Rethinking Gender, Reimagining Healing in Minjung Theology: An Indonesian Feminist Theological Rupture

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Abstract

This article rethinks gender and its impact on a reimagination of healing in Minjung theology. I argue that rethinking gender in Minjung theology by reconnecting its three features of collectivity, art, and event from a feminist trauma perspective ruptures the dominant masculine, heterosexual, and liberation grammar in Minjung theology and creates a new imagination of Minjung theology as a discourse of healing.

I call this oscillation between rethinking gender and reimagining healing a feminist theological rupture embedded in a grammar of trauma and resilience. This grammar is a theological addition to Minjung theology's core emphasis on resistance and liberation. I intend to extend and complexify Minjung theology's masculine and heterosexual grammar and make it more accessible to feminist, queer, and broader contemporary theological praxes for healing.

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Methodologically, I use a self-reflexive approach by weaving the feminist and queer voices of South Korea and Indonesia with my own voice as rupturing voices to examine the complex tapestry and relevance of Minjung theology. As a result, this article unveils the plausibility of Minjung theology as a grammar of healing thatresonates with the rich and complex stories of trauma, witnessing, healing, and liberation in Asia.

Keywords

gender, healing, collectivity, event, art, feminist, rupture

I. Introduction

> Ahn loved his Bible, Bultmann, Jesus, and minjung—but not necessarily in that order.
> — R. S. Sugirtharajah, "Introduction," *Stories of Minjung Theology*

> The key insight of minjung theology was that it regarded the minjung as the subject of history.
> —David M. Thomson, "Introduction: Mapping Asian Christianity in the Context of World Christianity," *Christian Theology in Asia*

Much has been written on the relevance of Minjung theology within South Korea and beyond. This article, however, gives fresh insight by rethinking gender and its implications for reimagining Minjung theology as a discourse of healing by interconnecting feminist, queer, and trauma perspectives—an interconnectedness that has rarely been addressed in discussions of Minjung theology. The three dimensions of collectivity, event, and art are the framework for my theological proposal to identify the relevance, challenge, and promise of Minjung theology in the struggle, resistance, and resilience of the wounded ochlos to find healing that liberates and liberation that heals.

This article addresses one primary question: How can Minjung theology listen and speak to the multidirectionality of today's feminist and queer grammar of trauma and healing? The term 'grammar' refers to Dirk G. Lange's discussion, drawing on trauma theory, of Martin Luther's view of liturgy and Luther's critique of the failure of theology—thus, the failure of grammar—to capture the Christ event.[1] It also refers to Cathy Caruth's

1 Dirk G. Lange, *Trauma Recalled: Liturgy, Disruption, and Theology* (Minneapolis:

concept of the "voice of the wound"[2]—thus, the grammar of the wound—which offers a unique way of listening and seeing trauma as a historical, collective, and individual phenomenon.

Minjung theology, pioneered by Ahn Byung-Mu[3](1922-1996), is an Asian liberation theology that emerged in the 1970s and peaked in the 1980s during a time of social-political upheaval in South Korea. In the global Christian theological landscape, especially in Asia, Minjung theology is embedded in and has shaped Asian "identity hermeneutics,"[4] as is shown in the discursive praxis of "feminists, Indian Dalits, the Japanese burakumins, and indigenous peoples."[5] Given Ahn's background as a biblical scholar, it is logical that Minjung theology is both biblical and culturally embedded.

II. A Ruptured Collectivity

Refusing to define the Minjung as having one singular identity, Ahn characterized the Minjung in multiple ways, such as "politically oppressed," "economically exploited," and "sociallyalienated."[6] Ahn also

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Fortress Press, 2010), 94.

2 Caruth defines this as follows: "A sorrowful voice that cries out, a voice that is paradoxically released through the wound." Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience,* 2.

3 I did not use Ahn Byung Mu's original writings because many are in Korean language but also because the purpose of this article is not to reflect on or respond specipically to Ahn's thoughts. Rather, my intention is to expand on the three central issues in his works as identified by many authors, primarily by R. S. Sugirtharajah in his brief introduction to Ahn's writings where he discusses Ahn's thinking.

4 R. S. Sugirtharajah, "Introduction," in *Stories of Minjung Theology: The Theological Journey of Ahn Byung-Mu in His Own Words*, translated and edited by Hanna In and Wongi Park (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2019), xxii.

