

International Journal of Korean Humanities and Social Sciences
vol. 7/2021
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.14746/kr.2021.07.03>

CRITICISM OF LITERATURISM IN THE 1990S: FOCUSING ON *MUNHAKDONGNE*

SOONMO YANG, PhD student

Yonsei University
#617 Oesol-gwan 50 Yonsei-ro Seodaemun-gu,
Seoul, South Korea
polanyikarl@naver.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9665-5209>

Abstract: Regarding the recent critical evaluations surrounding the Korean literature field in the 1990s, this paper argues that the criticism should be presented at a more ‘intrinsic’ and ‘reflective’ level. In particular, through *문학동네* *Munhakdongne* (the Literature Village) as a negative origin of today, I would like to examine the rationality of ‘literaturism’ (the art for art’s sake principle) in the 90s, which is difficult to criticize easily. This ‘rationality’ is not only one that is repeated and persuasive in today’s literature, but also one that shares much from the perspective of critically judging *Munhakdongne*. By critically examining the nature of this ‘rationality’ in the 1990s, this paper aims to define today’s Korean literature field and to prepare for the possibility of moving beyond it.

Keywords: 1990s Korean literature field; *Munhakdongne*; literaturism; inner self; authenticity.

1990년대 문학주의 비판: 문학동네를 중심으로

초록: 본고는 90년대 문학장을 둘러싼 최근의 비판적인 평가들과 관련하여, 그 비판이 보다 '내재적'이고 '반성적'인 차원에서 개진되어야 함을 주장한다. 특히 오늘날의 한 부정적 기원으로서 『문학동네』를 통해 손쉽게 비판하기 어려운 90년대 문학주의의 합리성을 살펴보고자 한다. 그 합리성은 오늘날 문학장에서 여전히 반복되며 설득력을 얻고 있을 뿐만 아니라, 이들을 비판적으로 판단하고 있는 시각에서 역시 상당 부분 공유하는 합리성이다. 본고는 저 합리성의 정체를 비판적으로 규명함으로써 오늘날 한국 문학장을 규정하고 이를 넘어설 수 있을 가능성을 마련해보고자 한다.

키워드: 1990년대 한국문학장; *문학동네*; 문학주의; 내면; 진정성.

KRYTYCYZM WOBEC LITERACKOŚCI LAT 90. WIEKU XX JAKO SZTUKI DLA SZTUKI – ZE SZCZEGÓLNYM UWZGLĘDNIENIEM *MUNHAKDONGNE*

Abstrakt: Artykuł, nawiązując do niedawnych krytycznych opinii dotyczących literatury koreańskiej lat 90. wieku XX, sugeruje, że podejście krytyczne powinno być realizowane w sposób nieco bardziej refleksyjny i skupiony na wnętrzu. Autor zamierza przeanalizować racjonalność skomplikowanego założenia o 'literackości' (zasada 'sztuka dla sztuki') w latach 90. wieku XX ze szczególnym skupieniem uwagi na *Munhakdongne* (*Literacka Wioska*), uznawanym za jej negatywne źródło. Nie chodzi bowiem jedynie o taką 'racjonalność', która jest powtarzalna i przekonująca we współczesnej literaturze, ale także taką, która dzieli się doświadczeniami z perspektywy ocenianej krytycznie *Munhakdongne*. Autor, wyszedłszy z krytycznego ujęcia natury owej 'racjonalności' próbuje definiować współczesną literaturę koreańską, czyniąc tym samym punkt wyjścia dla dalszych badań.

Słowa kluczowe: literatura koreańska lat 90. wieku XX; *Munhakdongne*; literackość jako sztuka dla sztuki; 'własne ja'; autentyczność.

1. Introduction

Perhaps the approval of contemporary criticism of the inner nature of literature in the early 1990s may be a signification for taking action for self-defense, which was attempted somewhat hastily. Perhaps criticism in the 90s excluded or tried to turn a blind eye to some important aspects in order to overcome literature in the 80s and out of a compulsion to prove that literature in the 90s was not a regression from the great literature in the 80s. Therefore, did critics in the 90s isolate the discourse of internality of literature in the 1990s into too narrow and limited areas? Thus, through this series of processes, the inner nature of literature may have acquired a kind of literary hegemony¹ (Bae Haeun 배하은 2016: 553).

