

***A Sentimentalist Approach to the Comfort Women Issue:
Reading a Documentary “The Big Picture” through the Notion of Sympathy***

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Abstract

This paper analyzes a recently released documentary on the comfort women issue, “The Big Picture”, through two notions of sympathy: diachronic sympathy and synchronic sympathy. Diachronic sympathy is to infer the counterpart’s passion in relation to the sympathized’s diachronic being. It is collective but personal and reflective but contingent. In contrast, synchronic sympathy is to imagine the circumstance of the counterpart. It is a partially reactive sentiment to an imagined circumstantial vulnerability. With this distinction, I contend that both Koreans and the Japanese in the documentary might reconsider their habituated nationalistic orientations towards the comfort women issue and perceive circumstantial vulnerability comfort women faced as a shared threat through the Lacanian *Real* at the register of diachronic sympathy and the Derridean *Différance* at the register of synchronic sympathy.

Key words: diachronic sympathy, synchronic sympathy, circumstantial vulnerability, comfort women, the Big Picture

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Introduction

This paper analyzes the comfort women issue within the context of CEDAW (the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women). CEDAW is a human rights convention which requires its members to alter their institutional frameworks to collectively reconfigure the gendered social structure; the gendered social structure itself is not a problem but its configuration. Korea and Japan have ratified this treaty, but the lack of collaborative effort between them to collectively reconfigure the gendered social structure belies the purpose of CEDAW.

In this context, the resolution of the comfort women issue is a conundrum because there is no single historical narrative or universal moral standard through which one can demand such structural change from Japan. In the same way, there is no universal rationale through which one can persuade Koreans to renounce their insistence.

Then, is there any alternative? This paper claims that sympathy could help both Koreans and the Japanese to perceive circumstantial vulnerability comfort women faced as a mutual threat, and thus they may share collective interests to resolve it. However, sympathy does not *unify* different “we”s, but *creates* different configurations of “we”s. In other words, both Koreans and the Japanese might reconsider their habituated demarcation between “we” and “others” through sympathy.¹ To substantiate this argument, this paper introduces a distinction between diachronic sympathy and synchronic sympathy. With this distinction, it analyzes “The Big Picture”, a recently released documentary on the comfort women issue to portray how both Koreans and the Japanese may perceive the contextual experience of comfort women as a mutual threat at the register of diachronic sympathy through Lacan’s *real* and at the register of synchronic sympathy through Derrida’s *différance*.

(1) Two Dimensions of Sympathy: Diachronic and Synchronic sympathy.

In Cunningham’s reading of Hume, sympathy consists of two dimensions: diachronic and synchronic sympathy. First of all, diachronic sympathy is to infer one’s passions in relation to one’s diachronic self (Cunningham, 2004, p. 242). In other words, you infer the counterpart’s passion at the moment in relation to her life through putting yourself into the position of the counterpart. Furthermore, diachronic sympathy often involves a shift of the initial feeling. In other words, you shift your initial feeling towards the counterpart you sympathize with according to the further information you obtain (Baier, 1991, p. 180).

Then, how does diachronic sympathy work? First, you experience the impression of passion. Your body reacts to an external stimulus, the suffering of a person, in accordance with your habituation to the causal connection between that stimulus and

1 According to Blanchot, we often perceive “others” as a collective entity, which exists external to “us”. Thus, we wrongly assume that there must be an infinite distance between “we” and “others”. However, it is neither “we” nor “others” who creates the relationship between the two. Rather, it is the relationship between the two, which creates “we” and “others”. In Blanchot’s terminology, the relationship is what mysteriously gives voice to “we” and “others”.

your experience. In other words, your bodily reaction to the stimulus reflects your memory of repetitive causal experiences to that stimulus. For instance, assume that you are traveling in Sudan. You find a child crying and sympathize with the child without knowing anything about the child or the situation. You involuntarily feel sad about the child because you are habituated to react in that way. To elaborate further, you immediately feel sad about the child because your body is habituated through the numerous repetitive experiences of a similar situation where you feel sad when you see a child crying. Thus, this process is unilateral in a sense that this bodily reaction is subjective, because this reaction does not involve your reflection on your sympathy.