5 *Ibid.*

used the phrase "minjung-like people" to refer to "the minjung and people who were grief-stricken under the colonial rule, are exploited by the foreign powers, and are oppressed and deprived by the ruling class of their-own country"and noted that, in this regard, "the word minjung comprehends all three ideas."[7]

These ideas signified the personification of the Minjung as a "subject of history" and, more precisely, as a *collective* subject of history. The collectivity—the ochlos, the suffering people who are discriminated against—is Minjung theology's way of embracing differences based on the existentially shared experience of the collectiveness of being socially, economically, and politically deprived and subjugated. Minjung's theological collectivity, bound by the shared experience of the suffering people in Korean history, resonates with and is accessible to other Asian collective experiences of suffering and injustice. It also resonates with the two characteristics of Asia that were predominant in Asian contextual theologies in the period of the 1970s through the early 1990s—mass poverty and multifaceted religiosity—as reflected in the works of theologians such as Choan Seng Song of Taiwan, Kim Yong Bock of South Korea, Aloysius Pieris of Sri Lanka, Dhyanchand Carr and R. S. Sugirtharajah of India, the people power movement of the Philippines in the 1980s, and Eka Darmaputera and A. A. Yewangoe of Indonesia.

Collectivity, however, is problematic when it is equated with suffering as its universal marker because it denies the particularity of gender as a signifier or category of the root cause and the complexity of suffering as a collective experience and narrative. Many of the works of Asian liberation theologians that challenged and resisted the politicization of pov-

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6 *Ibid.*

7 David Arthur Sanchezas quotedin Sugirtharajah, "Introduction," xvii.

erty and suffering were later criticized by pioneer Asian feminist theologians such as Marianne Katoppo of Indonesia, Sun Ai Lee Park, Sook Ja Chung, and Chung Hyun Kyung of South Korea, Kwok Pui Lan of Hong Kong and the United States, Virginia Fabella and Mary John Mananzan of the Philippines, Yong Ting Jin of Malaysia, and Aruna Gnanadason of India for their lack of the particularity of Asian women's experiences and perspectives on suffering in the early stage of Asian contextual liberation theologies. Feminist theologians resisted the universalization of suffering and the Asian contextual liberation theology that ignores women's experience and perspective as a valid theological category and norm in narrating, analyzing, and interpreting suffering and liberation.

Similarly, years later Anna Cho, a South Korean theologian teaching in the Faculty of Theology, Stellenbosch University, South Africa, claimed that "some women theologians and church women participated in the Minjung movement… However, unfortunately, Minjung theology failed to deal with the issues of inequality, pain, suffering, and human rights that Korean women face… Gender-specific oppression of women was not taken seriously by the male Minjung theologians."[8] Cho said that "discussion on women's theology in Korea began in the 1980s after the Minjung theology."[9] This indicates that Korean feminist theology can be identified as a post-Minjung theology. Nevertheless, the question remains: In what ways does gender as a social and theological category play a role in signifying Korean feminist theology in post-Minjung theology? Does Korean feminist theology resemble Minjung theology or point toward a post-Minjung theology? Is it a critique, a shift in perspective, a new

8 Anna Cho, "Korean Women's Theology and Misogyny." *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* 78, no. 2 (2022): 1. https://doi. org/10.4102/hts.v78i2.7514.

9 *Ibid.*

discourse, or an alternative to Minjung (male) theology? The answers to these questions may be appropriately given by Korean feminist theologians. The earlier Asian feminist theologians identified masculinity as a theological category that ignored the particularity of gender-based suffering experienced by Asian women within their diverse economic, cultural, religious, and political landscapes.

Cho identified misogyny as the root cause of discrimination against and oppression of women by focusing on hate speech as a performative aspect of language that embodies misogyny, and she proposed ways for the church to overcome misogyny and to develop what she called a "correct theology of women" from within the Korean context of misogyny.[10] She claimed that misogyny in Korean culture, as in many Asian cultural systems, is embedded in church and society and has prevented the development of a systematic and established Korean feminist theology. She stated, "[T]he reason why Korea's womanist theology could not be systematically established in this way is the misogyny that is deeply rooted in society and the church. Discrimination and inequality, exclusion, ignorance and condemnation against women stem from the already formed misogyny in society."[11]

Cho's identification of misogyny as a cultural marker of Korean society and of the Korean church is a paradoxical reminder of the Minjung movement as a cultural movement of ordinary, everyday people. Her critique is critical in at least two aspects. *First*, her naming of misogyny in Korean culture and the church unveils the problem of the theological disconnection between Korean feminist theology and Minjung theology in shaping a contemporary collective voice of suffering and liberation and

10 *Ibid.*, 2.

