, grief and difficulties arisen from paradox. It is an infinite process of loving.

- Han cannot be shaped without a strong desire to overcome the situation.
- Han gives courage to deal with pain, even magnifying it for the ritual.
- *han* is necessary condition to jump up to the extreme state of playfulness called “신명 *Shin-Myung*.” Han is a sense of grief but also a sense of joy. It is a cry but also a laugh. It is a soft but very powerful energy of creation.

The form of ritual could be compared with Korean crown's tightrope walking, which looks very risky, unstable and unbalanced, continuously swinging left and right.

The more unstable he appears, the greater his stillness will appear. The longer the cosmic tree, the deeper *han*. The deeper *han*, the more powerful the ritual.



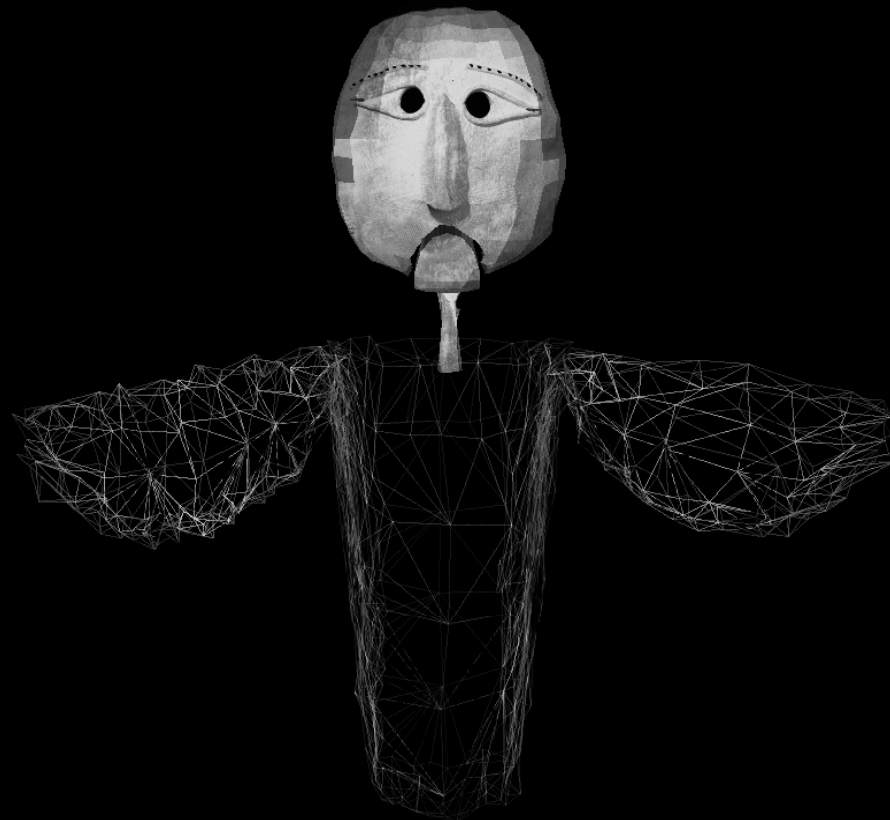
## Han in Contemporary Society

- Ritual demonstrates the infinite process of transformation that occurs in diverse layers of human experience, from micro to macro scales, from human consciousness to the sacred ceremony. As a driving force of the ritual, *han* could transcend cultural boundaries.
- In contemporary society, *han* can be situated in a microscopic view of human oppression, caused by invisible powers of social structures.
- Our bodies and desire, socially constructed and pre-defined, attain some degree of *han* only if we perceive repression.

- The greatest sadness would be to lose the sensation of distance, disconnection and love impossible, to lose the sense of ourselves as human beings struggling with power structures, to lose the ability to experience powerlessness, to really cry; to lose the ability to feel *han*.

- Han informs the human dilemma of living in the system of control, confronting the separation and distance of everyday life.
- Sometimes I ask myself, "Why are we all separated like this?" This separation is indeed sad, but, this question seems neither appropriate nor satisfying in contemporary social life.
- Maybe we are the main characters of a story of love impossible. However, without feeling the tragedy, how can we cry or laugh with the story? Without feeling the distance, how can we dream of revolution?

My Virtual Puppet in the context of distance, disconnection, love impossible..





