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***Pachinko* and the Code-Switching of History**

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Abstract

Based on Min Jin Lee's 2017 novel, the Apple TV+ series *Pachinko* (2022) has generated buzz from viewers and critics alike. The series has a specific relevance to the linguistic topic of code-switching, in that the drama showcases multiple instances of language alterations in variegated registers. Drawing upon Kira Hall and Chad Nilep's historical survey of the concept's evolution from the 1970s to the present, this study traces how *Pachinko*'s narrative timeline mirrors the four-stage development of code-switching: Busan of the 1910s-1930s corresponds to "speech community," 1930s-1940s Osaka to "nation-state," 1980s Tokyo/Osaka to "multicultural/interethnic," and the present century, in which the drama's audience is situated, to "hybrid/global." But the TV drama's bearings on the linguistic concept do not end there, for what is ultimately at stake in the tragic story of one Zainichi family's survival extends far beyond the problem of language. Indeed, the series compels us to expand the idea of code-switching to embrace non-linguistic and historical forms of switching codes. This reveals the aporetic condition of having to code the uncodable, a switch that haunts our lives as it did every generation before us.

Keywords

code-switching, history, home, *kairos*, *Pachinko*, sense, spectrality

History has failed us, but no matter.
—Min Jin Lee, *Pachinko*

Even amidst the recent upsurge of celebrated Korean films and television series, the Apple TV+ original *Pachinko* stands out. To begin with, although its main spoken language is Korean, *Pachinko* is not a Korean TV drama but an American production based on a 2017 American novel bearing the same title. More to the point, as the eye-catching color variation of its subtitles suggests, the series showcases an additional number of languages (Japanese and English) as well as various regional dialects (of Korean and Japanese) to more realistically depict the lives of four generations of Korean and Korean-Japanese families caught up in the tragic maelstrom of Korea's colonial and diasporic history. Indeed, the seductive power of the drama cannot be fully explained without taking into account this multiple linguistic dimension, in which individual characters negotiate their way through hardship and adversities. This essay focuses on the thematic significance of code-switching that undergirds *Pachinko* in order to show the intricate and often gut-wrenching micropolitics at work in *and* among different types of languages deployed in the series.

To the extent that code-switching is a *prima facie* linguistic concept, the first and primary aspect of *Pachinko* to examine is its discursive level. From the very first episode, which traces the girlhood of the protagonist Sunja in a small fishing village during Korea's colonial period, the series introduces a starkly dissymmetrical power relationship between the Japanese imperialists and the colonized Koreans. Language plays a major role in this state of colonial domination, as may be deduced from those colonized who are eager to adopt the master's language and lifestyle and the Japanese officials who condescend to speak the language of the colonized for sheerly administrative ends. As the story progresses, diverse forms of linguistic code-switching emerge: a mother tongue providing a sense of camaraderie among the first generation of Korean immigrants in Japan ("Episode Six"); a Zainichi's ability to speak Korean unexpectedly raising the chance to close a business deal ("Episode One"); and even at times the failure to properly switch language ensuring a certain death ("Episode Seven"). As conspicuous as these examples of code-switching are, there loom more subtle instances in the drama, where a choice between certain semi- or even extra-linguistic gestures proves equally consequential. Such instances perhaps only come into view when we extend the meaning of "code" to encompass the dimension of the non-linguistic within the linguistic, that is, that otherness inherent to language insofar as every language is ineluctably embedded in

the body.¹ This otherness of language may be called synesthetic in effect since the sensory reception of, say, the smell of a bowl of rice or the touch of waves at the Busan shoreline conjures up for a character like Sunja long-lost images of marriage and homeland, respectively. It is this material side of language that also leads to the all-important question of history in this family saga spanning over eighty years. As the opening line of Min Jin Lee's original novel—"History has failed us, but no matter" (Lee 3)—stoically declares, there exists an incommensurable gap between history and an individual's experiences, a chasm which no amount of signifiatory endeavor can assuage, and the attempt to countervail this originary gap by means of historiographical narrativization only lays bare the impossibility of adequate codification. And it is the coincidence of such sensory motifs that allows for the filmic narrative's shifting back and forth between two disparate historical periods via the editing technique of cross-cutting, thereby underscoring the ultimate connectedness of all the characters living in different times as it had been so hauntingly foreshadowed in the series' markedly ahistoricized opening title sequence.