Yet, this is not the whole picture. Diachronic sympathy includes not only the impression of passion but also the impression of reflection. In other words, you reflect on your initial sympathy. This process roughly occurs in the following steps. First, you reflect on the possible causal connection between the passion you have noticed and a possible cause of the passion in the counterpart. Second, you compare that passion with your memory of the past experience and construct an alternative causal relation between the passion and the cause of the passion. Third, you alter the initial passion about the passion and sympathize with the counterpart's situation with the altered passion. Finally, you repeat this cycle of the impression of passion and the impression of reflection. To conceptualize this process better, it might be helpful to consider the child example again. As mentioned above, crying is often associated with sadness. Accordingly, when you see a child crying, you sympathize with the child and experience the imagined sadness. Yet, if you realize that the child was crying out of relief, you sympathize with the child differently. You alter your initial impression of passion through the reflection, and sympathize with the child's relief, not her sadness. Consequently, the impression of passion and the impression of reflection unite feeling and thought. In this respect, as Deleuze contends through reading Hume, morality is an *extension* of sympathy (Deleuze, 1893, p. 43).

Synchronic sympathy is to imagine a situation the counterpart might have been in than the very passion she might have felt in that situation. In this sense, synchronic sympathy is spatially extensive but temporally limited. It is not to sympathize with the counterpart's diachronic self, but with the contextual experience of the counterpart (Cunningham, 2004, p. 243). Thus, a kind of connection built between the sympathizer and the counterpart is a shared situational setting similarly imagined by each. Obviously, one may hope to avoid such situational threat for various reasons. It can be out of disgust or a desire to protect one's beloved ones from such danger. Yet, one may still hope to avoid such threat. In this manner, synchronic sympathy is spatial not temporal, and this feature of synchronic sympathy is both its weakness and strength. On the one hand, synchronic sympathy is mechanical and less varying. Thus, it has weaker narrative power than diachronic sympathy. On the other hand, because it is habitual, it is more practical for the purpose of sharing a collective threat. Unlike diachronic sympathy, synchronic sympathy might be more easily induced.

In this respect, synchronic sympathy may provoke one's habituated sense of self-preservation and other habituated sentiments such as a desire to protect one's beloved ones from going through the imagined suffering they might face in the future. One may hope to avoid an imagined circumstantial vulnerability not only for oneself but also for those one cares for. Thus, synchronic sympathy may not motivate individuals to care for a stranger, but it can motivate individuals of different identities to share a

similar sentiment towards a certain social phenomenon. This shared sentimentality may subsequently alter their perceptions, beliefs, and interests on a social phenomenon. Through synchronic sympathy, individuals indirectly imagine a form of threat they might be subject to and become more vigilant on the issues regarding that form of threat.

(2) The Analysis of the Documentary, “The Big Picture”

In 2007, a group of Japanese publishers requested that Koreans and Chinese publishers join a collective project to publish illustrated books promoting the theme of peace for children in Japan, China, and Korea (Kwon, 2013). Upon this request, the Korean publisher asked Yoon-deok Kwon, a Korean novelist, to draw an illustrated book for children. After considering various options, she decides to draw a picture book about the life of a comfort woman named Shim Dal-yeon. Accordingly, the film, “The Big Picture”, portrays four years of how the picture book “Kkothalmeoni” (Flower Grandma) came into being; the title was inspired by Shim’s hobby of pressing flowers.²

(2-1) Diachronic Sympathy and Lacan’s Real

The documentary starts with Kwon initially focusing on antagonizing the Japanese army and the soldiers. As a victim of sexual violence herself, she initially thinks that she is the best person to speak through the voice of Shim. In the process of drawing the picture book, she occasionally revisits her past memories and feels strong anger towards the perpetrator. She portrays Shim’s experience from her own perspective and attempts to depict how the structured sexual violence under the imperial Japanese army victimized Shim. Yet, through her constant interactions with Shim, the protagonist of the book, Kwon realizes that Shim does not want the book to portray her as a soul full of resentment. Kwon feels that Shim desire “peace” and hopes to be portrayed “*beautifully*” in the book; whenever she sees a flower, she says, “I wish everyone live happily just like how people become happy when they see the flowers.”³

In fact, Shim’s desire for “peace” is much more complex than it may seem. On the one hand, her sense of detachment toward her own suffering reveals how her unconsciousness functions in relation to her trauma. In Lacanian terminology, the real is a register of the unconsciousness where any attempt of articulation either through language or other mediums fails; individuals cannot access their own real. Due to this peculiar feature of the real, it is often associated with trauma. In Shim’s case, she cannot remember clearly what happened to her, for she cannot access her own “trauma”. She can neither coherently remember the “suffering” nor the “passions at the moment of suffering.” Ironically, it is due to this inaccessibility through which she can shift her perspective on the issue of comfort women and desire peace. In other

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□ Please refer to the picture 1 in the appendix.

