



The Flow of the Masses and the Candlelight Demonstrations in South Korea

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Abstract

This paper traces the shifting modes of candlelight demonstrations in South Korea between 2002 and 2019. Operating in a new media environment, the candlelight protests involved the masses as a flow. The three mass movements that succeeded one another in 2002 exhibited qualities that were quite different from one another (politics, play, and struggle). In the protests of 2008, expressive traits, which appear as elements of play along with struggle against the government, became generalized, taking precedence over representation. In the protests of 2016–2017, the masses persisted in attacking the one and only target—the incompetent and corrupt Park Geun-hye. While the media kept in step with the masses in the candlelight demonstrations of 2016–2017, the candlelight demonstrations of 2019 were held in opposition to and direct confrontation with the media. They also faced simultaneous demonstrations from the opposing side. These differences show that the sui generis style of the candlelight demonstrations can be regarded as a repeatable form, one that can be repurposed to suit different conditions, and which can adopt various genres. They also call attention to the importance of discerning the differences that appear in the recurring candlelight demonstrations.

Keywords: candlelight demonstration, the masses, flow, decentralization, molecular contagion, molar mobilization, new media, expressive diversity, representative unity

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The Masses of Minor Lights and Candlelight Demonstrations

Dwindling and growing every weaker, lights that appear faint and about to be extinguished owe their power of attraction to their fragility and ephemerality. Fireflies are like that, and so are flickering candles. Things that shine brightly as if to show off their greatness might catch the eye because of the intensity of the light and/or the splendid qualities of the object. These intense lights might have the power to dazzle, but they do not have the power to attract. The spectacular lights of glory and power are like that. If the latter can be likened to the powerful and *blinding flashes* (*seomgwang* 閃光), great and gorgeous *lights of glory* (*yeonggwang* 榮光), the former can be regarded as miniscule and tiny *minor lights* (*migwang* 微光).¹

Minor lights come together. A minor light left by itself is tiny and weak, appearing quite precarious. So they call on others, and they themselves are also, in turn, attracted to others. Linking and bonding, they come together like constellations in the night sky. They weave a fabric of minor lights beautifully. Thus, the streets become the terrain of minor lights. Flashes do not come together. A flash shines all by itself. The glorious lights do not gather either, as they compete with other glorious lights and avoid them. Flashes and glorious lights are incomparably stronger than minor lights. Minor lights become invisible, nearly turning into nothingness before the glare of flashes. However, when these tiny lights assemble to form a terrain of minor lights, no flash is able to put it out. Nor is any glorious light be able to outshine it. Minor lights do not gather in order to put out flashes or outshine glorious lights, however. Minor lights exist because there is something that cannot be put out by flashes and something that we cannot give up in the face of glorious lights. Minor lights gather because they are attracted by neighboring minor lights and because they are inclined to lend ears to one another. The minor lights, gravitating towards one another as they find themselves in adjacency, being affected by each other, form the masses. Once they become the masses, the minor lights can finally bring

1. Didi-Huberman (2018) elaborated on the contrast between flash and minor lights, based on Passolini's writing on fireflies and searchlights.

themselves to speak of what they could not surrender in confrontation with the fierce light of power.

The *candlelight protests* of Korea attest to this power of minor lights, which can be understood as a power of the masses. Minor lights exert a power of attraction upon other minor lights, calling to them to join in and participate in the weaving of a common fabric. However, their movement has, from time to time, been violently interrupted by the powers that be, made to disperse and stand down. Even when an expansive archipelago of minor lights comes to the surface, there is always the possibility it will fade into oblivion without leaving any concrete results. This frailty can make it appear as though these lights are simply a hapless mass without the capacity to make breakthroughs or dismantle existing conditions. Whatever the case may be, each of these tiny lights have already had a *taste* of such gatherings. So, given a cause, they assemble. The cause can often be anger and protest, in some cases sadness or even joy. Even before gathering, the minor lights would be mobilizing through the dissemination and contagion of tiny electronic signals. In this sense, they exist constantly and continuously as a mass charged with weak energy even before coming out as the masses of the public square. Of course, this is not to say that good things always happen, or that the masses are always good. It is just that the masses become a flow in no time through contact with or exposure to whatever transpires nearby. They exist as a flow that forms through affection—a fickle, tempestuous flow that veers from one direction to another at different times.

Once, there was a time when a strong organization was needed to bring the masses into the public squares. This was a period in which organizations formed to lead the masses to the revolution drove the movement. It was also an era in which *mass organizations* like labor unions or councils spoke on behalf of the masses as well as a time in which demonstrations were construed as mass mobilizations coordinated by organizations that appointed themselves as their representatives. That was a time when we placed our hopes of revolution or reform on these forces. The minor lights or the masses of the candlelight demonstrations have none of these. Neither do they have a revolutionary or mass organization. We do not even know if they harbor hopes of revolution. The masses appear following the *signals*

disseminated through the digital network. They come out to the squares to express what they think and to demonstrate. They communicate, move, and struggle through rhizomatic networks. Does this mean that we have entered a new era of the masses?

This mode of formation of mass protest is discernible not just in Korea but everywhere. In the past decade or so, we have seen masses all over the world come out in large numbers and into the squares, forming the terrain of minor lights, and in some cases, even proceeding to attack the pivotal power structures. For example, that was the case with the demonstrations in Greece that started in the December of 2008, escalating into a revolutionary condition that shook the whole nation until 2014. Comparable were the mass protests in Algeria that occurred in December 2010, the upheaval that followed in Egypt in January 2011, as well as the Occupy Movement that began on Wall Street in the United States in September 2011. We cannot forget, of course, the persistent Yellow Vests movement that began in October 2018 in France and spread to neighboring countries, or the Umbrella Movement of Hong Kong that began in April 2014 and restarted in April 2019. At the time of writing this article in 2019, uprisings are ongoing across the globe in Lebanon, Iraq, Egypt, and Chile. The mass movement in Korea played a powerful and leading role in the history of mass movements. The most notable is the candlelight demonstration that occurred in protest against the Lee Myung-bak government in 2008 and the candlelight demonstrations of 2016–2017 that brought down President Park Geun-hye. The candlelight demonstration against the Supreme Prosecutor's Office has been on-going for three months due to the so-called "Cho Kuk affair."²

This new type of mass movement started to appear as we entered the first decade of the millennium. In South Korea, we can identify the specific time of its emergence. It was in 2002 that the first candlelight demonstration was held. The decisive factor in the emergence of the new masses was

2. This is a series of events that involved Cho Kuk, following his nomination to the position of Minister of Justice by the Moon Jae-in government. See the final section of this paper for a more detailed discussion of this.

the new communication environment, which essentially boils down to the widespread use of the internet and mobile technology. In the case of South Korea, the number of internet users jumped from 366,000 in 1995 to 24,380,000 in 2001 (Jeong 2002, 85). The mass availability of cell phones in South Korea began in the late-1990s. Thus, we can say that the network and communication environment changed drastically around the year 2000. Of course, the effective usage of the internet via cellular connectivity was not available until the smartphone began to become popular in 2009. This being the case, however, regular cell phones did provide minimal but sufficient means for individuals on the street to connect with each other through the transmission of text messages and photos even before the popularization of smartphones. With the coupling of smartphones and social media, this connectivity became not only more tightly woven, but these modes of connection evolved beyond simple communication to include intellectual processes such as the capacity to search, investigate, analyze, and check information as well as facilitating the dissemination of audio-visual information and sharing of affects. According to the Pew Research Center, South Korea has 100 percent adult mobile phone ownership and 95 percent smartphone ownership, the highest rates among the countries examined (Silver 2019).

Given this condition, in which individual *souls* are constantly hooked to mobile communication devices and the communication network, localized incidents can be easily shared and disseminated, and affectivity thereby becomes viral, or *contagious*. The social phenomena Gabriel Tarde would have called “mimicry” and “diffusion” have become quotidian facts of existence (Tarde 1903). Perhaps we can make an even stronger assertion. That is, the masses connected to the network through mobile devices essentially constitute a giant body that moves with the assemblage of machinic sensory apparatuses and nervous networks. As such, this giant body is always in existence, interacting with informational stimuli. This collective body, responding in real time to current issues and conditions, is what the mass movement is today.

Not mobilized or organized by organizations, this type of movement often “fails.” In other words, all too often they fizzle out without yielding

significant visible results. Even when they succeed, all too often their achievements soon end up usurped and co-opted by the political strata. For these reasons, many tend to subject these movements to critique and mockery. However, we need to recognize that the present-day mass movement should not be evaluated by visible achievements alone, because the primary achievement of the mass movement is the impression that it leaves in the bodies that constitute and compose the masses. The masses are both the embodied cause and effect of the new mass movements. Thus, one of its essential constituent qualities is *immanence*, in the Spinozist sense of the term. Put differently, the most important result of the mass movement is the *transformation of the masses themselves*. For this reason, when we look at the mass movement today, we need to pay attention to the transformation of the masses themselves in terms of their bodies, intellects, sensibilities, and habits rather than what they gain in terms of visible *achievements*.

I will henceforth examine the mass movement in South Korea since 2002—the so-called Candlelight Movement—in this light, primarily focusing on the candlelight demonstrations of 2008 and 2016–2017. To draw an illustrative analogy, I would liken these two demonstrations to the *tocatta* and *passacaglia* forms, citing the two styles of Baroque music using counterpoint. While *tocatta* makes use of repetitive themes in its counterpoint, it is a style chiefly characterized by flashy, technically demanding melodies and irregular rhythms, providing the occasion for the exhibition of a player's virtuosity and skill. *Passacaglia*, on the other hand, is a form of counterpoint that is characterized by a single clear theme, with repetitions that switch positions, while featuring different variations of counterpoint melodies. If the former is an artistic style that maximizes the diversity of expression, the latter is an artistic style that features a stubbornly repetitive theme—an *obstinate* (*ostinato*) theme—to the extent that its self-sameness is so difficult to forget that it becomes the only melody that sticks to the memory after hearing it.

However, if we are to understand the candlelight demonstrations properly, we need to look at the emergence of the new masses in 2002, a subject that I will describe as having three distinct faces. The candlelight demonstrations of 2002 might be journalistically described as a prelude

to the mass movements of 2008 and 2016–2017. However, as in music, we must rethink this term, bearing in mind that a prelude is not only a precursor to something that follows but also a *work* with a particular texture of its own. In this sense, it is perhaps more appropriate to think of it as an independent *overture* that points to the significant compositions of the mass movement to come and prefigures the overall contours of the affairs that followed. Whether prelude or overture, the structure of these two candlelight demonstrations took on the form of imitative counterpoint, in which the recurring theme switched parts through variations. While the candlelight demonstrations might play a repetitive *theme* through variations and modulations like the toccata, it might also obstinately maintain a single theme, focusing on a single issue like the passacaglia. This shows that the candlelight demonstrations have more different modalities than meet the naked eye, and that they might even be mutual conflicting.

Three Preludes: The Year 2002, Three Faces of the Masses

The year 2002 was clearly a year filled with *signs* of things to come. Three powerful and successive events occurred in the span of that year. Each of these events brought out the masses, who, connected to the network, interacted with one another in a horizontal fashion, engaging in processes of mimicry and contagion. They then assembled without being mobilized by a central leadership, presenting themselves before the gaze of an entire society. First came the politically *insane* masses, who spontaneously jumped on board Roh Moo-hyun's campaign bandwagon, led by Nosamo, beginning with the Democratic presidential primaries in March and April of 2002. They eventually succeeded in electing Roh to the presidency on December 19. Second came the sports *crazy* masses, who flooded the streets during the 17th World Cup between May 31 and June 30. Third came the protest masses, who participated in the anti-US demonstration from the end of November 2002 to January of 2003. The first one might be better described as the "Rho Moo-hyun masses," as it involved the formation of a flow—with the politician Rho Moo-hyun as the singular point—in relation to a political

affair par excellence—a presidential election.³ The second one might be called the “World-Cup masses.” As the name indicates, they constituted the mass that gathered around the football World Cup as its singular point, a *playful* mass that coalesced to root for the national squad. The third one can be referred to as the “middle school-girl masses.” The masses came together around the deaths of two middle-school girls, who were struck by a US army armored vehicle on June 13, 2002, as its singular point. The incident was socially forgotten for a while because of the World Cup and the presidential election. But the masses started to form with the memorial protest that took place belatedly in November of that year and then went on to demand the revision of the SOFA (Status of Forces Agreement) between the US and South Korean governments. These were the *struggle* masses that went on to hold anti-US demonstrations.