***Pachinko* and the Historical Vicissitudes of Code-Switching**

In defining code-switching as an alternation between languages or language varieties, one can already see the term's extensive applicability ("Code-switching"). For if "code" may include as its possible objects of exchange not only standard languages but also all types of language variants like dialects, registers, and styles, then "switching" evokes such related linguistic tropes as borrowing, mixing, shifting, crossing, etc. Although the original usage of the term may be traced back to the 1950s, the general consensus holds Jan-Petter Blom and John Gumperz's 1972 study on the local dialects of northern Norway foundational for having differentiated its conceptual approach from earlier versions. Instead of postulating language as a

¹ According to Jean-Luc Nancy, what makes language and every form of linguistic signification essentially constitutive of our sense of the world is its self-externality. "There is no thing without a name, but there is no name that, by naming and through naming, does not exscribe itself 'in' the thing, or 'as' it, while remaining this *other* of the thing that displays it only from afar" (*The Birth* 175-76). Or, to use Marie-Eve Morin's expression, "Exscription names both the relation between material body and sense, and between sense and linguistic signification. Meanings, inscribed significations (categories, concepts), are always already beyond language, in contact with a material point What is inscribed—the meaning of the word 'tree' for instance—is at the same time exscribed, placed outside of language by its contact with a material instance or a technical apparatus" (131).

bounded entity (which itself harks back to the mythical conflation of language, nationality, and the state during the pre-Enlightenment era) and its speakers a group of stationary subjects, code-switching is now viewed as a product of constant negotiation based on “translocal movement of some sort, whether economic, ideological or physical” (Hall and Nilep 599). Central to this new conception is the notion that code-switching is an “identity-based phenomenon” grounded in the sense of linguistic self-reflexivity made possible by repeated encounters with the other in the form of migrant workers and merchants, not to mention the growing power of the market itself. Starting out from this groundbreaking turn, Kira Hall and Chad Nilep survey the conceptual development of code-switching over the past half-century in the following four stages:

The first [tradition], established in the 1960s and 1970s within the ethnography of communication, situates code-switching as a product of local *speech community identities*. Speakers are seen as shifting between ingroup and outgroup language varieties to establish conversational footings informed by the contrast of local vs. non-local relationships and settings. A second tradition, initiated in the 1980s in work on language and political economy, analyzes code-switching practices with reference to the contrastive *nation-state identities* constituted through processes of nationalism. This research seeks to uncover the sociolinguistic hierarchies produced through language standardization, often focusing on the language practices of minority speakers in complexly stratified societies. A third tradition of research, established in the 1990s with the discursive turn in social theory, challenges our understanding of language choice controlled by pre-existing indexical ties to identities. Scholars influenced by this critique discuss code-switching as a resource in urban minority communities for the performance of *multicultural* and *interethnic identities*. This shift set the stage for a fourth tradition of research, developed since the millennium, that focuses on *hybrid identities* as the social corollary to the language mixing brought about through accelerated globalization. (598)

Underlying this continuous shift from regional to national and then to multinational and finally global frameworks (a movement respectively reflected in the succeeding series of identity formation known as speech community, nation-state,

multicultural/interethnic, and hybrid/global) is the seemingly irreversible expansion and intensification of capital itself. Indeed, according to Hall and Niple, even Blom and Gumperz's pioneering work, which focuses on language use within the relatively isolated town of Hemnesberget, bespeaks the ineluctable tide of sociohistorical change affecting even some of the remotest places in the wake of World War II, just as another influential study by Carol Myers Scotton attests to the escalation of migration and commodity exchange symptomatic of the accelerating rhythm of globalization (599-602).