It is not difficult to sympathize with the view of the Korean literature field in the 1990s as the product of “a signification for taking action for self-defense, which was attempted somewhat hastily” and “a compulsion to prove that literature in the 90s was not a regression from the great literature in the 80s” (Bae Haeun 배하은 2016: 553). Even a brief look at the criticisms in the early 1990s makes clear that terms such as ‘sociality’, ‘history’ and ‘totality’, which were common in the literature of the 1980s, quickly disappeared and were replaced by terms such as ‘personality’, ‘innerness’, and ‘sincerity’, and these substitutes eventually acquired importance. However, it seems somewhat problematic to attribute much of this to certain Ecole critics such as Seo Youngchae (서영채) and Hwang Jongyeon (황종연), rather than to share it with both writers and readers. These criticisms not only have the risk of “paradoxically overestimating the capabilities of a particular generation subject but also allow us to

¹ “어쩌면 1990년대 초 문학의 내면성에 대한 당대 비평의 승인은 다소 선부르게 시도된 자구(自求)적인 의미화는 아니었을까. 80년대 문학과와의 결별, 그것의 극복을 위해, 그리고 스스로가 위대한 80년대 문학으로부터의 퇴행이 아님을 입증해야 한다는 강박에 사로잡혀 어떤 중요한 측면들을 배제, 주변화하거나 애써 외면한 것은 아니었을까. 때문에 90년대 문학의 내면성이라는 담론은 지나치게 협소하고 제한적인 영역으로 스스로를 고립 내지는 게토화시킨 것은 아니었을까. 그리하여 이 일련의 과정을 거치는 가운데 문학의 내면성은 일종의 문학적 헤게모니를 획득하게 된 것이 아닐까” (배하은 2016: 553). All translations from Korean are by Author, unless stated otherwise.

underestimate the opportunity for the emergence of the ‘internal discourse’² (Kang Dongho 강동호 2020: 262).

If so, in order to answer enough of the above concerns, the ‘series of processes’ must be explained about how ‘innerness’ came to ‘acquire a kind of literary hegemony’. According to earlier studies, in the 1990s, the literature field was symbolically marked by *Munhakdongne* along with “[T]he desire for recognition of the 386 generation as second mover in the literature field”³ (Cho Yeonjeong 조연정 2018a: 224) and “the will to regain the original privileges of the tarnished literature”⁴ (Cho Yeonjeong 조연정 2018b: 26). In addition, *Munhakdongne* finds ‘innerness’ as “the area of literature that can sustain the value system of authenticity in the past in the most literary way”, and acquires hegemony by assuming ‘pure self-identity’, or ‘true authenticity’, for the novel’s “restoration of essence” (Bae Haeun 배하은 2016: 559-563). In the end, *Munhakdongne* forms an ‘unknown myth of authenticity’ based on innerness and colonizes the areas outside the Oikos called the literary world through a true/false dichotomy (Lee Soyeon 이소연 2017: 184).

However, the above explanations are not sufficient grounds for their arguments. The above explanations repeat only negative evaluations without providing sufficient explanation of how ‘literaturism’ based on ‘inner nature-sincerity’ won the confrontation with literature in the 1980s and how it became the main origin of today’s literature field. One previous critical commentator sets up discussions by distinguishing between ‘depressed’ and ‘cynical’ writers and critics who want to convince readers that the ‘signs’ of such writers are really ‘new ways to fight reality’. It also evokes the fact that

the view of considering the disconnected narratives common in literary history descriptions as products of discourse, and the view of criticizing the desires and generational recognition of the subjects who

² “역설적이게도 특정 세대 주체의 역량을 지나치게 과대평가하는 결과를 낳을 위험”이 있을뿐더러, “‘내면성’ 담론이 출현하게 된 계기를 과소평가”할 수 있게끔 하기 때문이다” (강동호 2020: 262).

³ “후발주자(386 세대)의 인정욕망” (조연정 2018a: 224).

⁴ “실추된 문학 본연의 특권을 되찾고자 하는 의지” (조연정 2018b: 26).

invented discourse can also be returned to the subject of historical description⁵ (Kang Dongho 강동호 2020: 261).

In other words, the commentator indirectly argues that the declaration of disconnection could not have been made solely by the desire of the critics at the time by suggesting that what the researchers' desires are today should also be reflected on.

In short, if today's researchers have no choice but to make value judgments with specific desires, and if judgment on today's literature is being made based on this, it should also be critically reviewed whether the value judgment of the researcher looking at the research subject is justified. Otherwise, today's research may not only violate the ethics of historical descriptions related to 'value judgment'; paradoxically, the recent criticism of criticism in the 90s is also due to 'a rather premature justification' in relation to literature today, and the obsession to prove that it is not a regression from literature in the 90s.

2. Methodology for Understanding Literature in the 1990s

This is commonly found in many critics of modernity discourse during this period (90s) ... the ultimate task of critics in the 90s, summarized as living and thinking seriously about the paradoxes and contradictions of modernity, is no different from thoroughly experiencing the paradoxes and contradictions proposed by Hwang Jongyeon. In the end, it is a repetition of the Berman-style frame. ("Modernism for Berman is an attitude that fully embraces modernity, full of tension and contradictions, and corresponding vision that promises adventure, power, joy, growth, and transformation of ourselves and the world, while at the same time threatening to destroy everything we have, everything we know and ourselves".) ... In this way, the discourse that actively raised modernity involves an interpretation that expands modern capabilities close to infinite power and expands modernity's boundaries close to permanence. ... By the

⁵ “문학사 서술에서 흔히 이루어지는 단절적 내러티브를 담론의 산물로 간주하고 담론을 창안한 주체들의 욕망과 세대론적 인정 욕구를 비판하는 관점 역시 역사 서술의 주체에게로 되돌려질 수 있다는 사실” (강동호 2020: 261).