11 *Ibid.*

in furthering the theological resonance of Minjung theology with other Asian theologies of liberation and healing. Second, however, her proposal of an "established correct [Korean] womanist theology"[12] requires self-reflexivity in establishing a 'correct theology' and may deny the multiplicity of Korean and Asian women's experiences of suffering and misogyny or the multiple manifestations of misogyny in various Asian cultural locations and practices, thus failing to address the 'incorrect' theology embedded in diverse gender perspectives.

Asian feminist theologians' critique of Asian contextual theology, including Minjung theology, remains true today and may continue to be a dissident voice within the contemporary landscape of Asian Christianity. A feminist theological voice may offer a model of collectivity that embraces difference. Thus, difference becomes the signifier of collectivity. The collective subject of history is a ruptured collectivity because it is now a site where differences—in gender, sexuality, ethnicity, spirituality, religiosity, age, ability, and so forth—are embraced in all their colorful and colorless complexities. Furthermore, identifying gender as a category in Minjung theology's connection or disconnection with Asian feminist theology unveils the *hierarchy of suffering* that divides, intensifies, and particularizes suffering from within the experiences of women and of sexual minorities. It also unveils not only the complex layers of suffering but also the fact that suffering—even if it is a collective story—has never been a neutral, singular, and hegemonic reality.

Another valid need within the interconnections and disconnections among these theologies is a thorough analysis of "the different agendas of academic theology and that of the Churches" in Asia, as identified by David M. Thompson.[13] The question, therefore, is how Minjung theology

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12 *Ibid.*

connects or disconnects with academic theology and the church and whether its influence in the 1980s Korean Christian movement of unification and liberation is a heritage worth saving for future Asian churches, theologies, and movements for social justice.

The ochlos-based collectivity in Minjung theology also needs to be extended and problematized from the queer perspective, including feminist/womanist/mujerista theology that has disrupted the global theological landscape, which for so long failed to listen to the different layers of queer narratives and voices. A recent article by Teguh Wijaya and Amadeo Udampoh of Indonesia titled "On Being LGBT-Affirming Pentecostals: Exploring Affirming Resources from within Indonesian Pentecostal Churches" identifies a fascinating connection between Pentecostal churches and LGBT-affirming Pentecostals in Indonesia.[14] Their findings disrupt the common assumption that evangelicals and Pentecostals do not welcome LGBT individuals and their allies. The authors indicate there has been a shift in Pentecostal individuals who have become allies of LGBT individuals while rethinking the teaching of their churches that caused them to reject the lives and experiences of LGBT people.

Although the article does not discuss collectivity and Minjung theology, it provides fresh insights into the possibility of reconnecting academic theology and church agendas through the debate over gender identities

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13 David M. Thomson, "Introduction: Mapping Asian Christianity in the Context of World Christianity," in *Christian Theology in Asia*, edited by Sebastian C. H. Kim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 13.

14 Teguh Wijaya Mulya, and Amadeo Devin Udampoh, "On Being LGBT-Affirming Pentecostals: Exploring Affirming Resources from within Indonesian Pentecostal Churches," *Theology and Sexuality* 29, no. 1 (2023): 1-18. https://doi.org/10.1080/13558358.2023.2257550.

and human sexuality. From within this context, a queer reconsideration of the meaning of the ochlos is needed to expand the horizons of Asian liberation theology, including Minjung theology. The authors' conclusion indicates the emergence of resources important for shaping a Pentecostal contextual theology, perhaps as an Asian liberation theology. They state that their study "has explored and presented a plethora of contextual resources within ostensibly conservative Pentecostal traditions that can be drawn upon to advance LGBT-affirming positions. It fills a gap in the existing literature on affirming evangelicals in non-Western contexts, where exploring contextual resources beyond theological reinterpretations is crucial."[15]

III. Art—A Witnessing Space for Healing

Similar to other Asian contextual theologies, Minjung theology has used art as part of its performative, public, political, and embodied voice of resistance and liberation. Raymond Kyooyung Ra's analysis of the vandalism of the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT) billboard at Sinchon Station in Seoul unveils the paradoxical and complex intertwining of queer identity and voice, South Korean public space, identity politics, and counterculture embedded in the Minjung tradition.