Among them, the earliest to appear and persist throughout the duration of 2002 were the Roh Moo-hyun masses. Their significance must be distinguished from their political achievements. They were the archetype of how the masses, in subsequent years, have formed within and acted through their participation in mass movements. The Roh Moo-hyun masses came into being, issuing forth from the womb of Nosamo. Nosamo (an acronym in Korean for ‘gathering of people who love Roh Moo-hyun’) was an organization originating in a network of people attracted to the personality of Roh Moo-hyun. Roh had become a star politician at a televised hearing in 1988 by candidly interrogating corporate and political leaders for their collusion under the dictatorship. Also of note was the fact that Roh had chosen to run in Busan for a third time, having left an electoral district in Seoul where he would likely have won. His decision was accompanied by an oath to get rid of regionalist politics. Having been defeated for the third

3. Mathematically speaking, a singular point is a point that is not differentiable. In terms of physics, singular points are points around which a certain force forms a force field. Examples of this include phenomena such as black holes, centers of pressure systems, a magnet forming its magnetic field, and the drain in the bathtub. In other words, a singular point is a point from which a certain force is radiating out or to which a certain flow is drawn. The way singular points are distributed over a field defines their singularity. The flow of a body of fluid is determined by the distribution of singular points.

time there, he earned the nickname “idiot” (*babo*) from his fans. In short, Roh persistently behaved in a fashion that was highly unorthodox for a political figure. Nosamo, then, was a sort of fan club devoted to Roh, as well as a social gathering of his supporters. While it had a strong driving force, it was by and large a loosely knit network and horizontal form of organization. Nosamo did have what you might call an upper structure or a center for its organization, but the central structure did not have the authority to issue orders and could only make proposals or requests. That is to say, its organizational principle was such that if someone wanted to do something, it was up to them to make a proposal on their own and persuade others to act (Roh 2002, 55).⁴

What brought them together as an organization, then, was the affect of *love* toward Roh Moo-hyun, just as the name of their organization indicated.⁵ In this sense, Nosamo was an affective organization whose rationale for gathering and action was found in the affect of love. Nosamo was formed right after Roh’s defeat in the general election on April 13, 2000.⁶ As soon as the Democratic Party decided on December 22, 2001 that they would start the Democratic National Presidential Primaries, Nosamo members made phone calls to individual voters asking them to support Roh. They also flooded the venue of the primaries in Seoul and turned it into a festival, thus creating a sort of *Roh fever* (*Roh Moo-hyun baram*). Riding on the strength of this fever, Roh was elected as the Party’s presidential candidate, defeating all the other competitors against odds that were, initially at least, highly unfavorable. This whirlwind—or we might

4. In this way, we can often see examples of how *somebody* who feels the necessity takes it upon themselves to make a proposal for an action and provide an impetus for spontaneous mass uprisings. For instance, the leadership in the earlier phase of the Gwangju Uprising fits this description. Elsewhere, I have called this phenomena “impersonal leadership” (Yi-Jinkyung 2012, 128–138).

5. “The bulk of the driving force for our rapid increase in membership subsequently came from the name of our organization ‘People Who Love Roh Moo-hyun’” (Roh 2002, 51).

6. The foundational general assembly was held on June 6, 2000, making it the official date of foundation. However, the proposal to create a group was made on April 15, followed by preparation work. Therefore, it is apt to describe the beginning of the group as having taken place “right after” Roh’s defeat (Shin 2002).

call it a tide—consistently defied all statistical projections and took over the venue of the Seoul primaries, spreading beyond the Democratic Party to become a nation-wide phenomenon. Thus, Roh Moo-hyun's support rating moved up from 8.2 percent in a national survey of January 2002 to 42.2 percent on November 26. Eventually, he received 48.9 percent of the total votes on December 15, 2002 and was elected into office. It was a stunning turn of events—a network-based mass organization had upset the *status quo* of party politics by cutting through the party hierarchy as well as the showdown logic of an election. Basically, a horizontal and molecular mass movement had overturned the law of large numbers. Borrowing Deleuze and Guattari's concepts, perhaps we can describe the turn of events as being that of a *molecular* movement, having propagated itself through horizontal contagion, overcoming the power of a molar organization (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 239–240).⁷ We can confirm here the emergence of the masses as a flow of liquid formed through the molecular contagion of affects—the horizontal and spontaneous masses that come together and mobilize not through the issue of top-down orders but through the lateral dissemination of affective processes. The flow of liquid masses overran the solid vertical walls and flooded the streets between them.

Throughout June 2002, while the Roh Moo-hyun masses were merging into a *crazy* flow cascading toward the presidential election, the World Cup called forth the masses to come out to the streets and squares. This was an event that took place simultaneously not just in Seoul but in almost every city across the country. The turnout of the masses went up by leaps and bounds nationwide from 700,000 (350,000 in Seoul) on June 4 to one million on June 14, 3.5 million on the June 18, 5 million on the June 22, and all the way up to 7 million on June 25 (Kim and Kim 2005, 52). The masses

7. Statistical prediction essentially depicts and/or predicts the state of a group as a unitary entity, following the law of large numbers. The field of gas kinetics statistically treats the state or the movement of a body of gas by units called mole equaling 6×10^{23} molecules. The word “molar” is derived from this train of thought. The term “molecular,” by contrast, refers to phenomena that cannot be described statistically, such as Brownian motion. As such, molecular movements are not movements of individual unitary entities but those of molecules that escape statistical prediction.

who cheered on the streets were, if you were to refer simply to their goals, rather apolitical when compared with the Roh Moo-hyun masses. However, there was a clear isomorphism in the manner of their formation. The supporters coalesced through an online network called the Red Devils. The contagious affect of excitement and wild enthusiasm towards the sport of football (soccer) permeated the whole process. The formation of collective will was made possible through horizontal contagion and dissemination rather than vertical transmission. The decisions were made through the collection of opinions online, which were subsequently enacted by people on the streets, thus effectively forming a collective body with an online-offline continuum. Like the Roh Moo-hyun masses, they were a molecular mass formed through lateral affective contagion, their shared enthusiasm for football translating into a willingness to act spontaneously. Like their political counterparts, the festive nature of their actions also gave onlookers the impression that they were inscrutable and *insane*.⁸

On the surface of things, these people who went out on the streets and squares were quite different from Nosamo. After all, while the World-Cup masses created an apparition of an autonomous giant collective body, Nosamo did not. The latter made phone calls to voters in the presidential primaries or asked others to support Roh Moo-hyun, infiltrating the body of the electoral masses and energizing it rather than creating an autonomous body. However, what happened afterwards with Nosamo and the World-Cup masses belied the obvious differences in their beginnings. For one, when Roh was impeached, the Roh Moo-hyun masses did come out to the squares, shouting “No Impeachment!”⁹ In this sense, they formed an

8. Some have accused the World Cup masses of embodying a form of collective madness, even going so far as to suggest that it can be construed as a variety of nationalism, racism, or even fascism. Even though there is a similarity in that these forms spread through molecular contagion, there is an essential difference. That is, the World Cup masses never had an enemy that they condemned or tried to destroy. Nor were any casualties sustained because of their actions. They appeared to be *madly feverish* about nationality because the World Cup is, after all, a game between teams assembled on the basis of nationality. It is even hard to say that the attitude of the World-Cup masses was nationalistic in character, because they did not attribute everything to the nation.

9. The opposition party proposed an impeachment motion on March 9, citing Roh Moo-hyun's

autonomous collective body, just as the World-Cup masses did. Working in and through the electoral process, the Roh Moo-hyun masses needed to solicit and enlist others as supporters. This must have contributed to a different condition in terms of forming collective bodies. Another point of contrast is that the World-Cup masses disbanded after the World Cup and lost their autonomous existence. The Roh Moo-hyun masses led by Nosamo, however, were not so ephemeral. They did not cease to exist after the election, and even survived Roh's death. However, when we remember that supporters continue to turn out in large numbers in the squares for large sports events, the difference between the two might not be small.

The first candlelight demonstration in Korea took place during a memorial protest commemorating the passing of two middle-school girls, Hyo-sun and Mi-seon, who were struck and killed by a US Army armored vehicle. This middle-school anti-US protest of 2002 was the morphological beginning and archetype of the candlelight demonstration form, impressing a particular shape upon the mass protests that would take place thereafter in South Korea. The masses brought candles to protests perhaps because the ephemerality of their light evoked the fragility of the girls' lives, or because they fit in the ritualistic format of the memorial. Their *origin* was in a kind of *ironic conversion*. According to accounts that were later confirmed, the candles first appeared during the memorial service held hurriedly on June 18 by the US military troops to bring closure to the incident. After seeing this, the Northern Gyeonggi Action Committee Seeking Justice in the Murder Incident of Middle-School Girls by the US Armored Vehicles figuratively *took* the candles off the hands of the US military by holding a candlelight demonstration in front of a US military camp on June 20.¹⁰ Following this, the candles were lit again in a mass protest during the memorial protest of November 30 at Gwanghwamun near the US embassy. Candles, from that

violation of impartiality from the National Assembly and other policy missteps. A mass protest followed right after the impeachment motion was passed on March 12. This will be discussed further below.

10. Kwon Sook-hee, "Daehan minguk 'chotbul minjujuui,' eonje eodiseo sijak dwaesseulkka?" (When and Where did the 'Candlelight Democracy' of the Republic of Korea Begin?), *Yonhap News Agency*, December 14, 2016, <https://www.yna.co.kr/view/AKR20161213167900060>.

point onwards, became a metonymic image symbolizing a new form of mass protest that had taken shape in South Korea at the dawn of the new millennium. The candles that were *taken from* the hands of the US military became a symbol of demonstrations critical of the US military.

The candlelight demonstration of November 30 was held following a proposal by an ordinary office worker without the involvement of the coalition of citizen groups (National Action Committee Seeking Justice for the Murder Incident of Ms. Shin Hyo-sun and Ms. Shim Mi-seon, hereafter referred to as the Action Committee) that had been active since the incident. An internet post by an office worker who went by the online name of “Angma” on November 27 (reading simply ‘Forget the weekend! Let’s meet at the plaza every weekend at 6pm’) quickly went viral. People responded by appearing *en masse* at Gwanghwamun on November 30 (Kim and Kwon-Park 2002). The size of the candlelight mass, which was 10,000 on that day, grew to 50,000 on December 7 and 100,000 on December 14. Even on December 30, a week after the presidential election, 60,000 people joined the protest. A newspaper article at the time reported on this protesting mass as follows:

The candlelight demonstration does not fulfill any of the conditions assumed by previous social movements—prior systematic planning, organizational leadership by a certain group, common ideology shared by the participants—but it has brought about a spontaneous gathering of people from all walks of life, from young netizens, teenagers who are of the same age as the deceased junior high school girls, families holding hands with their kids, all the way up to office workers.¹¹

This description is quite similar to the formation of the masses around Nosamo or how the World Cup supporters organized themselves on the street.