It might be coincidental that the narrative timeline of the TV series *Pachinko*, at least in its first season, allows for a quadripartite division mirroring the four-stage development of code-switching: Busan of the 1910s-1930s for "speech community"; 1930s-1940s Osaka for "nation-state"; 1980s Tokyo/Osaka for "multicultural/interethnic"; and the present century of the drama's audience for "hybrid/global" (the import of the last time period will be discussed later in the essay along with "Episode Seven," the 1923 Great Kantō earthquake episode). Although the parallel between the drama's progress and the concept's evolution may not be so stringent, some scenes from *Pachinko* are worth examining for their revealing relevance. When we are introduced, for example, to the birth of the protagonist Sunja and her childhood in the remote island village Yeongdo, she basks in an idyllic milieu of parental love, surrounded by all the boons of nature (a peaceful view of golden rice paddies, a swarm of friendly butterflies, not to mention one less than shy abalone), all these romantic impressions prepared for by her parents' yearning for the baby and a shaman's prophecy of the newborn's survival. So even when the precocious Sunja witnesses unaccountable acts of injustice committed by remorseless Japanese policemen at the fish market, she hardly shows any sign of being disheartened ("Episode One" 42:50). In fact, it is only when she exhibits her savvy sense of bargaining by helping a fisherman get a fair price for his catch ("Episode One" 16:30) that we get to glimpse the first sign of her situational code-switching, namely, her ability to speak another style of language, which happens to be the bargaining speech of the market. Doubtless this acquisition of market lingo as well as its commercial logic must be due to Sunja's experience of having accompanied her father for food supply shopping, which itself reminds us of the fact that despite her home's geographical isolation from the bigger world outside, that outside world had existed in her house all along, even during the years before her birth, in the figures of migrant workers and guest fishermen coinhabiting the house as boardinghouse lodgers.

At this early stage of the heroine's adolescence, the foreboding presence of the Japanese language does not register as the de facto language of power and domination, and if Gumperz's dichotomy of "we code" (speech of the local) and "they code" (that of the non-local) hovers over the colonized environment, Sunja's awareness of ethnic otherness and self-reflexivity remains minimal. Things change, however, when an unsettling sense of otherness dawns on her with the appearance of a good-looking, well-dressed businessman named Hansu, who, in addition to being strikingly multilingual, speaks Korean in the unaccustomed dialect of the capital, Kyongsong (present-day Seoul). Where and how Hansu acquired his cosmopolitan air and financial finesse is a lingering mystery (a secret to be revealed in the series' penultimate episode), but one historical element that needs to be recalled here is the fact that the standardization of the Korean language, which prescribed "Kyongsong dialect spoken among the middle class populace" as the national standard, did not come into effect until its promulgation by the Korean Language Society on October 29, 1933 ("Pyojuneo"). Considering in tandem Sunja's apparent lack of formal schooling, which ought to have fostered an appreciation for the capital's dialect as a symbolic capital in its own right, it becomes understandable why the heroine can stay so unabashed and self-assured apropos a refined beau like Hansu. Once Sunja arrives with her husband Isak at Osaka in April 1933 and gets hurled into a ghetto area populated by fellow émigrés, the stark dissymmetry in power relations between the imperial Japanese and the Korean diaspora hits her with full force. Her brother-in-law Yoseb might have been overcautious when he advised the newly-arrived couple, "it is safer to speak in Japanese out in the streets" ("Episode Five" 6:12), switching his own speech immediately into Japanese. The full weight of his remark is demonstrated in the following episode, where not even the interior of a pub is safe from the violent bigotry of the so-called regular inspection when it comes to colonial laborers ("Episode Six" 38:48). On Sunja's part, we rarely see her opting to speak Japanese; her refusal to do so even seems to suggest a measured resistance against the stratified hierarchy of the imperial system. Thus, her desperate sales pitch in Japanese to sell kimchi in the final episode's closing scene ("Episode Eight" 55:30) strikes the viewer as much a moment of personal transformation as a momentary release from all the chains that have bound her.

In maximizing multilingual skills to advance his professional career, Sunja's grandson Solomon is reminiscent of Hansu from the previous interwar generation. Where the former departs in terms of resemblance is in the sense of utter rootlessness surrounding him. This is evident from the introductory shot in which we see him walking through a New York City crowd, conversing in perfectly fluent English

(“Episode One” 4:00). In the next scene, where he lands at Osaka International Airport and heads to a pachinko parlor owned by his father, he just as seamlessly switches his language from Korean (“Dad,” “아버지”) to English (“Too much pizza”) to Kansai Japanese (“I need to watch myself,” “気をつけなあかん”) (“Episode One” 12:00). As a matter of fact, the very financial stratagem through which he plans to catapult his position at the firm hinges on using Korean to coax an aged, first-generation Zainichi woman to sell her Tokyo property for an American hotel development project. From then on, we gradually pick up fragments of his past through recurring flashbacks, which unlike Sunja’s (the story of her growing up followed a successive trajectory) fail to build up a stable chronological footing. This quintessentially postmodern mode of subjectivity, whose identity lacks “its deictic grounding in the temporal and spatial fixities . . . [of] an earlier era” (Hall and Nilep 607), cannot but provoke a feeling of nostalgia for the heyday of bygone modernity because however fragmented and elusive it may be, the era still retained a semblance of hectic everydayness.