On August 2, 2020, a group of men used a knife to slash the IDAHOBIT billboard, which consisted of 517 printed portraits of LGBTQ+ individuals and allies. Ra stated that one of the culprits, a self-described pious man, stated the religious reason behind his homophobic vandalism: "I did it be-

15 *Ibid.*, 15.

cause I hate sexual minorities."[16] Ra categorized the vandalism as a form of South Korean public rejection of queer visibility. He identified the complex and paradoxical connection between the use of art in the "contemporary queer visibility politics in South Korea" and Minjung, or what he calls "the leftist democratic movements in Korea," to reveal the queerness of the Minjung tradition.[17] From a queer perspective, Ra argues that "the minjung tradition and its radical force come from its accretion over generations of collective actions and intelligence, able to be accessed by those who can discover its historical vein."[18] He finds aesthetics a signifier in the linkage between the local culture of queering a public space for the queer politics of visibility with that of the activist culture embedded in Minjung art as the political voice of resistance, demanding and shaping the public space and public voice of change and transformation. This connection is possible when Minjung culture as a representation of the Korean democratic counterculture is disentangled from its masculinist ethos and thus provides a space for the queer voice and visibility politics to emerge. Ra writes:

> [I]f the minjung culture can be re-envisioned as a constellation of political, cultural, and social forces that goes beyond the often-invoked 'alleged ethnonationalist and Marxist excesses' and masculinist ethos, can queer visibility politics—often exoticized, effeminized, and relegated beyond consideration as [a] vital component of nation-building effort— be located within the traditions of Korean democratic counterculture?[19]

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16 Raymond Kyooyung Ra, "Discovery of the [Queer] Minjung Tradition: The Sinchon Station IDAHOBIT Billboard Vandalism and Queer Korean Politics of Visibility," *International Journal of Korean History* 28, no. 1(2023): 3.

17 *Ibid.*, 9.

18 *Ibid.*

Unlike the Korean feminist theologians' voices I quoted above, Ra's identification of Minjung as a counterculture model for queer resistance complexifies the question of Minjung theology's relevance in today's world. He argues:

> Not only does the incident at the Sinchon IDAHOBIT billboard offer a more locally grounded perspective on queer Korean visibility politics while not completely disavowing South Korea's more-than-marginal position within the network of global queer activist cultures, situating it within the tapestry of *minjung* traditions initiates an intervention into the narrow scope of the minjung movement and minjung art that had been allocated to national history.[20]

Queering Minjung art and the Minjung movement—liberating Minjung art from the confines of masculinity and the heteronormativity of Korean politics and democratic culture—is a prerequisite for making it relevant in queer visibility politics and, simultaneously, for reconnecting queer public voices and visibility with the Minjung provision of access to queer identity politics. This is meant to reclaim the inclusivity of the Minjung collectivity not only in Korean but also in many other Asian local cultures and histories, and collective narratives of healing and liberation.

Rainbow Action, a South Korean LGBTQ+ organization coalition, mobilized concerned individuals to cover the damaged IDAHOT billboard with sticky notes as a new medium and form of resistance to the rejection, damage, and perpetuation of hate that the act of vandalism had created.[21]

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19 *Ibid.*, 10.

20 *Ibid.*, 10-11.

21 *Ibid.*, 3-4.

According to Ra,

> In reaction to the series of vandalisms, a collective movement was spurred to make the IDAHOBIT billboard site at Sinchon Station a destination of pilgrimage for queer subjects and allies, and the pilgrims' contributions to the wall resulted in the vibrantly queer space marked out by post-it notes, stickers, and all sorts of celebratory paraphernalia.[22]

The damaged space has now become a "co-authored sacred queer space."[23]

In the sticky notes and various other objects left by the public on the billboard, Ra saw the interconnectedness of the site with art sites of the Minjung. He stated, "The minjung tradition of site-specific protest art or hyŏnjang misul (art at the site), which included flags, posters, banners with slogans, and wearable objects like scarfs, in addition to the actual 'poster' or the kŏlgae kŭrim[,] continued on as well."[24] The collective sacred queer space has now become a rupturing event—a temporal site of remembering subversively, resisting the power that disregards and deprives the humanity of those who include condemned as immoral and unfaithful.