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reflection of aesthetic modernity, the impossibility of revolution is replaced by the revolution of modernity itself and ultimately forgotten. However, as such, the impossibility replaced by possibility cannot help but leave some trace⁶ (Hwang Jeonga 황정아 2020: 123-133).

One commentator, who defines modernity as a narrative category and metaphor rather than a concept, stipulates that the main task of modernity is rewriting, but that the discussion of modernity in the 1990s is rewriting related to the ‘status’ of the category itself, and critically approaching the discourse of modernity in the 90s. The above criticism argues that concepts associated with ‘literaturism’ such as ‘sincerity’ and ‘inner self’, which are transformed into ‘aesthetic modernity’, only specialize in ‘self-identity’ of modernity, but cannot escape itself. This is in line with earlier criticisms, but it is meaningful in that it expands the scope of criticism not only to the editorial committee of *Munhakdongne* of the time but also to several critics who participated in (aesthetic) modernity discourse. In addition, no matter how thoroughly aesthetic modernity criticizes and reflects on modernity, such argument of aesthetic modernity proves the limitations of literature in the 1990s by revealing that it is only a self-reflection of modernity. It should be fully explained how well the power of each element contained in modernity is justly recognized, and how well the contradictions and paradoxical tensions created by different elements are maintained. Otherwise, ‘aesthetic modernity’ will only degenerate into a means of self-justification of ‘modernity’ along with mythical explanations such as along with mythical

⁶ “이 시기 근대성 담론의 상당 수에 공통적으로 확인 되는(바) ... 근대성의 역설과 모순을 ‘온몸으로 살고’ ‘진지하게 사고’하는 것으로, 궁극적인 과제도 황중연이 제안한 역설과 모순을 철저히 겪는 일과 다를 바 없다. 결국 버먼식 프레임(“버먼에게 모더니즘이란 ... 모험, 힘, 기쁨, 성장, 그리고 우리 자신과 세계의 변형을 약속하는 동시에 우리가 가진 모든 것, 우리가 아는 모든 것, 우리 자신인 모든 것을 파괴하려고 위협하는 역설과 긴장과 모순으로 가득한 근대성을 온전히 수용하고 그에 상응하는 비전을 갖는 태도”)의 반복인 셈인데 ... 근대성을 적극적으로 부상시킨 담론에는 이와 같이 근대의 역량을 거의 무한 동력에 가깝게 확대하고 그 경계를 거의 영속성에 가깝게 확장하는 해석이 개입한다. ... 미적 근대성의 반성작용에 의해 혁명의 불가능성이 근대성 자체의 혁명성으로 대체되고 궁극적으로 망각되는 것이다. 하지만 그렇듯 가능성으로 대체된 불가능성이 어떤 흔적을 남기지 않을 수는 없다.” (황정아 2020: 123-133).

explanations such as ‘reviving the contradiction of modernity faithfully = restoring modernity’ (Hwang Jeonga *황정아* 2014: 142).

To summarize the above criticism, the loss of utopian concepts which were popular in the 80s, such as ‘Revolution’ and the ‘Outside’ still applies not only to the ‘90s’ but also to ‘Today’, and it argues that if we do not actively remember and present what we have forgotten since the 1990s, both the criticism of the past and today’s criticism will fail. The above criticism, which is very fundamental and persuasive, is more intransitive than the previous discussions, criticizing Fantasia, which romanticizes and mythologizes the ‘aesthetic modernity’ pursued by ‘literaturism’. This criticism evokes the impossibility of aesthetic modernity and emphasizes that the recovery of utopia in the 80s is a way to overcome the above pitfalls. However, was this criticism and proposal possible at the time, and is it possible today? This may be another disconnection and settlement between the 1990s and today.

Whenever I look back on the acceptance process of post-discourse in Korea over the past 20 years, I feel surprised. Such surprises arise, above all, from the puzzling changes that took place in the late 1980s and early 1990s when the acceptance of post-discourse was just beginning. ... It was a change that could be called epistemological disconnection or amputation. ... Why on earth did this drastic change take place? The most obvious answer to this question is that it is due to the rapid changes in world history that took place at the same time. For example, the Berlin Wall collapsed in 1989, and the Soviet Union and other socialist countries in Eastern Europe fell one after another ... However, it is difficult to properly answer the question of why the “change in external reality” had to involve such a rapid “internal ideological change.” ... Rather, it can be hypothesized that the rapid acceptance of post-discourse is a kind of expression of condolences. ... The hypothesis of post-discourse as a mourning discourse allows us to explain why so many narratives of confession and conversion became popular in Korea in the early 1990s. Post-discourse was something that made it possible to endure the painful process of mourning and replace an object that had already been lost⁷ (Jin Taewon *진태원* 2019: 35-37).