As mentioned earlier, it will be necessary to reflect on our singular spatiotemporal situation as viewers perceiving the audiovisual images of *Pachinko*. But before examining the participatory role of the twenty-first century spectator, we must consider the precise manner in which the TV series—in contrast to the novel version, which adheres to the conventional trajectory based on chronological progress—weaves together two disparate timelines by utilizing the cross-cutting editing technique. For it is in those recurring segues that entwine the narrative’s bifurcated time flows that the other side of language manifests itself as the condition of possibility for not only any type of code-switching but also our experience of the world as such.

Language, Home, and the Sense of the World

By examining several instances of code-switching depicted in *Pachinko*, we have seen how the story’s changing sociohistorical context relates to the changing scope and emphases of the linguistic concept as it had been elaborated by the quadripartite schema of Hall and Nilep. As many critics have pointed out, the TV drama does not follow the simple progressive time scheme of the eponymous novel. In fact, it deploys the editing technique called cross-cutting, which repeatedly juxtaposes Sunja’s years of growing up from the 1910s onward with those of her family members living in the economic bubble-driven 1980s. The implications of this dual time shift, which comprise the whole narrative, are more far-reaching than at

first appears. The enhancement of dramatic effects is one thing, since certain kinds of emotions—be it joy or pathos—are bound to attain additive weight by resurfacing across different time zones and geographical locales, but an even more dominant result is the uncanny sense of connectedness, the unlikely rapport between individual characters and their situations generated by the constant switching back and forth between successive pairs of incommensurable historical moments. How to account for this second and admittedly non-linguistic type of code-switching propelling *Pachinko*? To apply the term “code-switching” to the transfer and exchange between disparate historical situations might be stretching the concept too far, indeed beyond all recognition as it is conventionally understood by the tradition of sociolinguistics. But the fundamental meanings of and historical relationship between code and language are neither simple nor clear-cut. To begin with, “code” is an ever-changing sign system, etymologically tracing its origin back to the era when scrolls began to be displaced by the new technic of binding documents for easier access of reading, and the plasticity of the concept culminates in the current language of computer software, in which code cannot but undergo an endless process of rewriting and reformatting (Videla). So, if “code,” from its birth as caudex (literally, “tree trunk”) up to its present-day rebirth in programming, inherently defies codification into a particular medium of language or even language variants, so too is the definition of language as privileged means of human communication a restrictive one. For, as linguists influenced by such sociologists as Benedict Anderson and Pierre Bourdieu attest, and as those who later built upon the wide variety of poststructuralist theories cannot but testify, the idea of language cannot be properly grasped without taking into account its relationship to the dominant ideology of the day as much as to the everlasting inertia of Western metaphysics (Hall and Nilep 603-09).

In the earlier noted scene of code-switching exemplified by Sunja’s brother-in-law in Osaka, it was seen that the speaker matter-of-factly switches his speech from Korean into Japanese so as to performatively mark and emphasize to the newly-arrived couple the need to surreptitiously blend into the native crowd of the foreign country. Comparing the content of his final remark in Korean (“it is safer to speak in Japanese out in the streets,” “밖에선 일본 말로 하는 게 더 안전해”) to the one soon following it in Japanese (“Hey, look at that! They’re building a subway now. Tokyo just opened its first line a few years ago, so Osaka will have the second one in all of Asia,” “あっほらあれ見てみろ-今度できる地下鉄だ.何年か前に東京で最初のが開通したから大阪はアジアで2番目だ” (“Episode Five” 06:20), one can readily recognize that in this instance of switching codes there is more at stake than the mere task of fitting in and self-protecting. Indeed, as Sunja’s