The public space becomes, in reference to Rebecca S. Chopp, a site of the "poetics of testimony"[25] and is infused with voices, gestures, and postures of testimonies that are beyond the academic realm. The poetics of

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22 *Ibid.*, 4.

23 *Ibid.*

24 *Ibid.*, 12.

25 Rebecca S. Chopp, "Theology as the Poetics of Testimony," *Criterion* Winter, No. 37 (1998): 6.

testimony are the works of art—films, novels, poems, songs, and so forth —that are embedded within the grammar of event—the language that witnesses the failure of theology and theory to capture and confine the event into a systematic and structured composition.

The sticky notes and the space they claim at Sinchon Station analogically point to how the site becomes an event whenever the voice of violence and the voice of dissent and healing intertwine paradoxically, and they stand as a reminder of the paradox of the Christ event—the event when, through the death of Christ, life (the resurrection) is witnessed in life's ascent.

In October 2023, during a Minjung Theology Consultation in Seoul, a few friends and I visited the statue of the enslaved comfort woman across the street from Japan embassy. It is called the Statue of a Girl for Peace. The statue memorializes the history of the women victims of Japanese military sexual slavery. The statue is a figure of a girl sitting alone on a chair with a bird on her left shoulder. Behind her, on the sidewalk, is a painted shadow of the bent-over body of an older woman. A butterfly is painted on the older woman's shadow. The statue expresses the paradox of the lives of the enslaved women whose young lives were violated and whose later lives and memories were burdened. Many have said that the statue represents the stories of the women and their persistent demands for an apology from the Japanese government. But, the statue can also symbolize the persistent witnessing to the narratives of the wound that requires healing for the survivors and to their stories of trauma and resilience that refuse to be forgotten and hidden. While the bird symbolizes peace, the butterfly symbolizes hope. The symbols resonate with 'the voice that is released from the wounds' of today's minjung in the lives of women survivors of violence, LGBTIQ, the poor, the discriminated

against, victims of war and violence, and the suffering creation.

Many analyses have identified the statues of enslaved comfort women (jugun ianfu) in Korea and other countries as a contested space that challenges the long history of occupation and its hiding the stories and the voices of the survivors. During our visit, I wore two painted scarves created by a friend of mine, an Indonesian Muslim feminist scholar, activist, and painter, Dewi Chandraningrum. The first scarf depicts the faces of the women survivors of the Indonesian State's mass killing of members and allies of the Indonesian Communist Party in 1965-66. The scarf is marked with a red lining at one end to signify the flag of the Indonesian Communist Party, one of the largest political parties in Indonesia that was banned in 1965. The second scarf portrays the faces of the survivors of Indonesian comfort women during the Japanese occupation of Indonesia in 1942-45. The scarf has a yellow lining that signifies the international color of the enslaved comfort women. Many of the survivors were in their seventies or eighties when Chandraningrum interviewed and painted them.

I have worn these scarves at different events, but mostly for teaching purposes in and outside Indonesia. Wearing the scarves with the portrait of the women survivors of historic trauma gives me a sense of ruptured collectivity that compels me to be present as a witness. It is as if the elderly women survivors are calling upon me to bear witness to their stories of their wounds and resilience and the possibility of healing, knowing that their stories have been hidden under the surface of the history of independence, post-independence, and post-authoritarianism in Indonesia.

The statue of the comfort woman in Seoul and the scarves resonate with Minjung art in their use of art to critique and resist the power that subjugates the ochlos. But they also disrupt Minjung art and the resistance

movement that uses art as its medium in that they reposition the female body, narrative, and symbolism into the core of the movement by disentangling and disrupting the commonly accepted male body as a representation of the ochlos, of the struggle for liberation.

Wearing the scarves while standing near the statue of the comfort woman, furthermore, implies an act of being part of the "queer sacred space" where the queerness of the space resonates with the poetics—the art—of witnessing to an event that has refused to be captured yet remains present. This event is embodied in the resilience and resistance for the healing and liberation of all who have suffered under a power structure that negates the humanity of the victims and survivors of violence.