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□ Please refer to the picture 2 in the appendix.

words, Shim can shift her perspective, for her painful memories are inaccessible.⁴ Thus, the inaccessibility to her own passions engenders her desire for peace. On the other hand, her desire for peace demonstrates a possibility of a shift in one's engagement with a perceived target of resentment. In other words, there is no causal relationship between harassment and resentment; the relationship between the two is always in flux. The connection between one's pain and one's anger towards the target is contingent. Shim's aspiration for peace clearly manifests how the lack creates a different attitude towards a certain issue even if that issue has been particularly painful to oneself.

Shim's attitude puzzles Kwon, for she cannot understand why Shim is not resentful. This evinces that Kwon synchronically sympathizes with Shim but fails to diachronically sympathize with her. Kwon shares the context of Shim's suffering but fails to share the passion of Shim, the desire for peace. However, she soon realizes that her antagonistic portrayal of the Japanese army and the soldiers reflect her "own" resentment towards them not Shim's: the contingent nature of the relationship between resentment and pain. She acknowledges that her own interpretation of Shim's experience is clearly subjective. Consequently, she comes to reflect on her initial sympathetic connection with Shim. Kwon reflects on how she has been habituated to perceive the comfort women case as such. She understands that her vision was the nationalistic gaze which antagonizes the signifier, "the Japanese state." She realizes the illusive nature of this gaze that the gaze of Shim, which Kwon thought she was sharing, does not exist. She recognizes that this gaze has framed her to see only what she wanted to see: the brutality of the Japanese army.

With the awareness that the picture book might merely reflect her own anger towards the Japanese army and the soldiers, Kwon decides to test an early version of the picture book at a Korean elementary school. Korean students feel repulsed by the picture book because of the cruelty portrayed in it and fail to identify themselves with the protagonist. A kind of reaction Kwon initially expected to take place between the protagonist and the students certainly fails to occur because the students fail to identify themselves with the protagonist. Shim's resentment towards sexual violence portrayed in the book is not how a typical 13-year-old girl would feel. A 13-year-old Shim would rather be traumatized, disoriented, and frightened. In a way, the protagonist in the book represents Kwon herself, an angry middle-aged woman victimized by sexual violence. Even more than the single author, this protagonist is the product of a culture of resentment and bitterness; beliefs of the society that fashioned her are imposed upon her, beliefs she could not believe and which masquerade as her own are made possible only by failing to diachronically sympathize with Shim.

After the test preview, Kwon attempts to revise the picture book and reconsiders the focus of the book. She says,

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[□]The extension between the Lacanian real and sympathy is inspired by how Deleuze approaches the notion of desire in *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. In this paper, while reading the documentary through the notion of the real, I appropriate it as a possibility of diachronic sympathy.

“My biggest worry was to portray Shim without antagonizing Japan. I do not want the reader to think that Japan is wholly responsible for the atrocity and its ramification Shim still suffers from. The suffering of Shim has to do with our attitude towards comfort women. We naively believe that we are totally free from accusation. In a way, even the Japanese soldiers were the victims of the war.”(Kwon, 2013)

Through numerous revisions, the book comes to better resemble how Shim might feel about her experience diachronically; how she would consider her suffering retrospectively within the framework of her life. Kwon shifts her initial attitude and experiences a moment of diachronic sympathy with Shim. She realizes that there is no single oppressor in the comfort women case. Even the Japanese soldiers were also war victims in a sense because some of them were forced to fight in the war for various reasons. Kwon comes to perceive the “Big Picture” that Shim was one of the victims of the maladjusted gender structure. Her illusive nationalist gaze, which had hindered her from perceiving the “Big picture”, finally shifts. This transition evinces the possibility of diachronic sympathy. Just like the sympathizer who initially sympathizes with the child wrongly and shifts, Kwon alters her sympathy. It is this moment through which Kwon shares both Shim’s circumstantial suffering (synchronic sympathy) and Shim’s desire for peace (diachronic sympathy).

In this respect, diachronic sympathy is reflective and flexible. Initially, Kwon only synchronically sympathizes with Shim, assuming that Shim must be vengeful. However, through reflection, Kwon realizes that Shim desires peace rather than revenge or compensation.

