**Ways of Saying the Unsayable:**

**Cho Sehŭi’s *The Roots of Silence***

Korea University

Winter 2025

2:00 - 4:55 p.m.

Location: TBA

Instructors: Chris Hanscom (UCLA) with Boduerae Kwon (Korea U.)

Course description

Reception of Cho Sehŭi’s work has been complex, has varied over time, and has centered on his series of linked stories from the late 1970s, *A Dwarf Launches a Small Ball*. This seminar addresses Cho’s later work, *The Roots of Silence* (1985). We will read these essays, short stories, testimonies, and photographs in light of critical ideas from both Cho’s time (primarily through Barthes’s later writings—especially the idea of a neutral or “third language,” developed in a seminar he offered at the Collège de France in 1978) and from the present.

Brief note on language

조세희와 바르트는 모두 '언어의 권력'을 예민하게 의식하고 그것을 흐트러뜨리는 글쓰기를 실천했습니다. 이들의 글쓰기를 기억하면서, 본 수업은 영어와 한국어를 자유롭게 섞어 쓰는 분위기를 지향합니다. 함께 조금씩 더듬거리면서 생각과 표현의 새로운 지평을 찾아갈 수 있었으면 합니다.

Grading

Students will submit a brief (one- to two-page-long) essay to the group on the day prior to the seminar meeting. The essay should include a critical perspective on the readings, and should include at least two questions for discussion.

Schedule of readings

**1/17 The compulsion of language**

Barthes, “Lecture in Inauguration of the Chair of Literary Semiology, 3-16.

Barthes, *Neutral*: “Argument,” 6-14 (논지, 36-47); “Silence,” 21-29 (침묵, 64-78);

“Affirmation,” 41-46 (단언, 99-108); “The Active of the Neutral,” 81-83 (“중립의 적극적인 면,” 168-171).

Hanscom, *Impossible Speech*, 1-14, 24-26.

**1/24 The little prince**

Cho, *Roots of Silence*: 13-18; 19-37.

Barthes, *Neutral:* “Weariness,” 16-21 (피로, 54-59); “Tact,” 29-36 (섬세함, 78-82).

Optional: Saint-Exupéry, *Le Petit Prince*, trans. Katherine Woods (1945), 김현 (1973).

**1/31 An unusual kingdom**

Cho, *Roots of Silence*: 38-41; 41-55; 80-85.

Barthes, *Neutral*: “Answer,” 107-121 (대답, 215-240).

Hirsch and Spitzer, *Liquid Time*, 3-42.

Sebald, *Austerlitz*, 181-200.

Peter Bichsel, “Ein Tisch ist ein Tisch” (책상은 책상이다, 38-46).

**2/7 The politics of literature/ with Haeun Bae, Mi-young Lee**

Cho, *Roots of Silence*: 63-66; 92-97.

Barthes, *Neutral*: “Ideospheres,” 87-93 (이데올로기권, 178-191).

이미영, “1980년대 한국 소설에 나타난 ‘비인간적인 것’의 연구” (박사논문,

2023), 1-37; 60-82.

배하은, “1980년대 문학의 수행성 연구 - 양식과 미학을 중심으로” (박사논문,

2017), 1-67, 98-112.

**2/14 The “pensive” photograph**

Cho, 135-137; 138-238; 240-263.

Barthes, *Neutral*: “Arrogance,” 152-163 (오만, 295-315).

Barthes, “The Photographic Message,” 194-210 (사진의 메시지, 65-85).

Barthes, “The Third Meaning,” 52-68 (제3의 의미, 155-180).

Allan Sekula, “Reading an Archive: Photography Between Labour and Capital,” 443-452.

Optional: Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 3-119 (카메라 루시다, 11-117).