Rethinking gender and reimagining Minjung theology as a healing discourse from a feminist theological rupture also implies the juxtaposition of healing and liberation. If Minjung theology is to be known today for its message of liberation, a feminist-queer Minjung voice of healing is much needed. To perceive Minjung as a posture of witnessing can contribute to the broader narrative of healing and resilience in our world today, filled as it is with wars, violence, intolerance, and discrimination. Alison Fitchett-Climenhaga and I introduce this new approach in our rereading of the story of Jesus and the hemorrhaging woman from the perspective of trauma healing. We state:

> The space between the back of Jesus and the face of the woman cannot be articulated. This is where the power of healing (dunamis) is given and received. The turning around and the waiting unveil another posture of witnessing; the posture of embracing and remaining. The embracing of the woman's wounds takes place as Jesus turns toward her and she falls down, not seeing but sending the assuring source of power that she has received.

> This is the incomprehensible event. The spatiality and temporality of Jesus' and the woman's bodily knowledge are witnessed when the shared power is revealed—"Your faith has made you well"—and when the wounded voice speaks "the whole truth."[26]

Minjung theology can remain relevant today if it goes beyond its focus on the history of the suffering ochlos and points to the witnessing space within and beyond the temporality and spatiality of the sites, narratives of hopes, imaginations, and resilience of the suffering people and the trauma they endure in their everyday, mundane reality.

III. Event—Witnessing the Unsayability

R. S. Sugirtharajah stated that Ahn's contribution to biblical studies is his twofold hermeneutical achievement—the "hermeneutics of the ochlos and the claim of the historical Jesus."[27] Ahn's emphasis on the historical Jesus separated him from his German biblical studies teacher Rudolf Bultmann, who emphasized the kerygmatic Jesus as reflected in his "mantra" that "in the beginning, there was the event, not the kerygma."[28] Seeing the Jesus event—Jesus' death and resurrection—as a Minjung event, Ahn connected the historical, ordinary, and everyday life and struggle of the Minjung with that of the death and resurrection of Jesus

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26 Septemmy E. Lakawa, and Alison Fitchett-Climenhaga, "Mission and Healing: Witnessing in the Aftermath of Trauma," in The Oxford Handbook of Mission Studies, edited by Kirsteen Kim, Knud Jorgensen, and Alison Fitchett-Climenhaga (Oxford: Oxford University, 2022), 302.

27 Sugirtharajah, "Introduction," xv.

28 *Ibid.*

Christ. By starting from the event and not from the kerygma, Ahn made Minjung history and the narrative of suffering accessible and allowed them to be disentangled and reimagined as a history of struggle for liberation.

Rereading Ahn's "mantra" of the Christ event as a Minjung event in dialogue with Lange's trauma theological perspective on Martin Luther's understanding of the 'Christ event' may be a wise way to make a connection between Minjung theology and Asian theology with the complexity of gender as a social analysis and theological category. In his fascinating book Trauma Recalled: Liturgy, Disruption, and Theology, Lange uses Luther's view of the Christ event to offer a new way of understanding the role of liturgy in disrupting kerygma and theology and in making theology accessible to experiences that have been denied through a grammar that fails to represent, symbolize, and narrate the Christ event—the trauma event—for us today.[29] According to Lange, Luther understands that an event is not a simple occurrence in time and space; event contains traces of something else, something inaccessible. This 'something else' is different from what has been called a hidden meaning or a spiritual sense of an event or text. The something that returns in event and in the written text resists any form of systematization and leads to a disruption of meaning as it is classically understood.[30]

Lange writes that "Luther turns to the liturgy and liturgical language," thus unveiling Luther's understanding of liturgy as "a language of confrontation and resistance to theory."[31] Liturgy disrupts any effort to capture and confine the Christ event into kerygma, into theology. Lange

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29 Lange, *Trauma Recalled*, 22.

30 *Ibid.*

31 *Ibid.*

states that "[i]n the end, [Luther] is concerned with only one event—the Christ event—and how this event continually returns to disrupt all construed meanings, all our invented narratives. Through liturgy and liturgical language, Luther witnesses to a force that cannot be theorized but that continually returns in writing and in life."[32]

Ahn's mantra of the Christ event may resonate with Luther's Christ event as a disruptive power against the primacy of law, of word. In Ahn's Christ event as Minjung event, we may see a radical energy to resist a singular definition of the Minjung to avoid the tendency to capture or confine the Minjung into a hegemonic entity of the collective self—the suffering ochlos.

Moreover, linking Ahn's theological vision of the Christ event to the primacy of the word, the kerygma, in his own time with Lange's trauma theological perspective on Luther's view of the Christ event offers a new avenue for bringing trauma into the rethinking of gender—thus, gender-based trauma—and the reimagining of Minjung theology as a discourse of healing.