# PARTING ON Z

Virtual Interactive Puppetry + Pansori

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**Parting on Z** is real-time virtual puppetry that responds to the puppeteer's voice, walking balance, and fan movements, integrated with the traditional Korean oral storytelling known as *Pansori*. This live performance explores the paradoxical relationship between virtual puppet and puppeteer via the distance between avatar and user – symbolic lovers facing each other, continuously exchanging dialogues of love and farewell.  
*(For more info: [www.semiryu.net](http://www.semiryu.net))*

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Wednesday, May 27 at 7PM  
Chelsea Art Museum  
556 West 22nd Street (at 11th Ave), NYC



## PARTING ON Z

Virtual Interactive Puppetry + Pansori

### PARTING ON Z: Virtual Interactive Puppetry + Pansori

Wednesday, May 27, 7 pm  
Chelsea Art Museum  
656 West 22nd Street (at 11th Ave), NYC  
212.255.0719, [www.chelseartmuseum.org](http://www.chelseartmuseum.org)

"Parting on Z" is real-time virtual interactive puppetry that responds to the puppeteer's voice, and walking balance, integrated with the traditional Korean oral storytelling known as Pansori. The story chosen for this performance is the

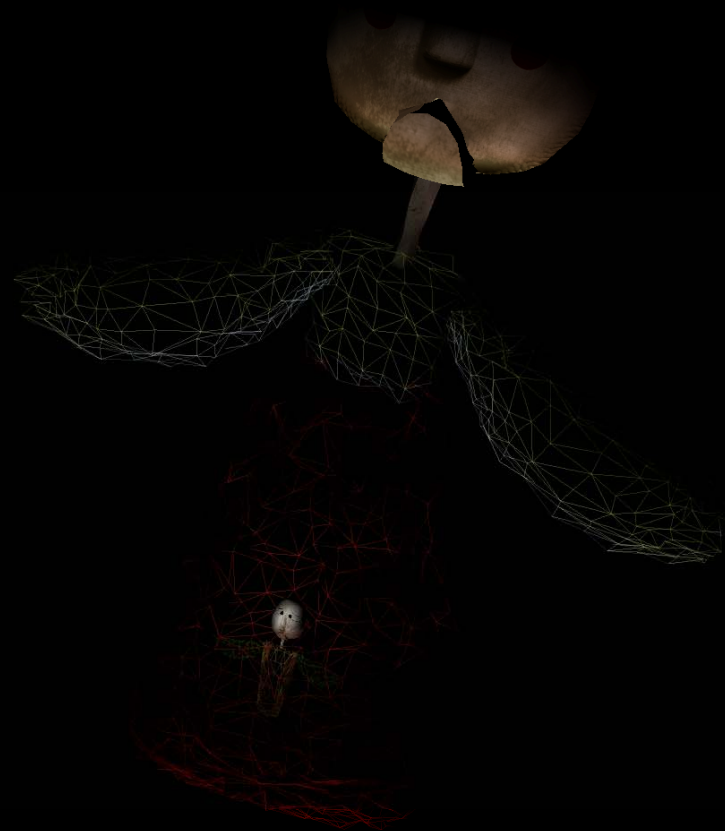
**Semi Ryu** is an assistant professor of Visual Imaging at Virginia Commonwealth University. Ryu is a media artist who specializes in experimental 3D animations and virtual puppetry, based on Korean shamanism and oral tradition of storytelling. Her works have been widely presented in exhibitions and performances in