The case of the author and real life character shows one side of diachronic sympathy – between people of the same cultural sphere. Yet, what about the cross-cultural relationship between the sympathizer and the sympathized? Is diachronic sympathy possible between Japanese people in the documentary and Shim?

Right before the publication of “Kkothalmeoni”, Hamada Geiko visits Shim. When they are taking a picture together, she suddenly says “*Sorry*” again and again and bursts into tears (Kwon, 2013). Watching Hamada sobbing, Kwon subsequently bursts into tears (Kwon, 2013). Kwon pats Hamada’s back and sobs along with Hamada. Shim holds Hamada’s hand tightly and says, “*You are like my daughter, if I had a daughter she would cry like you*” (Kwon, 2013). Here, Hamada *feels* Shim’s pain, and thus Shim feels *as if* Hamada were her daughter. In other words, they create a certain form of *resemblance*. However, their resemblance is neither a formalized rational agreement regarding a certain issue nor a realization of shared intrinsic similarities. Rather, the resemblance is a moment of connection between the two *confused* diachronic beings. Here, both Hamada and Shim are confused of who they are. On the one hand, Hamada is being detached from her Japanese identity and cries *like* Shim’s daughter. On the other hand, Shim, a victim of “the Japanese”, hugs and pats Hamada *as if* she were her daughter. Ironically, they come to resemble each other because they are confused of who they “are”: Shim as a victim and Hamada as an aggressor.

Yet, it is important to notice that this moment of diachronic sympathy is beyond Hamada’s conscious control. Just like Kwon’s sense of affinity with Shim is, Hamada’s sense of guilt is not a conscious deductive understanding of Shim. She did

not intend to cry at that moment nor had any control over her feeling. Rather, she reaches the moment where she diachronically sympathizes with Shim partially unconsciously.⁵ In this respect, the moment of diachronic sympathy is specific to each individual and one cannot artificially create such moment. Thus, it is impossible for individuals to control whether or not to diachronically sympathize with a person even if they desire to do so.

If this is true, creating an artificial moment where diachronic sympathy takes place between the sympathizer and the sympathized is highly implausible. Rather, the moment of diachronic sympathy seems to be a moment of rupture in the Lacanian sense.

For Lacan, a rupture happens when one brushes against the real (Ellie, 1996, p. 197). As briefly touched upon, the real is a register of unconsciousness which cannot be translated into the symbolic. While the imaginary functions as to create pseudo-coherence in the symbolic, i.e., the chain of free-floating signifiers connected to each other which can be displaced (Metonymy) and subsequently condensed (Metaphor), the real embodies what is incoherent and undifferentiated; for the later Lacan, there is neither a signified nor a master-signifier (Ellie, 1996, p. 197). In other words, the real is a register of unconsciousness where any attempt of articulation either through language or other mediums fails.

Due to this inaccessibility, the real is often associated with the traumatic experience. For instance, a victim of rape can neither coherently remember the situation nor clearly articulate the experience. She cannot portray it in a manner which can be signified.

Upon the contact with the real, the subtle and delicate pseudo-coherence between signifiers collapse; the presumed coherence, i.e., the imaginary, gets threatened by the real.⁶ This moment of a rupture is a point where the imaginary order reveals its artificial nature. In other words, the things which made a clear sense before becomes a complete non-sense.

When a signifier brushes against the real, the unconscious acts to confine the concatenations of signifiers and re-orders the relationship between free-floating signifiers. To elaborate further, the unconscious attempts to create a meaning out of the arbitrarily disposed signifiers to sustain the homeostasis of mental life. For example, when a contingent and arbitrary signifier, e.g., a sentence like “You are a complete failure!”, brushes against the real at a certain moment, the unconscious re-orders the relationship among signifiers to make sense of the signifier in relation to the nexus of signifiers. In other words, the signifier itself does not have any content,

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□ Here, my intent is neither to claim that there is a clear binary distinction between consciousness and unconsciousness nor to argue that diachronic sympathy is completely unconscious. Rather, it is to emphasize the contingent nature of diachronic sympathy.

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□ To be clear, it is not that there is some traumatic “thing” that threatens coherence. Rather, it is the very threat to coherence that makes an experience traumatic.

but its relation to other signifiers functions as yet another meaning. Thus, the real resists the symbolic and re-orders the symbolic.