The aspect of trauma is yet to be integrated into the analysis of the relevance of Minjung theology for Asia today. If Luther found in liturgy the disruptive grammar that unveiled the failure of theology, of word, of kerygma, of language to capture the Christ event, then Ahn's mantra of the Christ event provides a way to witness the Minjung as a "language of word, image, and gesture that reveals the failure of language to capture the event."[33] The Minjung, therefore, can be relevant to and withstand the challenges of the twenty-first-century world if it is perceived as an event—as a reminder of the failure of theology and the church to witness the

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32 *Ibid.*, 23.

33 *Ibid.*, 94.

Christ event in the ordinary lives of women, sexual minorities, men, children, and all of creation who have been wounded and traumatized by the powers that be. Their stories of suffering remain and even haunt Asian liberation theology, which focuses on systematizing and constructing the stories of the suffering ochlos rather than witnessing to their suffering, and, through witnessing the Christ event as it is embodied in our Asian languages, these stories have so far failed to be captured and confined into one single testimony of structured, proper theology.

Rethinking gender and healing in Minjung theology can also mean rethinking event in Minjung theology. Sugirtharajah's exposition of Ahn's focus on the Christ event illustrates this possible rethinking of gender and event:

> While Bultmann argued for an "existential solidarity with Jesus," Ahn insisted on experiencing Jesus "socially" and "collectively." … Ahn asserted firmly that such a collective concept or what he called the "sociability" of Jesus, was found in christological titles such as the "Son of Man" and "Son of God." The search for the historical Jesus is part of the social biography of the minjung. His repeated refrain had been: "Where there is Jesus, there is the minjung. And where there is the minjung, there is Jesus." … In other words, Jesus needed the minjung as much as minjung needed him. Third, for Ahn one encountered Jesus only in and through minjung events and not through preaching as the existentialist and individualistic theology of the Word of the time insisted.[34]

By looking at the Minjung as an embodiment of the Christ event, it may be possible to make the Minjung Christ, as a "collective persona whose

34 Sugirtharajah, "Introduction," xv.

identity was inseverable from and entwined with that of the minjung," relevant for those whose gender-based trauma and suffering have been ignored and who have been subjugated into the masculine and hetero-normative narrative of the collective suffering of the Minjung.[35]

Annie G. Rogers coined the term 'unsayability' to define trauma—meaning that the language of trauma is the language of the unsayable.[36] Based on her work as a child psychotherapist and a trauma survivor, Rogers stated:

> What is so terrible about trauma is not about abuse itself, no matter the brutality of treatment, but the way terror marks the body and then becomes invisible and inarticulate… There was always something unsayable… Whatever was terrifyingly present in [Jamie's] body, yet unsayable, took a coded, symbolic form in her art, her speech, and her actions… [It took] many years to learn to decipher this coded poetry of the unsayable and find a way to translate it back to girls themselves.[37]

Rogers's depiction of the unsayability of trauma and its symbolic form in how a child survivor tries to communicate signifies the incomprehensibility of trauma. Rogers's statement is a challenge to reimagine Minjung theology as a feminist theological rupture. It is a theology that "[writes] history where silence reigned, where silence was broken by an undeciphered cry that went unheard" and where "all the traces of history have been erased and the body itself is inscribed with an un-

35 *Ibid.*

36 Annie G. Rogers, The Unsayable: The Hidden Language of Trauma (New York: Random House, 2006), 44.

37 *Ibid.*

known language."[38] Her approach to trauma offers profound insights into how a theological response to trauma must go through a rupture—decoding the coded language, the unsayable—to become a practice of witnessing to the coded world of the wounded voice.

VI. Conclusion

In summary, this article has critically interconnected the three main features of Minjung theology—collectivity, art, and event—using a feminist trauma theological perspective. It complexifies these three features by weaving them, using a self-reflexive approach, into the theological components of feminist theological rupture. It has discussed elements that offer an understanding of how a feminist theological grammar of rupture as a witnessing practice is bearable in our praxis of resilience, healing, and liberation that connects us to the voices of the wound and the event of the unsayable. This article has offered a discussion on rethinking gender and its implication on reimagining Minjung theology as a discourse of healing.

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38 *Ibid.*, xiv.

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