husband Isak all too appropriately enjoins (“But it feels like we’ve already leaped into the future,” “今でさえ未来に来たような気持ちなのに”) (“Episode Five” 06:33), to change the discursive mode from one language to another can signal not only a change in the manner of signification but even that of the worldview. In Heidegger’s “Letter on Humanism,” which was addressed to Jean Beaufret as much as Sartre, both non-native speakers of German, he famously proclaims that “Language is the house of Being”—immediately adding, “In its home human beings dwell” (239). According to Heidegger, to speak a language or to let language speak through humans is to partake not only of a certain shared mood or even a particular tradition but also, more crucially, of the singularity of the world we inhabit as its guardians. The character farthest from recognizing this ontological facet of language is Sunja’s grandson. Although more versatile in multilingualism than any other individual in the drama, Solomon has no inkling of what his capacity to speak in Korean means for someone like Han Geum-ja, the old first-generation Korean woman who stalls the hotel development project in Tokyo by refusing to sell her tiny real estate property. To him, the Korean language is a mere tool for persuading the poor old woman to realize the exorbitant financial value of the land, a language, in other words, conveniently utilizable for business purposes in this case but ultimately interchangeable with any other, just like everything else for sale in the exchange market of late capitalism. Though pleasantly surprised by Solomon’s accosting her in her native tongue (“Episode Two” 34:39), Geum-ja refuses his offer to the end because the house is her home away from home, imbued with irretrievable memories, just like the language of her homeland.

Unlike Geum-ja, Sunja does not dwell on the past. It is no accident, therefore, that the latter decides to visit Korea only after the former reminds her that “it is not too late for you” to return (“Episode Three” 35:46). In this verbal exchange, Geum-ja makes a remark whose thematic import directly touches on our topic. As someone who made the return trip twice, she informs Sunja, “Yes, much has changed [in Korea]. But to walk the street and hear your own language, to smell our own food. The ground beneath your feet feels different. And that’s when your soul knows this land really is my home” (“Episode Three” 34:26). As decisive as her advice turns out to be in facilitating Sunja’s long-awaited return to her motherland, no less noteworthy is the contiguity drawn between “your own language” and “our own food” (“Episode Three” 34:30). Up to this point, if Sunja happened to remember her Korean past at all, it was in the mode of willed forgetting or what Walter Benjamin might have called “involuntary memory” (202), through which visual narrative—rather than the heroine herself as an agent doing memory work—controls the reversion to past

events. Significantly, the nodal nexus between past and present often takes the form of interconnected sensory motifs and images: for instance, preparing a meal in the Osaka house and at the Yeongdo boardinghouse (“Episode Five” 10:40); the smell of a precious bowl of rice on Sunja’s wedding night and the one prepared by a modern rice cooker (“Episode Four” 15:32); and the touch of the splashing waves at the Busan shoreline and the hovering image of young Sunja diving into the deep (“Episode One” 23:48). For our protagonist, who insistently speaks Korean throughout the story, the so-called native language hardly provides the virtual security of home as it does for Geum-ja. Nor does the return journey itself reawaken the lost sense of belonging. Rather, it is her body and the sensory perception it allows that, after so many years of unacknowledged signals, lead her to finally concede—as epitomized by that poignant scene where she bursts out in tears while wading through the tides in Busan—what she had intuited all along: namely, that something as elusive as a sense of home resides neither in the verifiable realm of signification nor in the crude materiality of objects but in-between, in that liminal zone where, as Jean-Luc Nancy would remind us, being is exposed to the touch of the inappropriable other, the radical otherness of being that underpins our relationship to the world (*The Sense* 1-4). Hence her sudden change of heart to head back to Japan after discovering the site of her father’s grave. It is not so much the past’s remains that need to be shored up for mourning but the inassimilable remainder at the very core of being that connects us to one another as the condition of existence.

Compared to Yoseb and Geum-ja’s exchange, in which a preference for a given language reflects the choice of a particular worldview, and Sunja, whose intuitive embrace of sensory experience bespeaks an ontological stance of openness to the world, Geum-ja’s juxtaposition with a Korean singer stands apart in that its mode of code-switching occurs not apropos an individual character (be it consciously or unconsciously) but between different individuals separated in historical time and geographical space. In an intimately intertwined sequence when Geum-ja signs a property contract and the nameless Korean singer commits suicide in a ferry en route to Japan, the two women carry out acts of uncompromising moral integrity by respectively eschewing the seductive power of finance capitalism (“Episode Four” 55:50) and resisting the domineering authority of imperialism by switching from a Western aria to a Korean folksong in front of the Japanese authorities (“Episode Four” 55:00). Of more import, however, than this joint but asynchronous heroism is the question of who actually juxtaposes the successive scenes. Here the binding force of past and present simply transcends the level of the involved subjects altogether, yielding editorial control of the narrative to the directors, but then again the overall

effect is such that the entwined dramas feel as if they are not of certain individuals' making but the result of history speaking out by repeating itself. The highlighted connection between the unidentified singer and Geum-ja intimates that collective history does not comprise distinct individuals' lives but presupposes what Nancy calls the "being-in-common" preceding every singular existence ("Le Communisme"). So, although the two characters are physically far away from their homeland, they both in a way partake in a shared history of homecoming, an ontological journey to which they mutually lay claim by carrying each other, thus touching each other.