If read through this Lacanian schema, Hamada's diachronic sympathy does not only come from her conscious awareness and visualization of Shim's suffering. In addition to her own interest in Shim's suffering, she comes to diachronically sympathize with Shim's suffering when a signifier brushes against her real. In the documentary, Hamada starts to cry when she holds Shim's hand to take a picture together. In this case, a signifier, which brushes against the real, is the act of Hamada holding Shim's hand. With that touch, Hamada suddenly bursts into tears. Her sense of coherence in herself, what Lacan calls the imaginary, breaks down upon the moment of brushing against the real and her unconscious re-orders the relationship among signifiers to make sense of the signifier in relation to the nexus of signifiers. The moment of diachronic sympathy completely disrupts her sense of how to feel, think, and behave as a "Japanese" novelist. Hamada's sobbing symbolizes the breakdown and reconstitution of her sense of coherence constituted by the relation among the signifiers.

Upon the moment of diachronic sympathy, her sense of coherence as a Japanese woman dismantles itself. Hamada's pseudo-coherence through which she has oriented her relationship with Shim so far reveals its illusive nature. It is only through this disruptive reorientation of how to "be" a Japanese woman in relation to Shim does Hamada diachronically connect herself to Shim. Thus, the moment of diachronic sympathy is both a moment of disorientation and a moment of connection. On the one hand, Hamada experiences the disorientation of herself. She is neither clear why she cries nor capable of expressing her passion linguistically. In other words, the moment of diachronic sympathy perplexes her. On the other hand, through the disorientation, Hamada departs from her previous understanding of Shim as a stranger to a mother through the connection to Shim's diachronic self.

Yet, it is important to note that there is no direct causal relationship between the touch and Hamada's sobbing. The touch does not cause diachronic sympathy but only creates a context through which Hamada diachronically sympathizes with Shim's suffering. In other words, she could not control her diachronic sympathy.⁷ This would be similar for an audience who watches a documentary on comfort women or a reader of the novel *A Gesture Life* by Chang-rae Lee, which deals with the issue of comfort women. The moment of rupture is not only contingent but also unique to each individual. There is no way to fully control how to trigger such feeling due to the particularities each individual embodies; it is impossible to anticipate which signifier would cause the brush against the real, for there is no master signifier which always triggers the brush against the real.

⁷For Lacan, there is no objective standpoint through which one can analyze the moment of rupture. In the case of the film analysis, if the moment of rupture takes place, it is between the reader and the film, not between the characters. Yet, for the specific purpose of the paper, I assumed the standpoint of a spectator and portrayed the interaction between Hamada and Shim Dal-yeon as a moment of rupture from the perspective of "I."

This conclusion is very important. If a moment of diachronic sympathy is contingent, Koreans and the Japanese may fail to perceive the circumstantial vulnerability of comfort women as a mutual threat through diachronic sympathy.

(2-2) Synchronic Sympathy and Derrida's *Différance*

Then, what about the register at synchronic sympathy? When the Japanese publisher Doshinsha and Kwon take a test preview on “Kkothalmeoni” to Japanese children, one of the elementary students says, “*It was wrong to forcefully bring young female children to Japan. If it were me, it would have been so painful*” (Kwon, 2013). Another student in the group comments in a similar manner. She says, “*I am shocked. I wish this kind of gender violence would not take place ever again*” (Kwon, 2013). After listening to the story of “Kkothalmeoni”, the female elementary students neither suffer from severe exhaustion like Kwon nor bursts into tears like Hamada. Rather, they quite plainly state that they would not want such pain if they were in the same situation of Shim. Here, the elementary school students do not merely imagine Shim’s bodily pain. Rather, they synchronically sympathize more broadly with the circumstantial vulnerability Shim faced. The social stereotypes imposed on Shim when she came back to Korea from Japan are some of the circumstantial vulnerability the elementary students synchronically sympathize with. This synchronic sympathy is possible because the protagonist is not a 71-year-old woman but a 13-year-old girl. The effectiveness of the picture book is its portrayal of the circumstantial vulnerability of a 13-year-old girl whom elementary school students can imagine and identify with. The students synchronically sympathize with the protagonist as they imagine themselves in a similar situation. Without much reflection on the context, they express a desire to protect themselves from an imagined threat. Accordingly, a kind of solidarity which arises between Shim and the students is not a shared common truth. Instead, it is a shared vulnerability to a certain situation. As Rorty writes, “it is sharing a common selfish hope, the hope that one’s world – the little things around which one has woven into one’s final vocabulary – will not be destroyed” (Rorty, 1989, p. 92). This moment is neither a solemn moment of guilt nor a moment of a sudden diachronic sympathy.⁸ Instead, it is a mere hope to avoid and prevent an imagined suffering.