⁷ “지난 20 여 년 동안 국내에서 이루어진 포스트 담론의 수용 과정을 들여다볼 때마다 놀라움을 느끼게 된다. 그러한 놀라움은 무엇보다 포스트 담론의 수용이 막 시작되던 1980년대 말~1990년대 초에 일어난 수수께끼 같은 변화로 인해

According to the discussion that analyzed the discourse of the humanities as a whole beyond the literature field, the emergence of new things in the 90s that felt disconnected from the 80s was ‘something that allowed us to endure the painful process of mourning and replace the already lost loved ones’. The advantage of this framework is that ‘post-discourse was at first and is still tied to the bondage of its introduction conditions’, as well as that it connects the 1990s and today more closely to reflect on it, and that the 1990s can be approached away from sincerity-based ‘value judgments’ (Jin Taewon 진태원 2019: 34-35).

When applying the above perspectives one by one to the literary field of the 1990s, we can see that

- 1) critics of field of the 1990s continued their literary history as a process of sincere mourning by using the works and attitudes (scepticism, cynicism, masochism, etc.) shown by depressing writers of the time as a ‘substitute’.
- 2) In addition, as for the response to the loss of mourning [mourning/depression], we should be more cautious as long as Derrida’s argument that a more ethical response should accept the impossibility of mourning is still something unfamiliar. Today’s gaze should be more careful in determining the value of mourning work, which was common in the 1990s. To continue the above application,
- 3) we easily confirm that the criticisms for the 90s literature field represented by Hwang Jeonga belong to the category ‘depression’, another aspect of response to loss, and that

생겨난다. ... 가히 인식론적 단절 내지 절단이라고 부를 만한 변화였다. ... 이러한 급격한 변화는 도대체 왜 일어난 것일까? 이 질문에 대한 가장 명백한 답변은 같은 시기에 일어났던 급격한 세계사적 변화에 그 원인이 있다는 것이다. 1989년 베를린 장벽이 붕괴되고 소련을 비롯한 동유럽 사회주의 국가들의 연쇄적인 몰락... (그러나) 이 답변은 ‘외부 현실의 변화’가 왜 꼭 그렇게 급격한 ‘내부의 사상적 변화’를 수반해야 했는가라는 반문에 대해 제대로 답변하기 어렵다. ... 오히려 포스트 담론의 수입과 급속한 수용은 일종의 애도의 표현이라는 가설을 세워볼 수 있다. ... 애도담론으로서의 포스트 담론이라는 가설은 왜 1990년대 초에 국내에 그토록 많은 고백의 서사와 전향의 담론이 유행하게 되었는지 설명할 수 있게 해준다. 포스트 담론은 그 고통스러운 애도의 과정을 견딜 수 있게 해주고 이미 상실된 사랑하는 대상을 대체할 수 있게 해준 어떤 것이었다”(진태원 2019: 35-37).

‘depression’ as a different choice remains a moral criticism of 90s literaturism (mourning), and it cannot be an alternative.

Citing Derrida, Jin Taewon proposes a way to overcome the (sorrow/depression) dichotomy. Mourning of mourning, or mourning about mourning, are answers to ‘how to mourn ourselves’ (‘narcissistic subject-centeredism’), and it asks for (re) mourning work on the ‘sorrow’ work that ‘we’ have been performing since the 1990s. In other words, we must truly mourn ourselves in the meantime, looking back on ‘we’, which have expressed ‘inner self’, ‘sincerity’, and ‘literaturism’ as mourning works since the 1990s. However, the above way is somewhat unique. Looking at Jin Taewon’s work of mourning for the discourse field of theory (the humanities as a whole, philosophy), he performs ‘primarily’ ‘discovering and developing unique insights into post-discourses that have not been properly recognized or practiced despite the arrival of post-discourses over the past 20 years’. However, such work, contrary to the ‘denial’ and ‘disposal’ of products that have been replaced and developed since the 1990s, clarifies 90s’ ‘benefits’ and ‘meaning’ once again. This is because the author assumed that the main prospective reader of the book, including himself in the past, was the subject of depression. Depression is also an aspect of self-destructive ‘other mourning’, a process of mourning as a larger category, and the author argues that the subject in depression should not narcissistically adhere to his own method, but should instead discover the ‘original connection’ from the 1990s. In other words, the depression of criticism, which rejects mourning in the 1990s and insists on the recovery of what was in the 1980s, should start with the affirmation of what was in the 1990s and move itself to the realm of mourning ourselves and dialogue with others.

3. Criticism of Literaturism in the 1990s (1)

Jin Jeongseok: As you know, the active recognition of national literature played a decisive role in the spread of the Shin Kyung-sook phenomenon to the entire range of the literature field. This was a kind of incident. To many people, Shin Kyung-sook’s novel seemed almost contrary to the resistance image of national literature. However, there seems to be an analogous resemblance and structural agreement

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between Shin Kyung-sook's topic and the concerns of national literature. *Writing as a Confession* is the medium. The essence of Shin Kyung-sook's novel is a confession, a desperate confession to oneself, not anyone else. It is a common belief in literary history that the form of confession is usually submitted in a crisis of identity, and that it is a writing method that pursues sincerity. National literature in the 90s, in a serious identity crisis, discovers a new meaning implied in the writing of this confession in the process of seeking an alternative to overcoming. This structure can also be found in Choi In-hoon's "화두 Hwadu (The Topic)", a clear coordinate of confession novels in the 1990s. Doesn't "화두 Hwadu" also have a creative motivation to overcome the impact of the collapse of the Cold War and reaffirm one's identity?⁸ (Jin Jeongseok et al. 진정석 외. 1999: 37).