History and the Time of *Kairos*

The synesthetic effect of Sunja's sensory experience as much as the conjoined efforts of resistance on the part of Geum-ja and the nameless singer bring to view the fundamental limit of code-switching on the standard level of linguistic discourse. As one critic cogently put it, one of the overriding tenets dictating the drama consists in restoring the sense of "historical justice" forfeited by the official account of Japanese imperialism (Nam). From the heyday of Japonisme in Europe during the late nineteenth century to its meteoric rise as economic powerhouse during the 1970s and 1980s, Japan has captivated the Western imaginary as a prestigious and exceptional East Asian country, an idealized image that, combined with the tragic legacy of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, helped to overshadow the dark side of its colonial legacy. In order to give voice to the countless victims trampled on by Japan's ruthless rule—how to forget, for instance, those hapless servant girls at the Yeongdo boardinghouse beguiled into serving as "sex slaves"?—what seems to be needed is a new code, a different language of narrativization that does justice to those silenced by the official accounts of the past. *Pachinko* offers one by drawing on a family story that evolves through four generations in a manner reminiscent of Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks* and John Galsworthy's *The Forsyte Saga*. Yet, as if the conventional chronological schema of the novel is not effective or unsettling enough in challenging the more well-known versions of the traumatic history, the directors and producers of *Pachinko* decided to disrupt the story's teleological form by splitting the narrative flow into two specular timeframes, allowing each syncopated part to more viscerally engage with the other across the recurring spatiotemporal chasm through a historical mode of code-switching. What then to make of the attendant outcome? Is the dramatic version more effective for attempting an irregular mode of historical code-switching? More to the point, how to measure the success of this particular

mode of contrapuntal code-switching if, as the novel's first line ominously acknowledges, history is bound to fail us—indeed, is even in a sense synonymous with failure?

“History,” claims E. H. Carr, “is an unending dialogue between the present and the past” (30). If this succinct definition of history as an ongoing interactive process presupposes the possibility of ultimately attaining a certain pure entity called “history”—say, in the manner of Henri Bergson's “pure memory,” idealistically extricated and dissociated from the experiential debris called “memory-habit” (Jansen 29-30)—this hermeneutical view disregards two important facts. The first is the inherently opaque nature of the very medium in which the hypothetical dialogue is envisaged to occur. In the case of Korea's colonial past, there is no dearth of revisionists and instigators of fake news on both sides of the Korea/Tsushima strait who still to the present day deny the existence of sex slaves and forced wartime labor. And second, even the eyewitness accounts of victims themselves may not always warrant verifiable objectivity since, as Stephen Dedalus aptly puts it in *Ulysses*, the historical memory can veer toward a Goyaesque nightmare haunted by partial objects in the manner of the Hegelian “night of the world” (Joyce 34). As if cognizant of this double predicament, the makers of *Pachinko* chose to forgo the qualitatively measurable time of *chronos*, opting instead to let that measure-defying, alternative dimension of temporality known as *kairos* propel the narrative. *Kairos* is not so much antithetical to *chronos*; resistant to the binary logic of opposition, *kairos* perdures, in a mode analogous to the Lacanian Real or Derrida's spacing, underneath and in-between the scientifically objective and mechanical flow of *chronos*, always ready to burst through the ineradicable fissures and fault lines of chronological temporality while at the same time providing the condition of the latter's possibility (Agamben 101).² The time of *kairos* designates the inassimilable void that gets lost sight of in the chronological rigidification of originary temporality. To borrow the language of deconstruction, this void is the non-present remainder of originary time that, following the logical impossibility of self-presence, or every form of being in itself,

² As an exemplary illustration of *kairos* contra Christianity's linear, teleological time, Giorgio Agamben cites the temporality envisioned by Gnosticism, “an incoherent and unhomogeneous time, whose truth is in the moment of abrupt interruption, when man, in a sudden act of consciousness, takes possession of his own condition of being resurrected (‘statim resurrectionis compos’). In keeping with this experience of interrupted time, the Gnostic attitude is resolutely revolutionary; it refuses the past while valuing in it, through an exemplary sense of the present, precisely what was condemned as negative [in Christianity] (Cain, Esau, the inhabitants of Sodom), and expecting nothing from the future” (101). For further discussion on *kairos* and *chronos*, see Delahaye.