Furthermore, it is crucial to notice that the imagined threat, i.e., the circumstantial vulnerability of Shim portrayed in the picture book, is always *absent*. In other words, the students consider the imagined threat as a danger yet to come. In Derrida’s terminology, it is both differed and differentiated. He writes,

“The verb “to differ” seems to differ from itself. On the one hand, it indicates difference as distinction, inequality, or discernibility; on the other, it expresses the interposition of delay, interval of a spacing and temporalizing that puts off until “later” what is presently denied, the possible that is presently impossible” (Derrida, 1973, p. 130).

⁸ The children were given information only about the content of the book, not the detailed information on the debate between Koreans and the Japanese.

On the one hand, the threat and the non-threat *differentiate* each other to sustain their very existence. The threat is the circumstantial vulnerability portrayed in the picture book while the non-threat is a hope for an ideal future without the threat. This oppositional relationship between the threat and the non-threat is interesting, for they are both fictional. In other words, for the students, the threat can never be “experienced” because it is neither exactly Shim’s nor other comfort women’s. Rather, it is a fictional setting portrayed by Kwon’s reading of Shim’s diachronic self. In this respect, the threat functions as an empty signifier which induces a certain sentimental reaction from the audience without any signified. In the same manner, the non-threat is an empty signifier too because the non-threat exists only in relation to the threat. Thus, neither the threat nor the non-threat is “real”, because both are imaginaries. To rephrase, both the threat and the non-threat are illusions which do not exist, but the very oppositional relationship sustains their existence. On the other hand, the threat acts as an imaginary which evokes a sense of vulnerability because of its possibility in the future. The threat does not strike the students as a picture of the presence, but a picture of the future. What the students are afraid of is the very possibility of such threat taking place in the future because it may destroy what is considered to be stable in the present: the threat is constantly *differed*. In this line of reasoning, the threat functions as an arbitrary danger in the future. It is always absent in the present but potentially present in the future. For the reason that the threat is a *différance*, it can constantly induce the sense of vulnerability. The Japanese students feel motivated to prevent the threat because the threat is absence both spatially (*differentiated*) and temporally (*differed*). The very fact that they cannot “experience” the threat induces them to fear it.⁹ Therefore, the Japanese students synchronically sympathize with Shim’s suffering, perceiving it as a *différance*.

Conclusion

Within the context of the comfort women issue, I have suggested sympathy as a medium thorough which both Koreans and the Japanese may perceive the comfort women issue as a collective problem. With a particular emphasis on the documentary “The Big Picture”, I have demonstrated how sympathy may function in reality. At the register of diachronic sympathy, a moment of diachronic connection between Hamada and Shim functions a rupture where Hamada’s sense of coherence deconstructs. It is only through this disorientation that Hamada comes to “understand” Shim’s diachronic self.

At the register of synchronic sympathy on the other hand, the Japanese students perceive the imagined threat, i.e., the circumstantial vulnerability portrayed in the picture book, as a collective problem which should be prevented in the future. On the one hand, they hope to avoid the imagined threat out of the fear that it may destroy their peaceful present. On the other hand, they hope to prevent it, for they believe a

⁹ At first glance, reading a documentary through Deleuze’s reading of Hume, Lacanian notion of the real, and Derrida’s *différance* might seem too superficial. Yet, my emphasis is not that their theories become a coherent whole. Rather, I hope to create a pastiche through engaging with some of the most difficult thinkers in contemporary continental philosophy.

society without such threat is possible in the future. In this respect, the imagined threat functions in relation to the non-threat (a future without the threat), which is always differentiated and differed: Derrida's *différance*.

However, a possibility of sharing a mutual threat through sympathy is not to erase difference. Rather, through sympathy, we can constantly question the relationship between "we" and "others". Consequently, we might both break away from our habituated "weness" and create different configurations of "we". Just like how sympathy creates the current "we", it could also disrupt our habituated sentimental affiliations with whom we define as "we".

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Appendix (The pictures are from the book, Kkothalmeoni)

Picture 1



Picture 2



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