First of all, the 'loss' of literature in the 1990s and the subsequent 'serious identity crisis' were quite common, and keywords such as 'confession', 'inner self', and 'sincerity' were not only for critics of a specific École, but rather a substitute for the mourning process borrowed from the entire literature field. Of course, the pattern will vary greatly depending on how it is handled and how the relationship is established in the future (e.g., as a confession of depression or as a new alternative), but at least it can be seen that several keywords assumed to be literary were somewhat inevitable in the process of loss and mourning. One interesting fact is that several critics of the time went through the above process of mourning after considerable hesitation. Therefore, the point to note today should not be the judgment of the external value of the answer they eventually gave, but

⁸ “진정석: 아시다시피 <신경숙 현상>이 전문단적인 범위로 확산되는 데는 민족문학 쪽의 적극적인 사후 추인이 결정적인 역할을 했는데요. 이걸 일종의 사건이었죠. 많은 사람들에게 신경숙 소설은 민족문학의 저항적 이미지와 거의 배치되는 것처럼 보였거든요. 하지만 신경숙의 화두와 민족문학의 고민 사이에는 어떤 유비적인 답음, 구조적인 합치점이 있었던 것 같아요. <고백으로서의 글쓰기>가 바로 그 매개인데요. 신경숙 소설의 본질은 고백, 그것도 다른 누가 아닌 바로 자기 자신을 향한 간절한 고백이지요. 고백의 형식이 대개 정체성의 위기상황에서 제출된다는 것, 진정성을 추구하는 글쓰기 방식이라는 것은 문학사의 통설입니다. 심각한 정체성 위기에 처한 90년대의 민족문학은 극복의 대안을 모색하는 과정에서 이 고백의 글쓰기에 내포된 의미를 새롭게 발견하게 되죠. 90년대 고백체 소설의 뚜렷한 좌표인 최인훈의 <화두>에서도 이런 구조를 찾아볼 수 있어요. 화두 역시 냉전체제의 붕괴가 가져다준 충격을 극복하고 자기 정체성을 재확인하려는 창작동기를 갖고 있지 않습니까?” (진정석 외. 1999: 37).

the work of verifying whether it was logical and effective from an intrinsic point of view.

The problem is that it is relative and one-off, and that parody without the original cannot exist, and lightness can only be established on the premise of heavyness. Nietzsche's Zarathustra also talked about the lightness of a child. However, the child's condition is only possible after going through a painful camel and a violent lion. ... The reason why nihilism is repeatedly mentioned at the discussion of feature novels in the 1990s is because of the fact that a new generation of writers is now naked in front of that huge nihilism. Disillusionment is basically a form of self-confession, so it is difficult to repeat it more than once in a writer. In other words, there is no continuous productivity. ... How to acquire the vitality of serious cheerfulness and lightness, which is not frivolous, is an exciting concern for readers, but it will be an object of considerable struggle for them⁹ (Seo Yeongchae 서영채 1995: 34-40).

However, it is not an alternative to established culture by itself to making something pitiable, that is, praise for deviance and immorality. ... If you believe that the corrupt reason that dominates society will be broken down through the recovery of suppressed madness, it is an innocent idea. ... It is correct to say that the carnival of madness has the effect of helping reconstruction rather than destroying the bourgeois identity. ... Unlike the interpretation of people who make romantic beautifications about it, the "people's carnival" is only a temporary crack in the hegemony allowed by the established power itself from the beginning¹⁰ (Hwang Jongyeon 황종연 2001: 30-31).

⁹ “문제는 그것이 상대적이고 일회적인 것이라는 점, 원전 없는 패러디는 존재할 수 없으며 가벼움은 무거움을 전제로만 성립될 수 있다는 점이다. 니체의 짜라투스트라도 어린아니의 가벼움을 이야기했다. 그러나 그 어린아이의 상태는 고통스런 낙타와 격렬한 사자의 상태를 거친 이후에만 가능하다. ... 90 년대의 장편 소설을 논의하는 자리에서 거듭 허무주의를 언급하는 것은, 이제 새로운 세대의 작가들이 저 거대한 허무주의 앞에 알몸으로 노출되어 있다는 사실 때문이다. 환멸은 기본적으로 자기고백의 형식이기 때문에 한 작가에게서 두 번 이상 반복되기 어렵다. 곧 지속적인 생산력이 없다는 것이다. ... 진지한 쾌활함과 경박하지 않은 가벼움의 활력을 어떤 방식으로 획득할 것인지, 이것이 독자들에게는 흥미진진한 관심거리이지만 그들에게는 적지 않은 고투의 대상일 것이다.” (서영채 1995: 34-40).