is “always disjointed between being no longer and being not yet” (Hägglund 79). Indeed, time, according to Derrida, can only manifest itself as spectral, since it “cannot be fully present . . . [and] has no being in itself but marks a relation to what is no longer or not yet” (Hägglund 82).³ This makes the time of *kairos* (or spectral temporality) all the more fitting for conveying the sense of disorientation and intense suffering faced by victims of historical violence, those who have been excluded or marginalized from the official account of history and whose personal stories can only be belatedly heard and reimagined as uncanny interruptions of the conventional time-flow. (On the other hand, the past is never over for the Korean and Korean-Japanese survivors in *Pachinko*, and therefore the cross-cutting may be more faithful to their experience of the present and more ethically conscious of the stakes of the present.)

It is this incessant colliding and coinciding of the incommensurable temporalities opened up by the present that endows a spectral quality to *Pachinko*'s heroine and all the other characters. The series' repeated opening title is emblematic in this regard. Spatially confined to the interior of a pachinko parlor, the sequence visually captures that uncanny temporal convergence by bringing together the three actresses who play Sunja, along with other cast members from different generations, into a hyperreal achronological zone. This alternate dimension of time transforms the apparently collective but ultimately alienating space of the gambling parlor into a site of illuminated gathering (Barthes 27-29). The Rokes' 1967 tune “Let's Live for Today” runs through the scene, adding to the effect of linking vignettes from different times and places into a unified plane of “now” and “today.” As the show's producer Soo Hugh emphasized, characters and timelines were not of prime importance (Burack). A minor character who acquires, in this respect, an unexpected thematic significance is Hana. From the start, her presence is announced only through her haunting voice on a telephone call (“Episode Two” 48:51). As the plot progresses, it becomes apparent that she is not only a fragment from Solomon's buried past but also a ghostlike figure whose shadow reverberates through the other characters, including Mozasu, Etsuko, and even Sunja. Though portrayed like a personification of the pure death drive, her presence nonetheless touches all those around her, goading them to reassemble her memory retroactively. In the *kairos* time engineered by the technique of cross-cutting, all the characters straddle the past and the present

³ “The specter in Derrida is to be thought in terms of deconstruction's thinking of a non-remainder, we should add, that is neither spiritually transcendent nor fully embodied, but which is instead, like the ghost, a sort of non-present being-there . . . Spectrality is also in the machine, in every programme, and is to be thought, too, in terms of actuvirtual, the tele-effect, and so on” (Wortham 197).

in the haunting manner of Hana. Historical revisionism has little chance of having the last say in this uncanny milieu. Its attempt to manipulate the historical narrative by means of isolating and underscoring a particular facet of putative facts exerts little if any power over the Zainichi, whose lives are crisscrossed by the temporality of haunting. What then of the alternative? Would the belated and morally laudable endeavor on the other side of the political spectrum by those who, upholding political correctness, propose a new interpretation of the past grounded in so-called verifiable evidence fare any better?

As if to answer the question, *Pachinko* ushers in a non-fictional element of real-life documentary at the conclusion of the series. The interview of Zainichi women that rounds off the final, eighth episode gestures toward the outside of the television screen. This supplementary footage, apparently designed to provide a concrete basis for the dramatized dimension of Zainichi life, ironically gives rise to the obverse effect: it highlights the fictive nature of the preceding drama, thereby resuscitating the time-worn opposition between the real and the fictive. To recognize the potentially risky consequences of such a maneuver, one ought to recall the controversial case of the former “comfort woman” Lee Yong-soo. By stepping into the visceral arena of factional politics, Lee was unconsciously exploited by Korea’s reactionary political party in order to popularize its revisionist rhetoric, thereby bringing the then growing civil movement in support of comfort woman to a stall (Kim). Equally risk-prone is the drama’s appeal to the representation of a traumatic historical event. The series’ seventh episode, which jumps back in time to cover Hansu’s past and his ordeal during the Great Kantō earthquake, does not appear in the original novel. Though understandably meant to accentuate the tragic dimension of the early generation of Zainichi’s suffering, this conspicuous exemplar of divine retribution wrought at the imperialist heartland generates the unintended effect of shifting the thematic focus from the visceral magnitude of the event itself to the blame game regarding who’s the real victim, thereby triggering backlash from the naysayers of history in a manner reminiscent of Holocaust deniers. Such a perfunctory and facile approach to the problem of representing historical justice is likely to spawn the illusion that history is a sheer matter of coding, decoding, and recoding past materials to suit any purpose.