farewell

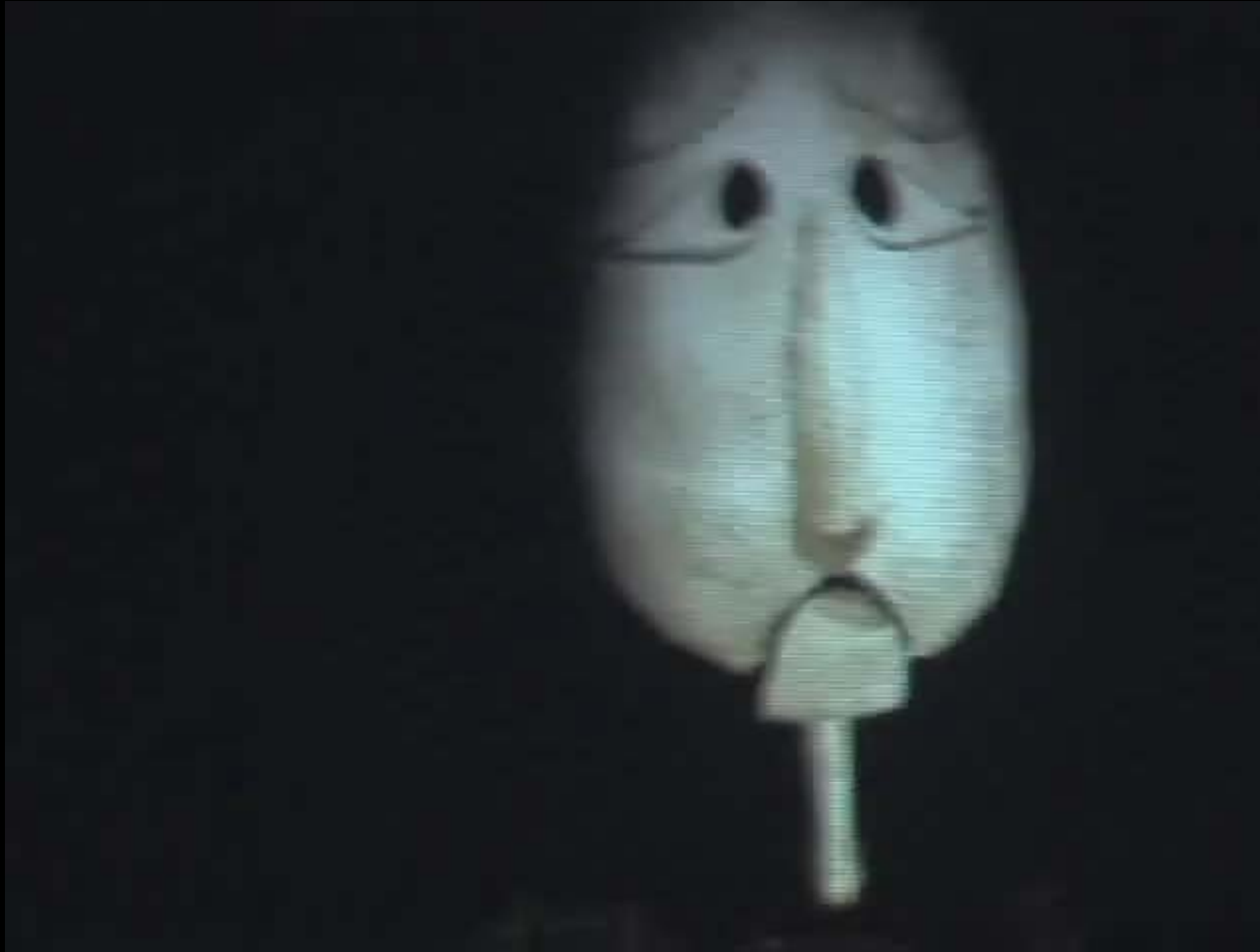






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## Video documentation(Rehearsal)



Virtual puppet (facial expression, mouth, body parts), interacting with puppeteer's voice input, using the wireless microphone

## Testing WiiFit and facial tracking







## Video documentation(Live performance)

- [PARTING ON Z: Virtual interactive puppetry + Pansori](#)
- Wednesday, May 27, 7 pm , Chelsea Art Museum ,NYC
- “Parting on Z” is real-time virtual interactive puppetry that responds to the puppeteer’s voice and walking balance, integrated with the traditional Korean oral storytelling known as *Pansori*. The story chosen for this performance is the farewell scene from *Chunhyang-Ga* (춘향가), the oldest pansori text and one of Korea’s best known stories about love, separation and reunion. This farewell scene demonstrates the extreme emotional state of constraints called *han* (한). Han is a paradoxical state of consciousness that combines the extreme state of grief caused by physical or mental constraints with a great hope and strong desire for overcoming the situation. It is a fundamental driving source of transformative rituals in Korean shamanism. “Parting on Z” explores *han* in the paradoxical relationship between virtual puppet and puppeteer via the distance between avatar and user—symbolic lovers facing each other, continuously exchanging dialogues of love and farewell.
- Tonight’s performance invites the *pansori* master, Junghee Oh, to be a puppeteer interacting with the virtual puppet in real time. The virtual puppet will face the puppeteer from a distance, speaking back her story in real time mimicry and mirroring her body in swaying motions. The audience will be physically and spiritually located between spiraling interactive dialogues of the virtual puppet and the puppeteer. For more information, please visit [www.semiryu.net](http://www.semiryu.net)

**<Scene 1: Monologue of Mong-Ryong - dialogue of puppet and puppeteer>**

The Virtual Puppet “Mong-Ryong ” speaks sadly in Korean.  
The puppeteer speaks to virtual puppet, watching him in a long distance.



<Scene 2: Monologue of Chun-Hyang - dialogue of puppet and puppeteer>

The Virtual Puppet “Chun-Hyang ” speaks in doubts and grief.



English text generation of keywords, activated by puppeteer's voice input, when no virtual puppet presented.



<Scene 3: Dialogues between lovers>

Virtual puppets “**Mong-Ryong**” and “**Chun-Hyang**”, speak each other, one by one.



<Scene 4: Mixed lovers>

Virtual puppets being mixed beyond dialogue.



<Scene 5: Syncretic lovers>

Live captured face video of the puppeteer projected on virtual puppet face.  
All puppets and puppeteer speaks together.



**<Last Scene: Walking with reflection - parting on Z>**

At the last scene, puppeteer stops singing, and starts walking with her virtual puppet, watching the puppet disappearing over the horizon of the virtual space. Her walks and breath steers the virtual puppet and space constantly moving(walk and breathe).





The following subtitle texts displays, as the distance increases between virtual puppet and puppeteer.

“Your silhouette wanes like the moon.”

“Slowly metamorphosing into a star,”

“A butterfly,”

“A firefly,”

“And disappearing beyond the horizon”

“Not even leaving a trace of your shadow.”



See the entire video documentation at:  
[www.semiryu.net](http://www.semiryu.net)