11. “Teukjip: Yeojungsaeng sageon 1junyeon: chotbul siwi, sae chamyeo munhwa sibal” (Special Report on the One-year Anniversary of the Middle-School Girl Incident: Candlelight Demonstration, The Beginning of a New Culture of Participation), *Yeonhap News*, June 10, 2003. Cited in Kim and Kim (2005, 89).

The memorial candlelight demonstrations for the middle-school girls, however, proceeded to make a *strange* transition that would prefigure the mass movements that would follow. While the two middle-school girls Shin Hyo-sun and Shim Mi-seon were killed by the US Army armored vehicle on June 13, 2002, the first candlelight demonstration took place at Gwanghwamun on November 30. That means that a period of more than five months had passed between the two events. It was not that there were no demonstrations held immediately following the incident in June. Indeed, there had been attempts by citizens groups to hold memorial vigils and raise public awareness of the issues surrounding the deaths of Hyo-sun and Mi-seon. Right after the incident, the citizen groups held protests near the US military base concerned as well as at Gwanghwamun. However, these actions received almost no media exposure and failed to entice many people to join in. To top it off, the demonstrators even had a minor clash with the World Cup masses. The situation turned around completely by the end of November, almost half a year after the incident, when many people joined the candlelight demonstration. Standing before a sea of candlelight, a member of the Action Committee reportedly said, "These people [the majority of the demonstrators] did not even turn their heads when we were fighting so hard..." (Goh 2008).

In other words, the candlelight demonstrations of June and November were dealing with the same problem but they were vastly different from one another. The bitter remark by a member of the Action Committee above bemoans his or her sense that the sheer multiplicity of forms of demonstration was a distraction from the *content* of the demonstration, the goal that it was supposed to pursue. In January 2003, the citizen group tried to move in the direction of an anti-US position, exemplified by the agenda of revising the SOFA. The netizens, led by Angma, on the other hand, deemed it necessary to put anti-war and peace on their agenda. As a consequence, the two groups parted ways and started to hold demonstrations at two different locations. When we look at the numbers of protesters in these groups after the split, we can see what subsequently transpired. On January 4, 2003, a little over 30 people showed up for the Angma group, while over 300 showed up for the citizens group. On January 7, over 70 attended the former,

while over 400 showed up for the latter. The near-zero attendance for the Angma group, compared to the tens of thousands that turned up in the previous month, clearly shows that the flow of the masses had stopped. The attendance for the citizens group, on the other hand, remained at a rather consistent level, which shows that this number was effectively the number of people who had been *organized* previously by the group. In fact, this number also approximates the average attendance of their demonstrations in June. This demonstrates that the *fluid* masses exhibit an unstable, liquid-like quality that recedes as entropy takes hold and the masses tire, as opposed to an organized mass, which might be smaller in size but maintains a stable and enduring presence. This fickle, capricious quality can also be seen in the example of the World Cup masses. The Korean Professional Football League (K-League) attendance figures, which saw a dramatic spike shortly after the World Cup, crashed by the end of August 2002, and would never rise to comparable levels again (Kim and Kim 2005, 71).

In these instances, we can see that the masses mobilized by organizations and the masses formed through networks differ in their essence. Even though these two different masses participated in a demonstration together, they organized, moved, and acted differently. They belonged to different genres, different categories of *mass*. The former is not always small in size (as was the case in the middle-school girls demonstration). The *masses* mobilized by the Korea Confederation of Trade Unions or the Korean Peasants League, for instance, would arrive from all over the country in rented buses and fill Seoul Plaza in front of Seoul City Hall. Demonstrations in the past tended to take the form of masses being mobilized mostly through organizations, with a minority of sympathizers joining in. These were molar masses with the stability and rigidity of a slab, a turgid mass that is mobilized via the vertical transmission of decisions made by a central authority, based on the shared perception of a given issue.¹²

By contrast, the new masses that came out in 2002 were molecular, fluid

12. I would like to call this type of group a *herd* to distinguish it from the masses. For a more detailed discussion on the notion of a mass and the ways in which it differs from a herd, please refer to Yi-Jinkyung (2012).

masses with liquid flexibility that spread horizontally through mimicry and the contagion of affects and opinions, converging and coagulating into a flow according to processes of semblance and adjacency. If the former is a mass that shares a sense of belonging and identity, delineating a set of interests, ideologies, and opinions in an organized fashion, the latter is a mass that shares/divides affects and opinions on some issue in a certain shared form in spite of having different belongings, interests, and thoughts among and between its members. The former has a clear center or centralized system upon which its movements are based, while the latter spreads laterally and moves according to the spontaneous will of each constituent. The former has a composition that is homogeneous in nature, and the mobilization and movements of the masses are based on loyalty and a sense of belonging. The latter, on the other hand, mobilizes and moves through affective contagion, a process that can even tear and unmoor a constituent from their prior sense of belonging. Thus, the mass forms a certain consistency while maintaining its heterogeneous composition. The molar masses move according to adherence to a place or a social rank, the latter masses come together by breaking away from those allegiances.

The internet and mobile technology provided the nervous system and devices necessary for the masses of the latter kind to form and act. Keeping in mind that the popularization of the internet and mobile technology happened around the year 2000, we can easily make a conjecture as to why this new type of mass formation appeared in the first decade of the new millennium. Subsequent candlelight demonstrations, the recurrence of which would exert a profound impact upon society, cannot be divorced from the emergence of new communicative conditions. The new communication network became a virtual *habitat* for the new masses. We must recognize that, as long as there are people who are connected through this communication network, the new masses are present *at all times* even when they are not visible. In this sense, we can say that the flows of masses of 2002, apparently disparate and divergent from one another, were—virtually at least—*one* mass. Of course, the actual existence of the mass is different in each instance, it is *actuated* each time by the form of address by which it is called forth. Thus, we cannot conflate them all and say they

are identical. They are different masses with different faces. However, these faces are carved onto a single body with material continuity. In short, a mass exists *potentially as one body but is actualized every time into a different form*. We now have this mass that has a single physical and material continuity, yet is called upon and brought forth each time bearing a different face. The reason why we emphasize the single material continuity in spite of the different appearances that the mass assumes is that *the experience of the mass movement returns to the bodies of the masses themselves and is recorded on them*. The potentiality for transformation is not lost from instantiation to instantiation; it permeates each configuration of the masses every time it is brought forth.

In this sense, the three events that shook Korean society in 2002 illustrate the ways in which the emergence of masses can spill into one another as they change forms. They were clearly a prelude to the mass movements that followed. But as the themes that expressed these events switched their *parts* and repeated, as in Baroque music, they came to have structures of their own. In this sense, these events are not mere *signs* of things to come. The three striking prelude pieces—the first marked by the name of “Roh Moo-hyun,” the second bearing the insignia of the “Red Devils,” and the third wearing the mourning banner of the “middle-school girls”—resonated across the streets of South Korea in 2002. The three themes that we have identified—*politics, play, and struggle*—would appear separately at times, and mixed or juxtaposed at other times, in the candlelight demonstrations that followed. So perhaps it is apt to say that the entire year of 2002, rather than the three demonstrations by themselves, may be regarded as an *overture* auguring the modalities and contours of the demonstrations that were to come.

Of all these, the voice of the World-Cup masses had a distinctly monophonic, uniform texture of unison, as following the matches and rooting for their team was the foremost preoccupation of the movement. The middle-school girl protests, on the other hand, initially featured the voice of a more or less traditional organization on the one hand (the Action Committee) and that of the netizen masses on the other. Then, the seemingly similar but different voices articulating anti-US and anti-

war positions in these two camps transformed into conflicting viewpoints, ending the movement of the middle-school girl masses. In the case of Nosamo, while the actions of the mass was centered around the elections, they went into various arenas, such as that of the presidential primaries of the Democratic Party, the presidential election itself, off-line public speech events, and the movement to boycott the right-wing newspaper the *Chosun ilbo*. Their theme went through variations and modulations, played forcefully at times and delicately at others, sometimes with a prolonged tempo and sometimes with a rapid one. The theme repeated itself endlessly in tandem with the counter melody throughout this prelude. At the same time, however, the movement exhibited a unique variable structure, in which even the theme itself went through processes of expansion and contraction, cutting and mixing, modulation and variation, etc. The power of the Roh masses that catapulted Roh from the last place candidate in the primaries to the presidency in short measure derived from their flexible variations upon the obstinate theme of love, variations that earned them the negative label of “Noppa.” Because of this power of *attraction*, the Roh Moo-hyun masses did not lose the power to mobilize even after Roh became president. This power was reactivated to bring people into the streets in the anti-impeachment candlelight demonstration in 2004. This demonstration exerted enormous political power, bringing a halt to the impeachment process. This power remained after Roh stepped down and died, persisting well into the presidency of Moon Jae-in, who was an old friend and successor of Roh. Thus, it provided a kind of basso continuo to the tone of the mass movement that followed.

Toccatà and Fugue: The Candlelight Demonstrations of 2008

On May 2, 2008, middle-school and high-school students held the first “candlelight culture festival against the import of US beef import.” This was another landmark event in the history of the mass movement in South Korea. The candlelight demonstrations of 2008 were triggered by the import of beef possibly tainted with mad cow disease under the Lee Myung-bak

government. As the size of the demonstration grew, the People's Council on Mad Cow Disease was formed by leading citizens groups. Subsequently, the movement also came to be known as the "mad cow" protest. However, the protest was not limited to the issue of mad cow disease. A high-school student who went by the name "Andante" had already started on April 6 a petition to impeach President Lee Myung-bak and managed to gather a million signatures within a month. This was a precursor to the candlelight demonstrations of 2008. Since the beginning of the demonstrations on May 2, middle-school and high-school students had been engaged in a protest against the government's education policy, a policy that was epitomized by the "zero period" that would require students to come to school to work on their own at seven in the morning. The demonstrators then went on to make other demands against the policies of the Lee Myung-bak government in general. "Stop the Four Major Rivers Project," "stop privatization," and "defend KBS" were some of their slogans. As all these demands converged into a single stream, the demonstration went on to demand the ousting of Lee Myung-bak. Therefore, this protest was, from the very beginning, not just against the import of US beef but against the Lee Myung-bak presidency as a whole. The issue of the importing of mad cow beef was a metonym that condensed and expressed all these grievances.

The size of the demonstrations started with a little over ten thousand on May 2, 2008. The number went up to twenty, and then thirty thousand ten days later. In June, the attendance was in the hundreds of thousands before rising to a million. More important than the size of the demonstration was the unprecedented modality that the candlelight demonstration assumed. First, middle-school students spearheaded the early demonstrations and maintained their presence throughout the duration of the protest (thus, a stylized cartoon image of middle-school girl holding a candle became one of the symbols of the protest). Second, after the initial period, the demonstration was held almost every day for over one hundred days. Third, while the police set up a massive wall of freight containers—later referred to as the "Myung-bak mountain fortress" (Myung-bak *sanseong*) by the demonstrators and media—to block the major roadway in Gwanghwamun leading to Cheongwadae (the Blue House, which is the presidential office

and residence) on June 10, they ceded the space in front of the wall, which the demonstrators were free to use every day. Fourth, because of this arrangement, the demonstration began to feature some rather unusual participants, such as online *clubs* and communities that were typically regarded as being apolitical. Thus, the protest took on a festive dimension. Lastly, we must add that the linking of online and offline spaces was operative throughout the protest, not just in the drafting of proposals for action but also throughout the course of the actions themselves. While these points that constitute the singularities of the candlelight demonstration of 2008 reflect the changes in the mode of mass movement after 2002 more distinctly, they also illustrate the ways in which the 2008 protest set itself apart from the demonstrations that came before and after it. For this reason, let us look at them more closely.