The Fate of Globalization and the Code-Switching to Come

The highly anticipated second season of *Pachinko* is expected to carry forward the tragic saga of Sunja and her family. With three more seasons in the offing, it is

likely that the series will end where Min Jin Lee's novel concludes: in 1989, the year that marks, according to Hall and Nilep's historical schema, the third stage of multicultural/interethnic code-switching. If Sunja's narrative fails to cover our twenty-first century, the final stage of code-switching in which the full swing of globalization gives rise to superdiverse and hybrid linguistic formations of all kinds, one need not bemoan the drama's seeming lack of relevance (Hall and Nilep 611). For *Pachinko* inscribes the signatory marker of our specific historical moment in the telltale form of color-varied language subtitles. By tapping and swiping language settings and subtitle options, one comes across an innumerable number of choices, as if every tongue of the human race were at one's command, although in reality of course the final pick will dwindle down for most people to a few at best. Whether this seemingly nondiegetic presence of translated speech ought to be considered a mere postproduction addition to the audiovisual interface is a moot point because multilingualism seems to have been as much part and parcel of the drama's preproduction, insofar as the diverse, international cast and crew were an ineluctable precondition of the shooting (O'Connell). And it is to the precise extent that we are, as the drama's audience, woven into the fabric of the story in advance with the whole idea of an endless possibility of choices that the heart-rending drama of *Pachinko* is ultimately rendered problematic. If the backbone of the story consists of a series of impossible life choices made by Sunja over the tortuous time span from Korea's colonial era of the early 1910s to the harsh conditions of the de facto second-class citizen Zainichi in affluent 1980s Japan, then her choices are not choices in the usual sense. Rather than calling it a *choice*, whose etymological origin traces back to enjoyment (the Old High German word *kiosan* means to enjoy) and thereby comfortably resonates with the consumerist ideology of liberal capitalism, it would seem more appropriate to call it a *decision* in the sense that Sunja's actions nearly always involve a cut, a wound of laceration as much as a severance, whether it be in terms of personal ties or the sense of belonging to a community or whatever. Indeed, who could dare ask a Ukrainian to "choose" his or her future in the midst of the current harrowing, endlessly protracted war? Whatever the decision entailed, would it not constitute a cut, an act of severing that non-Ukrainians would be at pains to fathom?

In their influential study on how contemporary language transcends the conventional binary of monolingualism and multilingualism so as to mold as much as fit the speaker's changing social positioning, Emi Otsuji and Alistair Pennycook draw attention to a group of Australian workers who, due to their business contacts with Japanese customers, often incorporate Japanese speech into their daily

intercourse (246). If their view of language as a fluid, transformative medium challenges the notion of linguistic boundaries under the aegis of a global economy, perhaps one need look no further for its illustration than the term “pachinko” itself. In the past, the transliterated word may have smacked, to many Westerners at least, of patently exotic Japanese cultural terms like *bonsai* (miniature plant growing) or *seppuku* (a ritual form of suicide), while for the Japanese people, the word simply denoted a popular form of the recreational arcade game—a source of possible embarrassment since its association with gambling marks a legal loophole in a society where gambling is otherwise outlawed. For Zainichi Koreans, on the other hand, who operate nearly eighty percent of the venues, the designation would retain yet another connotation, the long legacy of a love and hate relationship to the extent that it recalls the days when people of Korean origin were openly discriminated against in acquiring official job posts under Japan’s extremely xenophobic control, and therefore they sought livelihood in shady business areas (Scott). Thanks to the phenomenal success of the Apple TV+ series, the term “pachinko” might very well have captured all these distinct nuances, however variegated its mixture. Yet, even in an age when traditional borders and boundaries appear to be losing their hold, there remain exceptions, most glaringly the Japanese audience’s allergic reaction, which perhaps better deserves to be called a non-reaction, to *Pachinko* (McCurry). But more pressing than the problem of exception is the emergence of a new international trend: the possible coming to an end of globalization through what many economists and journalists identify as “fragmentation” (Wolf). How will the very idea of code-switching fare once a deglobalized geopolitical outlook becomes the new norm in the wake of erupting regional wars and escalating climate disasters? Will a new definitional turn be in order when the world moves apart toward re-regionalized cultural zones, erecting a new set of shibboleths to control the old borders?

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