

LOCATIONS

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Cici Wu

Upon Leaving the White Dust
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Waking up in the morning, I find myself in a field of white dust. From night to dawn, between loving and being loved, two sides in a coin toss, both ends of a rope, I wandered. At least there are plural entrances to take you into the white dust, such as language, memory, communication, and consciousness.

I enter the white dust through a kind of cinematic condition, as if I'm hypnotized. Before I entered, I had imagined an empty and dark room before me. In a relaxing state, I curl my legs up on a chair, and warmly watch something. I don't want to move around, a feeling of emptiness and idleness: I dream, not by the effect of the content of the film played in the theater, rather, I start to dream unwittingly before becoming a spectator. The film opens with a young woman. An unforeseen experience during her young adulthood causes her to lose all memory, and lose at the same time her capacity for speech. Her anonymity gives the character a possibility of multiple identities: young girl at the cinema, maid crouching on the ground her back turned, merchant woman on ferry, market place, orphan, nation, a historical condition, Mother, Memory.

In the darkness, I see the look of myself leaving. I bring both of my bodies out of the white dust. A narcissistic body of being loved by you which is looking, lost in materializing the structure of the film through gazing into the mirror, and a perverse body of loving you, ready to contain and absorb not the image of the film, but precisely that which exceeds it: grain of sound, sigh of subtitles, and rays of light.

Upon Leaving the White Dust is a situation created by distance, my last temporary state of being with the unfinished film *White Dust from Mongolia* (1980) by artist Theresa Hak Kyung Cha (1951-1982). It perhaps will always stay at the "temporary state of being with", crude and open, as if the moment of leaving a movie theater could actually be pulled very very long.

The place where the narrative takes place is in China, where many Koreans received asylum during the Japanese occupation of Korea from 1909 to 1945.

The main character in the story is a young woman, Korean by birth and living in China.

Having been forced to leave her native country as an immigrant to China, where again the Japanese had, by their law, enforced their language, she is doubly displaced. She is not permitted to speak her language to begin with, then finally, she ceases to speak at all...

All the elements are historical to lessen the physical geographical distance as well as the psychological distance of the Asian people from other ethnic cultures. The causes for the Korean War, and the reasons for the division of Korea into North and South, and the perpetuating conditions of Cold War will contribute to the understanding of Korea and Asia as whole cultures, not merely state their economic and political status as nations.

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MEMORY as a collective source, as almost having physical and organic dimensions, where space and time superimpose within it. It represents a body of time, units in time inside the time mass that is eternal and immeasurable, within which our existence is marked like a wound.¹

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¹ Excerpt from the Statement of Plans of White Dust from Mongolia, typewritten texts on paper, by Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, 1980. White Dust from Mongolia contains a film and a historical novel, neither were completed. Berkeley Art Museum/Pacific Film Archive.