Much of the time, we tend to attribute great significance to the demands that a struggle or demonstration puts forward (*what they want*). But if we were to paraphrase Marx from *The German Ideology*, how we demonstrate is often more important than what we demonstrate for. This was especially the case with the candlelight demonstration of 2008. We have already pointed out how the internet was no longer a mere means of communication or the media but that it effectively had become the nervous system of society. This became a full-blown phenomenon in the protest of 2008. In less than a month over one million people had signed the petition started by Andante to impeach Lee Myung-bak. The bulletin board service for online discussion, Agora on the web portal Daum, became a crucial site for the everyday exchange of opinions and affects. Simultaneous access and search facilitated the coordination of various individual and collective actions, such as posting on the internet and making phone calls to express grievances. All these were made possible by the network. Furthermore, online live streams enabled people to track the positions and movements of the riot police, thus enabling demonstrators to pick paths, exits, and meeting points, etc. The network was also instrumental in providing a means to monitor police brutality as well as share photographs and videos of police excesses, all of which were crucial in shaping popular opinions against the police. Besides this, the network served as a weapon to hack and attack the sites operated

by government agencies, such as the police or the Blue House. Moreover, the network enabled collectively run media channels to shape *counter public discourse* and fight the war of public opinion waged by the conservative press, an axis formed by the three pro-establishment papers: *Chosun ilbo*, *JoongAng ilbo*, and *Dong-a ilbo*, often referred to as “Cho-Joong-Dong.”

With the internet situated between them, participants, reporters, analysts, and transmitters, etc. were connected to each other, thus forming a single body (Min 2008). As part of this giant collective body, one could find oneself involved in performing any or all of the following functions—joining the demonstration; recording and uploading what is happening live; analyzing live footage; calling the police to account; finding a safe means of escape for demonstrators; relaying useful information to protesters on the ground, and making sure that this information circulates on blogs or internet communities; and producing and propagating critical public opinion. The on-line virtual space and off-line actual space merge to form an extension (body) and coordinate an action in real time together, effectively giving birth to a new mode of time-space continuum. For example, when an MC at the candlelight demonstration on June 10 called on the demonstrators to “access the homepage of the Blue House all at once to show the people’s will,” people across the nation did exactly this, causing an immediate shutdown. This example illustrates how powerful the on-offline extension/body is. Goh Byeong-gwon contrasts this form of media, which combines the *virtual* and the *actual*, online and offline extension, with the old form of media, which performed the function of mediating individuals in the public sphere. The media is no longer that which represents or mediates reality, opposing *directness*, but is something that constitutes reality immediately as things happen in real time. Goh calls this phenomenon *immediation*. According to Goh, “directness” and “mediation” are placed in a single continuum of *immediation* (Goh 2008, 249). This concept in effect highlights the fact that the media has transcended its former role and passed into the realm of *immediation*.

In this context, we also need to mention the private broadcast activists who broadcasted live footage of the action that transpired throughout the daily demonstrations, which lasted over a hundred days. In the backdrop

was the establishment of the online broadcasting platform Afreeca in 2006. This platform enabled private live broadcasting by anyone with a computer connected to the internet.¹³ Following the establishment of this platform, numerous private broadcasting stations came to the fore during the candlelight demonstration of 2008. While the standard broadcasting crew consisted of a trio—a camera person, a laptop operator, and a reporter—it was also not uncommon for individuals to broadcast on their own, with just one person carrying a laptop hooked up to the Internet with a USB modem, coupled with a camera and microphone. The best-known narrowcasting channel, Color TV, run by members of the New Progressive Party, received twenty thousand simultaneous views and a total of three hundred thousand views on the day of a major demonstration (Chin 2008, 170). Since the platform allowed viewers to comment, the private broadcasters were able to communicate with their viewers in real time. This meant the viewers were not only able to express their opinions on the content of the broadcast but also make requests, suggesting subjects for future content. Private broadcasters formed another media channel that established direct real-time communication with the actions on the ground, even enabling those who were not able to participate in the demonstrations to be connected to events on site.¹⁴

What differentiated the mass demonstrations of 2008 from previous ones was not the internet itself (as it can be argued that the internet existed prior to these events) but rather the wide distribution of mobile devices that can be equipped with digital video camera. In other words, these digital devices, when worn by an individual, can be regarded as a new *sensory organ that inputs* the real time happenings of the protests and uploads it to the giant nervous network, the internet, thus constituting a kind of molecular media. The sensory information inputted from the real world is then searched, analyzed, and disseminated, shaping new action directives in the

13. Private broadcasting is also known as narrowcasting, in contrast to broadcasting.

14. Chin Jung-kwon described this media forming an on-offline extension with what he called remediation. In spite of the contrasting wording, it in effect describes the same phenomena as what Goh Byeong-gwon called “immediation.”

collective nervous system that constitutes the internet. Now the *mass* is no longer a numbered aggregate of anonymous individuals but a giant cyborg that is connected through the giant nervous system of the internet, wearing new digital sensory organs that are hooked up to a collective intelligence that is continuously constituted (Yi-Jinkyung 2012, 69).

The transformation of the media environment and the emergence of an on-offline mode of extension were the primary conditions that determined the *subject* of this demonstration and the manner in which the demonstration progressed as a whole. If we were to look at the process of subject formation first, it has already been pointed out that the mass movements after 2002 did not have a great leader or a particular center at their heart but began and spread through the proliferation of decentralized networks. This was also the case with the demonstrations of 2008. Nevertheless, there was a difference. The impetus for the demonstrations of 2002 was supplied for the most part by discernible groups (Nosamo and the Red Devils) or by individuals (in the case of the netizen who issued a call to the masses to move beyond the purview of the Action Committee). The candlelight rallies of 2008, on the other hand, were quite different, as it is difficult to pinpoint any group or focal point that led the protest early on. Even though the petition that was initiated by the high-school student Andante to impeach President Lee Myung-bak had gathered a large number of signatures in a short period of time, it failed to become a direct ignition point for the candlelight rallies. Even the internet communities that formed around the petition did not provide the impetus for the demonstrations. The bulletin board platform Agora did play a very important role, but did not succeed in taking on the task of *forming* the protest, because it was simply an arena for discussions between multifarious people. As for the unplanned demonstrations started by middle- and high-school students, they were soon followed by demonstrations oriented around other issues and taking place at scattered locations. Thus, we cannot say *who started it all*. Having witnessed how the teenagers' candlelight demonstration on May 2 was repeated by others here and there, more than seventeen hundred civil organizations gathered on May 6 and formed the People's Council to hold the Candlelight Culture Festival (hereafter, the People's Council). However, demonstrators

began marching after the Candlelight Culture Festival without prior directives from the Council. The majority of the organizations in the People's Council, in fact, objected to marching even after it developed into a mass march on May 24. They merely acquiesced to the growing number of people joining the march day by day until May 29, when the size of the march became massive. Thus, the People's Council merely followed the masses rather than playing a leadership role (G. Kim 2009a, 92–100). In sum, we cannot pinpoint an *organization* that led the candlelight demonstrations of 2008. From its inception to the burgeoning mass march, it was all up to the spontaneous judgement of the masses. The impetus for this all came from the simultaneous but diffused—one can almost say unfocused—gatherings held by multifarious groups.

Even after the People's Council started to take control, what distinguished the demonstrations of 2008 was the fact that internet communities that are quite heterogeneous and diverse took part in the demonstrations in their own characteristic ways. For example, the internet community My Club, formed by women in their twenties to thirties for the review and discussion of drama serials, not only ran a newspaper ad against the government policy but also distributed bread, rice cakes, fruits, instant noodles, water, and other items at the demonstration. The Soul Dresser, another bulletin board site run by women in their twenties to thirties, also gained public attention when they published a newspaper ad criticizing the government, participated in the demonstration and organized a flash mob at Coex (Convention and Exhibition Center), saying, "Democracy is dead." Members of the internet community on cosmetics, Hwajang Bal, participated in the demo with miniskirts and high heels, while Sebanyo (an acronym for Women Changing the World or *sesang-eul bakku-neun yeoja-deul*) joined the protest pushing baby carriages. 82 Cook, another bulletin board community whose stated purpose was to share "information or wisdom on cooking and wise housekeeping," started a boycott campaign against companies using imported beef and companies using GMOs, also publishing an indictment of the conservative paper *Chosun ilbo*. Other bulletin board communities that participated in the protest included, Ssang ko (an abridgement of Eyelids and Nose, or *ssangkkeopul-gwa ko*) an

information exchange site on plastic surgery; Yeop hok jin (an abridgement of Bizarre or True, or *yeopgi hogeun jinsil*), a discussion site that uses humor as its medium; Lemon Terrace, a site where home decoration, interior design, and child rearing are discussed; the SLR Club, on digital cameras; MLB Park, on American professional baseball; and Gimhap Jogong (Gimhap Tribute), a food review bulletin board on the portal DCinside. Each of these groups would join the rally, flying their *flag* and proudly displaying their unique style. In other words, they invented and practiced their own form of political participation.

While there were those who viewed these groups positively, there were others who criticized them for potentially engendering fragmentation by refusing the notion of centralized leadership. The latter also accused the former of overly extolling the spontaneity of the masses (for instance, G. Kim 2009b). Conversely, what such an appraisal illustrates is the fact that there was not just one but many who exercised leadership in the candlelight demonstrations of 2008. Besides this, there was the fact that each of these *leaders* had a particular orientation and *manner* of participating in the demonstrations. In effect, they applied a hue of their own to the giant canvas of the demonstration. Whether these new *leaders* were internet communities or high-school students, they would not, conventionally, have been in the position to exercise initiative in political protests. In the past, they would most likely have been mere participants. But during the candlelight demonstrations of 2008, they exercised their initiative in their own ways, adding their hues to the expansive painting of the demonstration. Moreover, when you take into account the fact that the interests that brought each of these bulletin board communities together—which spanned the spectrum from cosmetics, cooking, and plastic surgery all the way to humor—are all generally considered quite distant from social movements, it is evident that the candlelight demonstrations of 2008 brought new subjects into the social movement. In this sense, the candlelight demonstrations of 2008 are different from any protests that came before or after.

This is directly linked to the way the candlelight demonstrations of 2008 unfolded. While a mass rally or demonstration is usually focused on one issue or presents a set of unified demands, the candlelight demonstrations of

2008 took on highly variable forms in the course of their development as the internet communities, some of which are listed above, participated in the demonstration in their own unique ways. The new protesting subjects, many of which had never been observed previously, came out daily to demonstrate in the space demarcated by the “Myung-bak mountain fortress”—the wall of stacked freight containers that blocked the major roadway in Gwanghwamun. Their presence in this space had a profound influence upon the mode or nature of the protest itself, especially as this arrangement went on for close to one month. The police had given up on suppressing the demonstration, ceding the space on one side of the wall to the masses. Under the circumstances, in which direct confrontation with the police was suspended, the masses ended up shouting slogans that would never enter the ears of the powers that be. In such a situation, the masses found themselves facing another nemesis, that of *senselessness*. Besides, time was against them. Even though struggle was what the masses were there for, the call for struggle alone is not enough to sustain a mass movement, especially when the powers that be had retreated behind make-shift walls in the areas around the presidential office. The more time passes, the more tired the masses become. This naturally led to a gradual diminution of the will of the masses, corresponding to a decline in the intensity of the struggle. In this sense, the empty space without the police is, for all intents and purposes, a *liberated zone*, but it can also end up a cul-de-sac if those who inhabit it cannot find an exit.

What is important here is to invent a new form of movement that changes time into a friend, so that the mass movement becomes stronger as time passes. The most important innovation of the candlelight demonstrations of 2008 concerns this exact point. The masses turned the space into a *playground* to withstand a duration extending over a month in a strange space. Within this space, a sense of liberation flourished despite the confined circumstances, a sense of victory persisted despite the feeling of being ignored, and meaning and senselessness were made to wage a struggle with one another. Daily performances were held at various metropolitan locations abandoned by the authorities. Collective action and speeches mocking the president, the government, and their policies were on display.