¹⁰ “그러나 비루하게 만들기, 그 일탈과 패덕의 찬양이 그 자체로 기성 문화에 대한 대안이 되지 않는 못한다. ... 사회를 지배하는 타락한 이성이 억압된 광기의

The novel driven by disillusionment, which is difficult to repeat more than once in a writer, is simply in crisis. In addition, the carnival of madness is more likely to contribute to helping rebuild rather than destroying bourgeois identity. Looking at writers passing through the 90s as ‘depressions’, critics are critically aware of the limitations of so-called 90s literature, recognizing that it cannot be the ultimate literary answer. In particular, Seo Youngchae and Hwang Jongyeon, both literary critics and Korean modern literature majors, commonly felt similarly to those in their late 30s and early 40s, and agonized to avoid repetition of ‘comic’ history. Seo Youngchae carefully took a literary attitude, remembering that

Kim Nam-cheon wanted to take a step back and look at the world; Choi Jae-seo went one step further, but Kim Nam-cheon took two steps back and wrote a popular novel, and Choi Jae-seo went two steps further and was awakened by the pseudo-modern fantasy of fascism¹¹ (Seo Yeongchae 서영채 1993: 41).

Through the above, we can talk as follows. The above critics are those who live in universal historical times such as the world history of the time and are obsessed with the time of the special field ‘Korean Literary History’. Furthermore, as literary critics (i.e., as authorities in the field of literature), they would have thought carefully with the writers of the time as they passed through a series of ‘end’ periods. For example, it is difficult to fully agree with the negativity shown by writers in the literature field of the time, but by deconstructing this negativity and paying attention to the innerness and authenticity assumed to exist in it, they somehow denied the end and continued history (literary history). If so, maybe critics wrote a ‘bildungsroman’ called Korean literary history, assuming writers at

복권을 통해 타파되리라고 믿는다면 그것은 아무래도 순진한 생각이다. ... 광기의 카니발은 부르주아적 정체성을 파괴하는 효과가 있다기보다는 오히려 재건을 돕는 효과가 있다고 해야 옳다. ... 민중 카니발은 그것에 대한 낭만적 미화를 일삼는 사람들의 해석과 다르게 애초부터 기성 권력 자체가 허용한 헤게모니의 일시적 균열에 불과하다”(황종연 2001: 30-31).

¹¹ “김남천은 한 발 물러서서 세상을 바라보고자 했고, 최재서는 한 발 더 나아가 세상 속으로 뛰어들라고 했”지만, “김남천은 두 발 물러서 통속소설을 썼고, 최재서는 두 발을 더 나아가 파시즘이라는 사이비 탈근대의 환상에 경도되었다.”(서영채 1993: 41).

the time as ‘characters’. If so, today we can find some problematic points from a critical point of view as well as a historical point of view over a ‘bildungsroman’ conducted by critics in the 1990s, if the ‘bildungsroman’ called rewriting of literary history is still inevitable today.

4. Criticism of Literaturism in the 1990s (2)

Full denial in the 80s style falls into the trap of suicide. So literature moves under the whip of a good mother. It is myself who is being beaten and at the same time, a bad father hiding inside me. I am in pain, but I feel a sense of pleasure in getting my father beaten. It’s a painful and pleasant joke that happens inside us. Death and cynicism appear in the text of the four writers, and furthermore, the big plot of the 1990s novel is read in a fundamentally masochistic context for us. The representative divinity of masochism is Jesus. ... The masochistic desire revealed through the divinity of Jesus is the will and desire for regeneration or new birth. ... It does not seem to be lacking in telling us the aspects and subject matter of the critical potential that literature must have in this era. The forest of novels in the 1990s, where these plots are intertwined, feels dense and deep¹² (Seo Yeongchae 서영채 2005: 150).

Of course, any generation has their own wounds, and they have their own language of authenticity. The same is true of Kim Young-ha’s generation. However, at least for them, literature is characteristic in that it is not a suitable form for expressing or healing wounds. ...

¹² “80 년대식으로 전면적으로 부정하는 것은, 자기 부정이라는 혹은 자살이라는 함정에 빠져버린다. 그래서 문학은 착한 어머니의 채찍 아래로 나아간다. 매를 맞고 있는 것은 나 자신이면서 동시에 내 안에 숨어 있는 못된 아버지다. 맞는 나는 고통스럽지만 아버지를 맞게 하는 나는 통쾌감을 느낀다. 그것은 자기 내부에서 벌어지는 아프고 유쾌한 농담이다. 네 작가의 텍스트에 나타나는 죽음과 냉소가, 더 나아가서는 1990 년대 소설의 큰 줄거리가 우리에게겐 근본적으로 마조히즘적인 맥락으로 읽힌다. 마조히즘의 대표적 신성은 예수이다. ... 예수라는 신성을 통해 드러나는 마조히즘적인 욕망은 재생 혹은 신생에의 의지이자 회구다. ... 그것은 우리에게 이 시대에 문학이 지녀야 하는 비판적 잠재력의 양상과 소재를 알려주기에 그다지 부족함이 없어 보인다. 이런 줄거리들이 서로 얽히며 만들어가는 1990 년대 소설의 숲은 더 없이 울창하고 그윽하게 느껴진다.” (서영채 2005: 150).

