There are not many substantial studies of han and no studies that explain the features of the uncanny and melancholy intrinsic to han.
—Meera Lee

Autobiography is at once an autotestimony and an autoceremony that reenacts trauma and narrates our historical death—how we have died and how we remain living. —Kim Hyesoon

When I was twelve, my mother’s hand enclosed around the handle of a kitchen knife she used to slice our sandwiches that morning. My mother lifted the blade to her neck as if it were a violin bow. In that second, I stole the weapon and aimed it at my throat. Later I learned she did the same thing as a girl to save her own mother in Daejeon. My mother explained the events, Han. Because she’d seized the knife, she already had han. But watching me do the same, my mother confessed it must now also reside in me. There was no understanding. Only that han lied within us. Like Korean Catholic families in the Bay Area, our family gathered with others every month to pray. I prayed to take the han out of my mother and father, my brother and me. Poet Sung Yung Shin says, Bodies fertilized the ground so well the trees grow / bright and tall. Looking at decay, han got bright and tall. Even today I can’t point to a singular meaning of han, but there is no doubt that a feeling of irresolvable pain ought to be understood if it must be uttered as some final word in my throat. I ask of han, who hardly trembles at my question, how could I build my childhood home for you to enter?