Also present were internet community members performing acts that accentuated their shared interests as well as singers and bands performing on stage. It is not difficult to see what role the internet community members, seemingly uninvolved in the social movement, played here. These playful performances served to draw internet community members, previously unfamiliar with social movement, to the sites of protest in growing numbers, as though they were showing up to compete with one another. In this way, the mass movement found a way to have time serve its ends, rather than work against it. Instead of the masses growing increasingly tired and leaving as time passed, new masses increasingly joined the demonstrations, exhibiting the seriousness befitting a social movement while offsetting this with a sense of playfulness and light-heartedness. The fact that the possibilities of clashes with the police were precluded at this time provided the condition for these masses to join the movement without the fear of violence or injury.

These modalities of the demonstration are not limited to the period after the “Myung-bak mountain fortress” went up in the Gwanghwamun area. Previously, the riot police defended the same area by forming a barricade with lined-up transport buses that were anchored to the pavement and shooting a water cannon at the demonstrators. Protesters, on the other hand, tried to make inroads toward the Blue House by playing tug-of-war with the buses or climbing over them. In spite of significant clashes, small collectives and clubs were on the ground, flying flags that showed off their tastes while criticizing and mocking the Lee Myung-bak government in their own fashion. They engaged in these activities as a kind of performance. Multiple assemblies were held here and there on the streets by small groups, many of which engaged in various acts and speeches critical of the government. On one side, there was a frontline against the police, while on the other, multiple groups (which might consist of tens, hundreds or even thousands) would participate in performances, singing and dancing. In other words, a *wild* sense of festivity was evident from the very beginning of the candlelight demonstrations. On this matter, Chin Jung-kwon, who was an anchor for Color TV—the *private* broadcasting channel of the New Progressive Party—wrote, “We have both politics of under-development

(politics as struggle) and politics of hyper-development (politics as play) within the candlelight demonstration. Even while the citizens fiercely collided with the police on the frontline, others would be enjoying a band performance a mere 100 meters behind them” (Chin 2008, 176).

Of course, not everything was rosy. Struggle and play are by nature in opposition to one another. Those who are earnestly participating in the struggle are prone to feel averse to the lightness of play, while the playful may feel encumbered by the heaviness of the struggle. What transpired on June 21st was a case in point. That day, a concert titled “Overnight Concert: Candles, Be Strong!” (*Himnaeja chotbula! 1 bak 2 il konseoteu*) was held on the initiative of the citizens group Munhwa yeondae (Cultural Action). “Although the concert was planned to encourage the demonstrators, some of the demonstrators were annoyed and complained to the organizers. Numerous remonstrations from various organizations and individuals kept on coming until the end of the concert early in the morning.” Because of the unexpected volume of criticisms, the organizers had to end the concert earlier than planned (Lee 2008, 151–152). It might be suggested that it was the sheer size of the stage and the volume of the amplified sound rather than the excessively playful nature of the event that led to so many complaints, as it may have interfered with the gatherings and performances organized by other organizations. In other words, these objections were made because the concert, which one might perceive as having a *totalizing* character because of its overwhelming size, encroached upon the territories that various subjects of the candlelight demonstration of 2008 carved out for their own expressions. Therefore, the cause of the conflict did not come from the opposition between struggle and play alone. Rather, it was the desire for the diversity of expression and the territorial boundaries of expression that catalyzed the conflict.

Needless to say, it was the new communicative environment, an infrastructure linking the internet and mobile technology, that enabled the coexistence of diverse expressions of playful festivity at the site of struggle. This enabled small groups to participate in and impact the modality of the demonstration at large. Members of the internet clubs were able to have real time discussions beforehand on how they would participate in any

given demonstration so they could allocate roles and prepare whatever was necessary. Middle- and high-school students also planned and prepared their own smaller gatherings, having online communications with friends. Such processes were made possible by the new communicative environment. In sum, the fortuitous combination of police strategy (the police barricading themselves behind buses and freight containers), a new communicative environment, and the participation of small groups enabled the unexpected transformation of the space of demonstration into a ground of playful festivity. With the demonstration taking shape in this way, those who previously would never have had any leading role in protests were afforded the time and space to participate in the demonstration, each in their own fashion. As there was no center that consolidated them, they—who would have been *nobodies* in demonstrations past—were able to emerge as *subjects* with agency of their own. Because of this, not only did the elements of struggle and play coexist, the latter dimensions overpowered the former to give the candlelight demonstration of 2008 an overall festive character. It was no surprise, then, that those who were loyal to a more traditional conception of the social movement would retrospectively summarize the proceedings of 2008 as, if we were to take the liberty of simplifying their words, “just having fun over 100 days without getting any results.” By contrast, for the exact same reason, others regarded the masses of the 2008 candlelight demonstrations as actual evidence of the “multitude” that Negri and Hardt spoke of, with their “swarm intelligence” and the diverse manners in which they expressed themselves (Joe 2009).

If the fact that the police/government and the demonstrating masses were separated by a giant wall appeared overwhelming, it was far more so for the government than for the demonstrating masses. The police and the government waited for the masses to tire themselves and grow enervated, but this did not happen. The masses were able to *enjoy* because they were able to make a playground and an expressive space of a festival in the middle of the city. The government and police, on the other hand, could only watch and wait throughout the duration of the demonstration, having completely ceded the center of the city to the masses. From their point of view, even though the masses remained in the politics of play, they had started the

demonstration as criticism and struggle against the government. That meant that they needed to *recapture* the center of the capital.

From the perspective of the demonstrating masses, even though the coexistence of struggle and play persisted throughout the demonstration, they were not intent on simply remaining in the mode of playfulness. The masses tried to consolidate their expressive activities into a unified offensive force against the government, despite the fact that the massive wall minimized the possibility of a collision. In fact, the demonstrating masses had taken the initiative in marching the streets from the beginning, spontaneously chanting “Lee Myung-bak out!” The playful groups had no hesitation on this particular point. It was rather the People’s Council—a coalition of numerous citizens groups—that was hesitant in taking up the slogan. In fact, they never came to a resolution on the matter, because of opposition from member organizations. They were even passive towards the idea of organizing a march at the conclusion of the formal assemblies (G. Kim 2009a, 95). It took them until May 29 to come to an agreement to organize the march. It was as though they had been pushed by the tide of masses that had grown in the order of hundreds of thousands to assume a pivotal position.

On June 10, one million people came to the demonstration. If one looks purely at the size of the demonstration, this was the high point of the candlelight demonstrations of 2008. The so-called Myung-bak mountain fortress appeared immediately following this. In front of the massive wall, people in the order of hundreds of thousands kept coming. However, the citizens groups that comprised the People’s Council were afraid of the demonstrations becoming a full-scale struggle. They avoided speaking explicitly of the movement as one that demanded regime change, choosing simply to wait for the government to respond to their request for negotiation.¹⁵ However, the government did not issue a response to this,

15. “Kim Min-yeong, who joined the People’s Council said, ‘We showed everything we had before the 10th. We don’t know what we must do now. We have concerns.’” Park Won-seok, who was the chief of the strategic office, remarked, “We are concerned about how we might exercise leadership over the movement if the president does not try to ‘renegotiate’ the [US beef] deal” (Goh 2008, 254).

even after the proposed time limit had passed. Even at this stage of the game, the People's Council did not enact any offensive measures but continued to await the government's response. While the slogans and critical voices were backed by the giant turnout of the masses, no action came forth to match that power. The slogans, thus, were evacuated of their force and conviction. The tide turned, and the initiative was handed over to the government. Even then, the masses kept on demonstrating outside the Myung-bak mountain fortress, since there was no particular reason to change direction or stop the demonstration. Meanwhile, the police took measures to ensure that there was no will on the part of the organization to lead the demonstrators to further struggle. Realizing that they had the initiative, the police went on to violently *arrest and suppress* the protesters gathered for the Overnight Demo of June 28–29. Many were injured as a result. The potential remained at the time for the struggle to switch from the mode that it had come to assume—one styled after protracted siege warfare—to an engagement in actual confrontation. However, on June 30, the Catholic Priests' Association for Justice held a mass entitled the "Mass for the Repentance of State Power." Placing themselves between the police and the masses, the priests calmed the intensifying fight. Instead of a physical wall, a religious wall went up. The mass by the Catholic priests was followed by ceremonies hosted by church pastors and Buddhist monks in succession. The situation reverted to the state of a protracted war.

In any case, the tide was not going to turn again and the government was not about to abandon the initiative. The police swiftly went into full-scale arrest mode, seizing any and every participant of the demonstration they could put their hands on, including leaders of the People's Council. The ensuing confusion deprived the demonstrators of any pivot in the middle, though the masses persisted in holding candlelight demonstrations in the form of sporadic skirmishes. What is more important is that the affect of the masses changed. Previously unafraid of physical clashes, even going so far as to scale the wall of police vehicles to advance towards the Blue House, the masses were now akin to *little lambs* seeking refuge in the protection of the priests. Even though the masses would continue holding demonstrations in the plazas and streets where they no longer encountered

the wall of freight containers or walls of police buses, they would turn and run upon sight of approaching police units, offering themselves the alibi that they were engaged in a playful struggle. The politics of play that stood alongside the politics of struggle now became mere politics of play without struggle. The protest, after this point, did persist until mid-August. However, it was a protest that the government no longer stressed about—one that was already tending towards its own disappearance. The Lee Myung-bak regime then proceeded, on the one hand, to enforce a full-scale suppression and apprehension of the demonstrators, and on the other, to seize media companies, such as KBS, that were sympathetic to the struggle. Thus, an all-out attack on the masses began. In this way, the candlelight demonstrations of 2008 fizzled out without a spectacular blaze.

Because of the fact that the candlelight demonstrations of 2008 ended in such a manner, and because of the fact that, in spite of the persistence of the demonstrations, they did not achieve any visible results, many see the candlelight demonstrations of 2008 in a negative light. This is especially the case for those who believe that mass movements must result in the development of democratic institutions and new political parties, such as political scientists adhering to traditional theories of politics. These academics were not reticent about their apprehensions about the struggle, especially since it did not assume a familiar form and was completely separated from political institutions (for example, Choi 2008 and Lim 2011). Apart from them, leftist activists and theorists who continued to promulgate a traditional activist logic, also criticized the candlelight demonstrations for not achieving any results, underlining their futility. Brandishing a class analysis, this line of thought often argued that the limitation of the demonstrations was obvious from the beginning, as the subjects of the candlelight demonstrations were “petit-bourgeois” or “consumer citizens” (for instance, Dangdae bipyeong gihoek wiwonhoe [2009]). To them, problems arising in the process of class *composition* must be an *a priori* alibi for any failure of a movement. This movement, then, served as a test of class identity—for them to be of the revolutionary class, they were compelled to stand on the side and ridicule the masses. It would appear, even, that they thought this to be a movement that should not have

been started in the first place.

Pointing out the limitation of an event or a movement based on its class origin, however, is not what a class analysis should be doing. The majority of mass movements, even ones that approach revolutionary situations, often find their origins in something that appears to be trivial or (*petit-*)*bourgeois*. However, all movements change in their essence as time passes. What began from a *petit-bourgeois* perspective may turn revolutionary, and conversely, a movement that held a proletarian class perspective initially may become bourgeois. Worse than this, it can even become reactionary. What is crucial is not to look for traces of *class* origin at the base structure, but to analyze and determine which way the emergent phenomenon is tending and which way we have to push it from a *class* perspective. What powers class analysis is the will to engage and even overcome the initially limited purview of the movement through the lens offered by the class perspective. If we do not have such a component—that is, if we were to simply look for an *a priori* reason for failure, or an alibi for why we should refrain from participating by employing *class analysis*—we would do well to cast such a form of analysis in the trash. There is no such thing as a movement that we should never be a part of. The type of thought process that says workers must engage in working-class struggle, or that the *petit-bourgeoisie* engage only in *petit-bourgeois* movements, is the idle talk of economism, the gossip of scientific voyeurs.