Soonmo Yang: Criticism of Literaturism in the 1990s:

Their literature seems to be serving as a mechanism of reflection while paralleling with sexuality and the tendency to sublimate in emotional life, which have gradually become the mainstream of the entire culture since the 1990s. ... They appear to have taken another dimension of authenticity in different ways, finding their own literary language. ... As Adorno said, if true depth stems from resistance, literary resistance will now be resistance to oneself¹³ (Seo Yeongchae 서영채 2005: 99-103).

In contrast, Seo Youngchae, who could not hide his skeptical gaze toward contemporary artists in the early 1990s, fully approved their works by the end of the 90s. The reason why this was possible was because Seo discovered an ‘enemy’. Critics confirm that writers are continuing their struggles and resistance by discovering the ‘enemy’ hidden behind self-torment and suicide shown by writers in the 1990s, and they approve such struggles as good literature. In fact, the importance of ‘the enemy’ and ‘fighting’ is evident from the beginning of Seo’s writing. For Seo, literature is a form of ‘fighting’ and ‘resistance’, and the inner self and authenticity exists as a ‘place’ as long as the fighting continues. In other words, for Seo Youngchae, literature is form of a resistance through reflection; thus, even Kim Young-ha’s novel, which seems far from ‘authenticity’, Seo captures that it performs fighting functions (reflection and reflection) well for the culture of the time, and approves it as another attempt to depth of literature.

The order of the commander (Hwang Ji-woo) was not a desperate battle, but a retreat. It means we have to be in seclusion. Caused by what? Needless to say, it is because of the enormous power of marketism. ... But isn’t it too late? Aren’t there already such vivid

¹³ “물론 어느 세대나 자기들만의 상처가 있게 마련이고 또 진정성에 대한 자기들만의 고유한 언어가 있게 마련이다. 김영하의 세대들도 마찬가지다. 그러나 최소한 그들에게 문학은 상처를 표현하거나 치유하는 데 적합한 형식이 아니라는 점에서 특징적이다. ... 그들의 문학은 1990 년대 이후 점차 문화 전체의 주류가 되고 있는 섹슈얼리티와 감정 생활에서의 탈승화 경향과 나란히 가면서 동시에 그에 대한 반영과 반성의 기제 노릇을 하고 있는 것으로 보인다. ... 그들은 다른 방식으로 진정성의 또다른 차원을, 자기들의 문학적 언어를 찾아나선 것으로 보인다. ... 아도르노의 말처럼 진정한 깊이가 저항에서 비롯되는 것이라면, 문학적 저항은 이제 자기 자신에 대한 저항일 것이다” (서영채 2005: 99-103).

traces of the struggle (fighting) that literature walked in the 1990s in front of our eyes? ... How remarkably different are the socialities of literature in the 1980s. Aren't these the literary expressions and responses to the cynicism and duality of the proud market?¹⁴ (Seo Yeongchae 서영채 2005: 111).

Therefore, literaturism, unique to *Munhakdongne*, which is distinguished from existing literaturism, is a head-on confrontation with marketism of the time, as previously confirmed in the approval of Kim Young-ha's novel. In short, 'enemy' as an object of struggle and resistance to literary neighborhoods is not an 'idol' (false hope, false reconciliation), but an obvious 'enemy' of the time.

The news that the ego is fiction now has no feeling of scandal. If you decide to use the word fiction like that, the whole human culture is fiction. Saying the self is a fiction does not exempt you from the task of contemplating and exploring the self. We must learn something from the post-structuralist correction that the ego is built in linguistic, cultural, and political connections, but we must also remember the historical fact that the ideal of the ego played an important role in human self-liberation. ... If so, the inner-self literature we have discussed so far is also responsible for reflecting on and renewing itself. Shin Kyung-sook and Yoon Dae-nyeong's novels have realized the principle of aesthetic subjectivity that builds the self after the neutralization of national-popular identity, but pending issues surrounding the self continue to be born, and the principle of introversion that meets the self truthfully remains valid¹⁵ (Hwang Jongyeon 황종연 2001: 136-137).

¹⁴ “사령관(황지우)의 명령은 결사 항전이 아니라 퇴각이었다. 은둔해야 한다는 것이다. 무엇 때문인가. 말할 것도 없이 시장주의의 저 엄청난 위력 때문이다. ... 그러나 그것은 너무 늦은 게 아닐까. 이미 우리 눈앞에는 1990 년대 문학이 걸어온 고투의 흔적들이 너무나 생생하게 펼쳐져 있지 않은가. ... 1980 년대 문학이 지니고 있었던 사회성에 비하면 얼마나 현저하게 다른 것들인가. 이들이야말로 저 의기양양한 시장의 냉소주의와 이중성에 대한 문학적 표현이자 대응이 아닐까”(서영채 2005: 111).