Another thing we must note concerns the discourse regarding *visible results*. If we were to say that any definition of success is contingent upon the accomplishment of visible results, then it can be argued that a successful movement is extremely rare. Neither the self-immolation of Jeon Tae-il nor the Gwangju Uprising fit such a definition of success. In fact, they were, by the logic of this criteria, impossibly far from it. Before we begin speaking about results, we must remember that mass movements produce something *inside the masses themselves*. The masses change themselves through their participation in the mass movement. That is the most important and most elementary fruit of the mass movements. This fruit, for better or worse, is discovered and savored in a very different spatial and temporal disposition than that of *visible results*.

What the pre-2008 mass movements signaled to the people was that they could express their will as masses with regard to any political matter or social issue and that they could make demands, in the name of the masses, indicating what they wanted. Further, it was proven that such a movement could produce surprising results in a presidential election or even a campaign against impeachment, such as the case of President Roh Moo-hyun. In addition, the most important achievement of the candlelight demonstrations of 2008 was the fact that the masses were able to occupy a plaza, while shaping and sharing a life together within this space throughout an extended period of time. The significance of demonstrations such as these lie in their capacity to remind its participants that however ordinary they may appear to be, or however far removed their interests may be (such as cosmetics, fashion, or TV dramas), anybody can take part in them in their own way, without having to be an *actor* in the conventional social-movement sense (that is, being someone who makes important decisions or acts with extraordinary courage at a significant juncture). Such experiences and perceptions become a part of collective memory, habitus, and culture. It is the experience of the mass movement that sets one part of the masses (which has these memories) from the other part (the part without). The candlelight demonstrations of 2016–2017 that ousted Park Geun-hye would not have been possible without the experience of the candlelight demonstrations of 2008 and the masses who participated in them. The achievements of the mass movement are destined to be deferred—*success* always arrives late. The effects of the mass movement impress themselves immediately upon the masses themselves first of all, taking a long detour to return elsewhere.

What stands out the most in the modalities of the candlelight demonstrations of 2008 are, as we said earlier, the expressive acts of the new political subjects—those who were previously not considered political subjects at all. They applied their own shades to the canvas of the demonstration. The expressive diversity of the subgroups, which seem distant from struggle and closer to play, transformed the modalities of protest. This diversity can be likened to colorful embroidery that was overlaid on the protest, offsetting the gravity of the demonstration,

transforming it into something joyful, light, and open to anyone willing to join. Not to mention flash mobs, as well as other *improvisational* ideas, such as raising money for advertisement and giving out *gimbap* (a Korean snack), water, and so forth, were inserted into the space of demonstration. These diverse improvisational acts that seemed so distant from the solemnity of protest made *mise en scène* out of the whole demonstration.

However, this expressive flamboyance was, throughout everything, inextricably bound to a set of powerful issues. Thus, the seriousness of the struggle was never made to disappear into oblivion, it remained in the background of all this activity. The seriousness of struggles functioned as the *theme* that weaved together the heterogeneous elements that appeared incongruous, such as plastic surgery, cosmetics, fashion, humor, etc. Due to the repetitive theme, the candlelight demonstration could accommodate the presence of extreme improvisational, flamboyant heterogeneity, while forming a consistency that confronted the Lee Myung-bak government in its entirety.¹⁶ Of course, the People's Council that coordinated the demonstration as a whole tried to flatten the theme into an excessively limited plane—demanding the mere re-negotiation of the terms of the beef import agreement with the US government. In this way, it tried to ignore any deviations from this strict delimitation. In terms of the *aesthetico-critical quality* of the demonstration, this was quite unfortunate and regrettable. However, in spite of this limitation, the masses were playing, from the beginning, variations on the repetitive theme of “Lee Myung-bak out.” These themes were sometimes mixed together and at other times compressed to compose contrapuntal themes. Thus, the protest took on the repetitive modality of the fugue, in which a theme is given and responded to by repetitive contrapuntal themes.

On the one hand, the candlelight demonstrations of 2008 exhibited the flashy virtuosity and expressive diversity that we can liken to the modality of the toccata, with its emphasis upon improvisation and irregular rhythms. On the other, we witnessed the emergence of a theme that switches its parts,

16. This *consistency* means to leave the heterogeneous components as they are, while still holding them together (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 327).

as well as the theme that answers it. These responses consequently brought forth new contrapuntal themes, mixing and intersecting and repeating. Subsequently, shortened fragments of the contrapuntal theme would mix with the contrasting themes and go through episodic transformations and development—a texture and modality of fugue. Around June 10, we had a stretta-like repetition, in which the main theme repeated and peaked in a compressed manner. However, instead of the last half of the demonstrations corresponding to a coda, the themes were deferred and repeated, gradually fading out. In this sense, one might say that as a finished product and composition, it was not up to the expected standard. In spite of this shortcoming, the flamboyance, improvisational quality, and heterogeneity of the elements at play transformed and wove through the repeated main theme in a contrapuntal fashion. In this sense, I would like to call this manner of progression *toccata and fugue*.

Passacaglia: The Candlelight Demonstrations of 2016–2017

The candlelight demonstrations that started on October 29, 2016 and extended through March 11 and then April 29, 2017, amassed a total of seventeen million participants.¹⁷ Extending for 5–6 months and ousting the incumbent president, the protest marked another peak in the history of the mass movement. Many see this series of candlelight demonstrations as an exemplar of *direct democracy*, with the 17 million-strong mass movement gathered in the plaza persisting in their demand over the course of these six months, and eventually realizing it (for example, Son [2017]; D. Kim [2017]; Lee [2017]). Some also refer to this mass movement as the “candlelight revolution” or “candlelight civil revolution” (for example, S. Kim [2017]). In this regard, the way in which the mass movement of 2016–2017 is regarded and judged is in total contrast to the protest of 2008, which was criticized for not getting anything done despite the long struggle.

This *success* was possible because those who united in the struggle

17. JoongAng ilbo, May 24, 2017.

included not only the candlelight masses and progressive organizations but also judges in the court as well as a number of National Assembly politicians, including a significant number on the right and even the pro-establishment media, including the right-wing paper *Chosun ilbo*. In contrast to the protest of 2008, which was completely cut off from the major political parties, the demonstrations of 2017 solicited the participation of society as a whole: the media exposed the problem; the masses demanded the president step down; members of the National Assembly agreed to pass an impeachment motion; the Constitutional Court judged in favor of impeachment. However, because of this very fact, there are others who regard this turn of events not as a *revolution* but as a mere act of repairing a system that had been wrecked by cronyism, calling it but a civil compromise to restore the constitutional order (for example, Y. Kwon 2018).¹⁸ These almost completely opposite reactions to the event that impeached and even arrested the incumbent president can be understood as different perspectives on the chain of causality that caused events to progress in the way that they did prior to the candlelight demonstration—the events that directly caused the demonstration to happen—as well as what transpired afterwards. If we are to understand the singularity of the candlelight demonstrations of 2016–2017, we need to summarize what happened before and after the series of demonstrations.

Park Geun-hye's government retained a strong continuity from the Lee Myung-bak regime, which had proceeded to implement aggressively neoliberal, exclusionary policies after having been surprised by the candlelight demonstrations of 2008. Just like its predecessor, the Park Geun-hye regime consistently ignored, disregarded, and suppressed human rights and democracy, dismissing the problems of the people, workers, and the

18. Seo Young-pyo (2017) argues that the event effectively eliminated the possibility for progressive politics, citing how it restored the *constitutionalist normalcy* and how the interests of the masses became trapped within the old institutional framework of politics. Kim Yun Cheol (2018) posits that the purview of the movement is defined by its adherence to procedure as they impeached the president and held an election to accomplish regime change. Thus, the movement did not seek a revolutionary change. Instead, it affirmed a sort of "Maginot Line Democracy" (after the French line of defense built against Germany prior to World War II but which turned out to be toothless), serving only to protect and conserve the barest, most minimal form of democracy.

poor. This also meant, however, that social resistance from all directions intensified as a consequence. This became especially evident after Kim Ki-choon, who was the Public Prosecutor General under the dictator Park Chung-hee, became Chief Secretary of the dictator's daughter, President Park Geun-hye. This meant that the sensibility of the Yushin era, which might be summed up as *suppression as a form of government is good enough*, was becoming hegemonic under Park Geun-hye. The resistance to this subsequently became full scale.

Thanks to these conditions, so many struggles emerged as if to compete against one another—the struggle against the nationalization of history textbooks, the movement demanding investigations into the capsized ferryboat MV Sewol, protests against the blacklisting of people involved in arts and performances, the struggle against the THAAD, the struggle to demand investigation into the death of the activist farmer Baek Nam-gi, among others. Among them, the sinking of MV Sewol haunted the Park Geun-hye regime from the day of the sinking on April 16, 2014 until the end of the regime. Gwanghwamun Plaza and Seoul Plaza in front of Seoul City Hall were filled with encampments of protesters demanding justice for these issues. Concerning these issues, 53 social organizations, including the KCTU (Korean Confederation of Trade Unions) formed the People's Struggle Center for National Rally (hereafter referred to as the Struggle Center). Starting from November 14, 2015 until March 26, 2016, the Struggle Center held five national rallies, which the KCTU called the “people's all-out stand” (*minjung chonggwolgi*). It was at this time that the demand for Park Geun-hye to step down first began to circulate. It was not a realistic demand, but it was more or less a slogan to call attention to the one who was ultimately responsible. In this sense, the purview of the demand stayed within the symbolic realm.

With these struggles in the backdrop, an event that turned out to be the decisive turning-point—what is known as Choi Soon-sil-gate—broke out. In September 2016, indications of Choi's abuse of power as a close confidant of Park Geun-hye began to emerge in the media, such as in the center-left paper *Hankyoreh*. This was followed on October 24 with a report by JTBC, the cable TV subsidiary of *JoongAng ilbo*, that it had obtained a tablet

device that belonged to Choi. It was with the revelation of its content, which indicated the depth of Choi's involvement in presidential decision-making, that the matter began to unfold as a full-blown national scandal. Following this development, the first candlelight demonstration on this issue with the title, "Citizens' Candlelight: Let us gather! Let us be indignant! Park Geun-hye, step down!" was held on October 29. While the organizers estimate put the attendance figure at fifty thousand (with the police reporting an estimate of twelve thousand), approximately twenty thousand seemed to have attended this first demonstration. On November 5, the figure jumped to two-hundred thousand, showing how fast things were developing. Then, a week later on November 12, one million people showed up for the third candlelight demonstration. On December 3, just before the passing of the impeachment motion in the National Assembly, the number of participants peaked at 1.7 million. The court let the protesters approach to within 100 meters of the Blue House. The police gave up suppressing the demonstrators and retreated to the last line of defense. The masses, on the other hand, avoided clashes with the police. Making calls for nonviolence and order, they encircled the Blue House. The impeachment motion¹⁹ that passed in the National Assembly on December 9 was taken up by the Constitutional Court on March 10, 2017. The three-day-two-night rally from March 9–11, specifically planned to coincide with the sentencing on the 10th, marked the twentieth candlelight demonstration. Subsequently, three more demonstrations were held up to April 29.

What we need to note is how the "people's all-out stand"—a form of rally quite in line with the tradition of social movements since the 1980s—was being organized by the KCTU, as well as the fact that the candlelight demonstrations were held by the Struggle Center, a coalition formed around the leadership of the KCTU. In other words, we need to pay attention to the convergence of an organized mass movement and the candlelight demonstration to understand the modalities of the protest. This dynamic

19. For the impeachment motion to pass, 28 members of the conservative then-ruling Saenuri Party had to vote for in favor. In other words, the passing of the impeachment motion required the support of a significant number of the law makers from the ruling conservative party.

is particularly clear in the first rally of this round of candlelight struggle. While the demo was organized by the Struggle Center, it took the form of a candlelight movement. This meant that the old-style social movement started a candlelight demonstration and actively participated in it. This turn was quite in contrast to how the KCTU had maintained a passive stance toward the candlelight demonstrations of 2008.²⁰ Also notable was the way in which the Struggle Center formed a coalition with groups involved in the struggles of Baek Nam-gi, the farmer killed by a police water cannon, and the victims of the sunken ferry MV Sewol, naming it the Preliminary Committee for the People's Urgent Action for the Ousting of the Park Geun-hye Regime. This coalition then went on to organize the second candlelight demonstration on November 5. Then, on November 9, 1503 organizations, including the Struggle Center and the Civil Society Organizations Network in Korea, came together to form the People's Urgent Action for the Ousting of the Park Geun-hye Regime (hereafter referred to as People's Urgent Action). This shows how two types of movement, which were independent from each other and often took opposing positions, came to converge in this movement.

None of the institutionalized parties, with the exception of the social-democratic Justice Party, joined the first candlelight demonstration on October 29. However, as the movement progressed, members of these parties gradually started to appear in the squares. This was an important distinction from the demonstrations of 2008, which, as we have mentioned, were completely disconnected from the institutionalized political parties. Of course, these lawmakers' opinions on Park Geun-hye's claim on presidency cum legitimacy were extremely cautious compared to the demands the masses were making. The mere mention of the word "impeachment" was strictly taboo to them. However, as the demonstrations progressed, their attitude gradually shifted and they eventually came to submit the impeachment bill. This shows that, contrary to the assertions made by its

20. Although the KCTU was the main organizer of the first candlelight demonstration of 2016, they did not have a separate demand for workers. In this sense, their *initiative* in this demonstration does not quite mean it can be typified as a workers' movement.

critics, the candlelight demonstration was not a *restorative* movement that merely accepted the protocols of institutional politics or assertions made by the media. Rather, it was the other way around. Had it not been for the candlelight demonstrations, it would have been highly probable that neither the National Assembly nor the court would even have fathomed calling for the impeachment of the president. In other words, even if the procedures of presidential impeachment had been initiated, clearly those procedures would not have proceeded to the extent they did without the protests by candlelight masses.

The convergence of these groups and people coincided with the gradual unification of the masses' demands, initially eclectic and scattered. Before the beginning of the candlelight demonstration, the "people's all-out stand," which was held on multiple occasions, held out twelve demands. However, the demands remained disparate from one another, and their appearance on a list besides one another only served to reveal the fact that together, they failed to make a cohesive whole. All the while, there were numerous sit-in encampments in Gwanghwamun. Various fractions of *the people* had carried on with their own struggles, expressing their own demands, often holding their own rallies. All these struggles had taken their own paths, expressing their purpose in their struggles. Choi Soon-sil-gate, having raised allegations against Choi for the "furtive acquisition of state affairs" (*gukjeong nongdan*), bound these multifarious struggles together and gave them a strong impetus to converge into a cohesive force. Park Geun-hye's incompetence as a politician and a person was clearly exposed to an unprecedented extent. The Blue House and the key figures of the Park Geun-hye government were about to be swallowed up by the utterly private relationship between Park and Choi as well as the various acts of fraud Choi committed despite holding no public position. In a parallel development, various issues, including that of MV Sewol and the blacklisting of artists came to focus on the single *cause*.

In this manner, the various issues were condensed into the demand "Park Geun-hye, step down." Thus, as the root cause of all these problems, the Park Geun-hye regime became the primary target of all struggles. From this point onwards, "step down" was no longer a symbolic call but a concrete demand. After having witnessed a succession of four massive candlelight

demonstrations, on November 24 the three opposition parties initiated discussions on proposing an impeachment bill. Thereafter, “impeach” replaced “step down” as the main slogan of the candlelight demonstrations. Even though the impeachment bill was passed by the National Assembly after the sixth candlelight demonstration, “impeach” effectively remained as the solitary slogan of the rallies until the Constitutional Court ruling on March 10. After the sixteenth candlelight demonstration on February 18, 2017, however, the slogan “arrest Park Geun-hye” came out alongside “impeach.”

A comparison with the candlelight demonstrations of 2008 is illustrative. Even though the slogan “Lee Myung-bak step down” was also heard in various quarters during rallies in 2008, it never became the main slogan. The People’s Council that organized the demonstrations did not come to approve it. The main slogan they put forward at the demonstrations was, rather, “Renegotiate the terms of the beef import agreement.” Even after June 10, they continued to insist upon their initial slogan. While this was certainly an important demand of the masses at the time, it failed to serve as a vessel or a point of condensation for the other demands. Precisely because of the fact that this slogan was not able to hold other demands, it stood side by side with, merely adjacent to, other demands and acts of protest. In other words, had the main slogan been “Lee Myung-bak, step down,” it would have absorbed and united voices across various issues, such as opposition to the education policy, four-river development, privatization, etc. “Renegotiate the terms of the beef import agreement” could not fulfil this metonymic function. Thus, it remained simply one slogan among others.

Many issues—MV Sewol, the blacklisting of artists, the agreement with the Japanese government on comfort women among them—were simultaneously at the forefront of peoples’ minds during the candlelight demonstrations of 2016–2017. These issues were simply being listed and advanced side by side, even up to the time of the “people’s all-out stand.” However, as Choi Soon-sil-gate began, the slogans “Park Geun-hye out of office” or “Park Geun-hye step down” came to the fore. As the affair progressed, these slogans were able to integrate and absorb other demands. Following the opposition parties’ agreement on the impeachment proposal,

the motion was passed. The matter now was simpler: they had only to pressure the Constitutional Court to accept the motion. This was when impeachment took center stage, replacing all other slogans. It became the only slogan that managed to absorb and integrate the others. Thus, *expressive diversity* was buried under and masked by the *representative unity* that bound the full multiplicity of the masses into a single nation/people.

Of course, the movement of 2016–2017 did feature many groups using humor at the demonstrations, often flying flags that displayed satirical names making fun of existing social organizations and witty names that made people chuckle. For example, people would be carrying flags with parodies of social movement themes, such as the flags of the National Mansplaining Association, National Dog Owners' Association, National Cat Labor Union, Korean Confederation of Cat Unions, Old-Fart Association of the Republic of Korea, and National Stay-home Girls and Boys Association. Others wove flags with funny names that had no further political coding, such as Korean Rhinoceros Beetle Research Institute, Korean Beef Bone Soup Studies Association, Korea High-altitude Erectile Dysfunction Studies Association, and Committee for the Promotion of Marriage of Solitary Young Men (Park 2016; Lee 2017). We cannot help but see traces of the experience of the candlelight demonstrations of 2008 in these flags. However, the difference was that these groups did not engage in any expressions of their own beyond the flags. Of course, there might have been instances of other expressive acts. But these expressions were generally hard to notice and never went beyond the level of triviality, with the expressions of the masses being channeled into the central slogan. While they had singers and bands at every candlelight demonstration, these performances were subsumed within the unity of the rally. In other words, these forms of expressive diversity lacked intensity, as well as the power to resist subsumption and assimilation. Thus, they failed to go beyond the monophonic tone that characterized the slogans of “out of office” or “step down.”

Here, we are perhaps able to speak analogically in comparing the demonstrations of 2008 and those of 2016–2017. The former took on the modalities of toccata, in which expressive diversity, the display of virtuosity, and an excessive amplification of improvisational elements overwhelms

the repetitive theme. The latter, on the other hand, took on the modalities of the *passacaglia* in which uniformity of a stubbornly repetitive theme overwhelms the contrapuntal melodies. The former succeeded in creating a plane of consistency that fused the seriousness of struggle with the playfulness of improvisation and diversity, but failed in forming a *realistic* political power. The latter, by contrast, was able to attain the maximum political effect by stubbornly focusing on a single political goal, but it failed to generate any space for unique expression, as even playful activities were subsumed under the overarching effort to achieve the goal.

As we mentioned earlier, the candlelight demonstrations of 2016–2017 had a very different composition. Authorities such as the National Assembly, the judiciary, and the conservative right-wing media combined with the social organizations of the movement to form a coalition. This was both the strength and the weakness of the candlelight demonstrations of 2016–2017. This was a strength because the scale of this cooperation across societal lines enabled the movement not only to bring down a regime and its cronies but also arrest them—a *visible result* that would not have been possible to expect without a *revolution*. On the other hand, it was a formidable weakness, because while it succeeded in *restoring* legitimacy to institutions that had been compromised by the existing regime, it could not go much beyond this. Conversely, the thought processes of the masses, by driving out forces and tendencies toward violence, became trapped within the bounds given by the constitution, thus castrating the dynamism of the masses. Some of the masses even began sweeping the streets after the demonstration as a movement to establish order—a clear sign that it had taken a conservative direction. This is certainly not unrelated to the dynamic of the entire movement, having assumed a modality that replaced expressive diversity with representative unity.

We surely cannot deny the fact that the candlelight demonstrations of 2016–2017 caused the flow of the masses, which by nature diverges and overflows, to conform to the striated space of law, order, non-violence and normalcy. Even though the previous candlelight demonstrations had also been mostly peaceful gatherings, the rallies of 2008 clearly went beyond this modality—the police vehicles were assaulted and physically damaged

(people playing tug of war with the anchored buses); others tried to breach the barricade, opposing the torrent of police water cannons; some others stacked earthbags and built a *ramp* (which demonstrators called an “earthen fortification” after ancient structures found in Korea) to go over the Myung-bak mountain fortress; the masses also debated with each other about the merits and demerits of advancing to the Blue House. So, all the way up until the religious leaders’ intervention, demonstrators were quite prepared for violent struggle, showing no hesitation in clashing with the police when necessary. By contrast, not even a trace of such attempts was observable in the demonstrations of 2016–2017. The masses maintained their commitment to the power of order and normalcy by keeping to non-violent tactics and engaging in *street sweeping*, to name just a few examples. Since we were able to confirm this tendency again in the candlelight demonstration that recurred in 2019, it is difficult to discount it as an aberration. If the masses of 2008 exhibited a multiplicity of faces, each one bearing an idiosyncratic expression, the masses of 2016–2017 were those who raised their voices for the normalization of the system—the mass that assumed a uniform expression—the *national subject*.

This affair is then fed back to the potentialities of the masses, changing the masses themselves. It is crucial, then, that we bear in mind the impact that this *restoration of normalcy* had upon the masses themselves, as they repeatedly curbed their own demands and contributed to the establishment of order. That remains the case, even if the fruit they reaped from their choices was great. The masses are formed through *divergence from one’s given positions*, such as job, status, or affiliation. Divergence is in itself the power of the masses insofar as it is a logic that opposes both the government—“the right disposition of things that one arranges so as to lead them to a suitable end” (Foucault 1991, 94), as well as the police, that which makes sure that “bodies are assigned by name to a particular place and task” (Rancière 1999, 29).

When the masses begin to see that demonstrations united unanimously by one slogan and led by central leadership yield visible results, any independent actions that diverge from this unanimity are in jeopardy of meeting with hostility and chastisement. Often the greater the divergence,

the greater the danger of suppression in the name of non-violence and order. Implicated in such a state of affairs is the danger that the masses become passive in spite of their outward appearance. The masses gather in the plaza only to expect and wait for the institution to respond to their demand.

At the same time, it would be overly one-sided to say that the masses were only affected by the demonstrations of 2016–2017 in this way. By contrast to what happened in 2008, the masses were able to bring down and even arrest the president and her ilk with their own power. In this sense, the feedback they received from this experience was a sense of tremendous empowerment. Such a sense of victory must have been fed back to create a strong potential of the masses to resolve any important issues by going out to the plazas. We also need to look at the fact that a total of 17 million people joined the demonstration and that the number of participants is inversely proportional to the degree and frequency of clashes and violent incidents. Events such as these have a profound effect upon the potential of the masses, demonstrating to *everybody* that they too can take part in movements should similar problems occur in the future. If we speak in hyperbole, we can say that the candlelight demonstrations became a site of politics where *anybody*²¹ could participate.

Another Variation?: The Candlelight Demonstrations of 2019

We came to witness another large-scale candlelight demonstration three years after the impeachment of Park Geun-hye. In August 2019, President Moon Jae-in appointed Cho Kuk, then Senior Secretary to the President

21. This may appear similar to the *nobodies* of the 2008 demonstrations. I would like to emphasize that these concepts are contrary to one another. Nobodies are separatists who are essentially opposed to the *norm* and the *average*. The concept of *anybody*, on the other hand, has affinity with the notion of universality and the generic. The genericity in the protests of 2016–2017 was so expansive that it even came to include people who were very different from any of the previous participants of candlelight demonstrations. As we see below, this meant that the people on the opposite political spectrum also came out to the plazas as *national subjects* with the flag of the Republic of Korea in their hands. This became actualized in 2019.

for Civil Affairs, to the position of Minister of Justice. Cho was formerly a professor of law and a legal scholar. Thus, he was appointed as a theoretical as well as symbolic leader of the “Moon Jae-in Prosecution Reform.” The chief target of this reform was perceived to be the Supreme Prosecutor’s Office, which has long been the ultimate arbiter of the Korean political landscape.²²

The right-wing conservative party and the right-wing media triad of “Cho-Joong-Dong” immediately began an extensive negative campaign, which produced an enormous number of scandalous articles. The Prosecutor’s Office immediately joined the bandwagon by starting an investigation into Cho Kuk’s family and relatives and indicted them with charges that were somewhat frivolous but also morally upsetting to many ordinary citizens.²³ This state of affairs also caused a heated debate and sharp division within the broader progressive camp as Cho has a long history of

22. Having its roots in the apparatus of Japanese colonial rule and military dictatorship, the Korean prosecution system has exercised enormous power in setting the tone of the authoritarian anti-communist state. These offices have autonomy and power to investigate as well as prosecute crimes. On the one hand, this power has often been used to cover up inconvenient truths about the powerful as well as the prosecutors themselves. Since retired prosecutors often become politicians, this process can be quite seamless. At the same time, dissidents, as well as certain politicians whose visible presence was found to be inconvenient to the fundamental power structure of the state and capital often became the targets of South Korean prosecutors. In this way, covering up traces of their own operations and investigating others like a sort of secret police, they came to have enormous power. Perhaps their power is even greater and more enduring than that of presidents, as they are impervious to public opinion or term limits. A case in point is Roh Moo-hyun, who, having attempted to push a reform of the Prosecutor’s Office, was forced to back down during his presidency. Roh ended up committing suicide after prosecutors, with a nod from Lee Myung-bak, pursued allegations of corruption against him following his retirement. Moon Jae-in had been an aide as well as a long-time friend of Roh since their days as human rights lawyers. One of the agendas in Moon’s reform entailed the separation of the power to investigate from the power to prosecute. The other was to set up a special office, independent from the Supreme Prosecutor’s Office, in charge of investigating the corruption of high-ranking officials.

23. According to the prosecution, Cho Kuk’s wife, Chung Kyung-sim, a university professor, was allegedly involved in forging a certificate of merit that was used for her daughter’s school admission. More than 60 search and seizure raids were made to indict Chung.

involvement in progressive politics and human rights issues.²⁴

Prosecutors went on to issue numerous search and seizure warrants to find any trace of incriminating evidence. Interpreting the sequence of events as a desperate bid on the Prosecutor's Office to protect its own power, some people started a candlelight protest in front of the Supreme Prosecutor's Office. The first five assemblies were small gatherings attended by several hundred people. The number started to increase, reaching five to ten thousand when the sixth gathering took place on September 21. After the Prosecutor's Office went on to search and then seize Cho Kuk's house, hundreds of thousands of people came out for the rally. The size of the gatherings grew to nearly one million people in subsequent weeks. Even after the organizing coalition All Citizen's Solidarity announced at the ninth gathering on October 12 that this was to be the final demonstration, people kept on gathering in smaller numbers in front of the Prosecutor's Office and the National Assembly Hall until December.

The candlelight demonstrations of 2019 maintained a sense of continuity with the rallies of 2016–2017. This continuity was evident in terms of the chain of events. The demonstrations of 2019 were held in support of President Moon, who was elected into the office after Park Geun-hye's impeachment, as well as President Moon's appointment of Cho Kuk as Minister of Justice. The continuity was also visible in the conduct of the masses, which comported itself in a law-abiding and non-violent fashion. Even though the Prosecutor's Office conducted searches and seizures on the homes of Cho Kuk's extended family for three months, delaying the advancement of the reform, the weekend protests never went over police lines or clashed with them. The protests assumed a stable and temperate modality. Again, these qualities displayed commonalities with the candlelight protests from three years previous.

However, the demonstrations of 2019 had some aspects that were

24. Cho Kuk was a member of the Socialist Labor League of South Korea while he was a university student. He was indicted for violation of the National Security Law in the early 1990s. Cho also professed to be a "liberal but also a socialist" during his nomination hearing for the position of Minister of Justice in 2019.

contrary to those of 2016–2017. It was clear, first of all, that the relationship with the media was very different. While the demonstrations of 2016–2017 had the support of all the media outlets, including the *Chosun ilbo*, the demonstrations of 2019 took place in protest against a number of articles condemning Cho Kuk, which featured even in center-left papers such as the *Kyunghyang sinmun* and *Hankyoreh*. The discourse taking the side of the protests against these media portrayals were mainly to be found on social media. The social media also functioned to communicate information about the demonstrations and collect funds to support them.

When one million people joined the seventh rally, the one-sided portrayal of the Cho Kuk affair began to change. Criticisms of one-sided, inaccurate, biased, or speculative reporting started to emerge. Even though the tide of public opinion did not make a complete turnaround, it changed to the extent that public opinion became divided into two halves. In this divided atmosphere, it became possible for critiques to counter some of the one-sided or inaccurate articles. The news agencies were now split. Confrontation between public opinion and what we might call counter-public opinion became generalized. In the end, antagonism between supporters of Cho Kuk and naysayers became generalized across society. The candlelight demonstrations of 2019, with the slogan of “Guard Cho Kuk, reform prosecution,” came to present a strong public opinion in support of the prosecution reform and in effect provided the main source of power in fighting the Prosecutor’s Office. The candlelight demonstrations in effect reversed and overturned the monological, one-sided circuit of communication imposed by the Prosecutor’s Office and the media.

Another important difference to be pointed out in this round of candlelight demonstrations can be found in the ways in which counter protests were held in opposition to them. The emergence of the counter protest actually goes back to the lattermost stages of Park Geun-hye’s impeachment process. Park loyalists, mostly consisting of the elderly with anti-communist right-wing ideas, held so-called Taegeukgi (Korean flag) rallies in places distant from the candlelight demonstrations, such as Seoul Station. At the time, it remained a small and limited gathering, dwarfed by the sheer size of the candlelight demonstration. As such, it had little

impact. The Taegeukgi rallies became bigger and much more vocal after the impeachment was upheld by the Constitutional Court, and the candlelight demonstrations were becoming sparser and less frequent. However, public opinion in support of the impeachment was so strong that the demonstrations failed to have much impact. Then, immediately following the candle demonstration with hundreds of thousands of participants, the right-wing conservative party and religious organizations organized a large-scale joint rally in Gwanghwamun on October 3, 2019. Even though many of the participants could have been simply passive mobilizations of groups, the sheer number of participants, which numbered upwards of one million people, showed that others had spontaneously joined the protest. The Taegeukgi rallies, having occupied and filled the Gwanghwamun area, came to exemplify one half of public opinion, with the candlelight demonstrators occupying the area in front of the Supreme Prosecutor's Office building representing the other half. Thus, the picture of confrontation—a society split in half between the candlelight demonstrations and the Taegeukgi rallies—became formalized, as large-scale Taegeukgi rallies were repeated a few more times following this, though the attendance figures never reached the size of the first.

Of course, the use of the word *confrontation* might not be entirely fitting, as the two camps were quite asymmetrical in terms of their modalities and scale. The masses of the candlelight demonstration of 2019 were formed through the process of molecular contagion, the demonstration having been initiated by a small group with a half-joking-half-serious name (Dogfighting People's Campaign Headquarters) on social media. The right-wing gathering, on the other hand, mostly depended on mobilization through organizations such as right-wing parties and churches, even though it would be a mistake to say that there were no unaffiliated participants who joined spontaneously. They were mostly a molar gathering with a herd-like crowd as its base constituents. The way these groups gathered in terms of frequency and number highlighted these differences. The candlelight demonstrations in front of the Supreme Prosecutor's Office building were held every week without interruption. The size of the crowds was in the range of hundreds of people initially but then increased exponentially or

even at a rate higher than that. The attendance of the right-wing gathering, on the other hand, reached the scale of one million people on October 3, but dropped dramatically afterward. This shows again that they were mobilized by parties and churches as a herd. In other words, when there was no *order* to mobilize (such as the example of October 3, with its religious overtones), a large-scale rally did not materialize. There were, indeed, right-wing rallies organized every week, Taegeukgi rallies held in the back quarters of the candlelight demonstrations with the intent to disrupt them. Having observed them many times, I would say that their attendance did not exceed five thousand.

Nonetheless, because the right wing held a “one-million-people rally,” the media began to cover the two rallies *equally*. This practice of *fairness* on their part made a *mise en scène* out of the antagonistic situation. Of course, it would be inaccurate to say that the Taegeukgi rally divided the candlelight masses into opposing halves. It would also be wrong to claim that these two masses can be accorded equal status within the mass movement. At present, we cannot conclude that the antagonism that appeared to be formalized as two halves exists as a schism in the body of the masses. The two masses are, after all, asymmetrical—one being invoked and mobilized by institutions and organizations, sporadically appearing when summoned, while the other, existing in the conjunction of the actual and the virtual, the continuum of online and offline space, has an entirely different duration and potential, which gives them a *permanence* that the right-wing masses simply do not have. The reason for this is that when we look at the modalities of how the demonstrations took place, we need to recognize that the masses who gathered spontaneously and the herd-like crowd who were mobilized by organizations differed in their very nature. However, this clear-cut contrast no longer holds perfectly true when we examine the right-wing movement of 2019. We cannot deny the fact that some of the masses, influenced by the accusatory reporting that persisted in the media, did participate spontaneously in the Taegeukgi rally. The reason this participation was possible is not unrelated to the experience of 2017, which proclaimed that *anybody* could join the mass demonstration.

In addition, what we need to take into account is the fact that the

usage of social media is starting to have an impact on the modalities of the previously herd-like segment. One example is the private broadcasts of YouTubers, with some even going so far as to engage in the active production of *fake news*. Another is the popularity of news/editorial channels on mobile messaging services such as KakaoTalk among the elderly. This signifies that new participants are beginning to take part, at least partially, in the formation of *molecular masses*. We do not know yet if such facts signal the formation of laminar flows contrary to one another within the broader flow of the masses. Further, there is the question of whether there is surplus space, where multiple singular points that differ from one another enter and disrupt the unity of the flow of the masses. This can be another variable which should not be taken lightly in considering the question of how the candlelight masses might change in the future.

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