¹⁵ “자아가 허구라는 소식은 이제 조금도 추문의 느낌이 없다. 허구라는 말을 그렇게 사용하기로 한다면, 인간 문화 전체가 허구다. 자아를 허구라고 말한다고 해서 자아에 대해 고민하고 탐구해야 하는 과제에서 면제되진 않는다. 우리는 자아가 언어적, 문화적, 정치적 연관 속에서 구축된다는 후구조주의적 교정으로부터 뭔가를 배워야 하지만 자아의 이상이 인간의 자기 해방에서 중요한 역할을 담당했다는 역사적 사실도 아울러 기억해야 한다. ... 그렇다면

In addition, in relation to *Munhakdongne*'s struggles, it can be confirmed that 'individuals', 'inner self' and 'sincerity' are truly places of struggle and are never ideal, safe, or pure spaces. The inner self, rather than a resistance base against the colonization of capital, is a place of struggle in which battles take place, and it is necessary to 'reflect and renew itself' repeatedly. Hwang Jongyeon carries this out in his own way, referring to the criticism of 'post-rescueist correction'. In other words, as the neoliberal drives of the 1990s transformed individuals, the inner self, and authenticity into 'products' and tools of 'product aesthetics', *Munhakdongne*'s struggles can be seen as efforts to somehow protect and re-examine values such as the inner self and authenticity. In short, authenticity itself is not a weapon, but a battlefield. For example, Charles Taylor emphasizes that authenticity culture has many problems, but it is a 'non-reversible' culture that cannot be discarded and should be re-dedicated (Taylor 2001: 40). Therefore, it can be concluded that literaturism in *Munhakdongne*, including concepts such as the inner self and authenticity, existed as a bastion of struggle in the confrontation with marketism, the 'enemy' of the time, rather than being materialized in itself. Therefore, as literature struggled with neoliberalism in the 1990s, the literaturism of *Munhakdongne* is an attitude that is difficult for us to criticize today, and criticism of this needs to be carried out more accurately.

5. Conclusion

This paper reviews 90s literaturism as represented by *Munhakdongne*, and Chapter 3 revealed that the inner self and authenticity were somewhat inevitable universal concepts in the process of mourning at the time, as critics and literary history continued to write their

우리가 지금까지 논의한 내면성의 문학 또한 스스로를 반성하고 갱신할 책임을 짊어지고 있는 셈이다. 신경숙, 윤대녕의 소설은 민족-민중적 정체성의 무력화 이후 자아를 구축하는 미적 주체성의 원리를 나름대로 실현했지만, 자아를 둘러싼 현안들은 계속해서 태어나고 있으며 자아와 진실하게 만나는 내향성의 원리 또한 변함없이 유효하다” (황중연 2001: 136-137).

‘bildungsroman’ using those writers of the inner self as characters. Chapter 4 confirms that their literature is literaturism that seeks its essence in the struggle, and thus argues that the inner self and authenticity were truly a battlefield of struggle against the market. These points are difficult to criticize easily today, but this paper critically approaches whether ‘bildungsroman-criticism’ was sufficient as their struggle. Through the above inherent criticism, this article tries to confirm the possibility of today’s literature-method, which is different from the 90’s.

As Franco Moretti points out in his book <The Way of the World>, the bildungsroman is a genre with an epochological origin for modernity’s experience. ... Growth only takes on a problematic character as autonomous abilities become inevitable and justifiable for individuals. ... Anxiety that one does not have a firm personal and social identity, and nervousness that constantly wants self-renewal and rise, like an unruly chronic disease, afflicts modern individuals. The universal experience of modern people who hide their inner anxiety and go on the path of wandering and speculation gave birth to an unusual human figure in modern European novels. ... The complex inner and arduous aspects of such characters constitute an image of dynamics and variability characteristic of modernity in themselves, while clearly showing the pastoral, comedy and tragedy of life contained therein. In this regard, Moretti’s argument that European liberal arts novels or bildungsroman are “symbolic forms of modernity” makes sense¹⁶ (Hwang Jongyeon 황종연 2001: 55-56).

One of the peculiar points that can be found in Hwang Jongyeon’s writing, which critically reviews ‘bildungsroman’ in the 1990s, is that

¹⁶ “프랑코 모레티가 그의 교양소설론 『세상살이』에서 지적하고 있듯이, 교양소설 혹은 성장소설은 모더니티의 경험에 발생론적 기원을 두고 있는 장르이다. ... 자율적 능력이 개인에게 필연이자 당위가 되면서 성장은 비로소 문제적인 성격을 띤다. ... 자기에게 확고한 개인적, 사회적 정체성이 없다는 불안감, 끊임없이 자아 갱신과 상승을 원하는 초조감과 근절되지 않는 숙환처럼 근대적 개인을 괴롭힌다. 내면의 불안과 불안과 초조를 감추고 유랑과 투기의 길을 가는 근대인의 보편적 경험은 유럽 근대소설에서 이채로운 인간형상을 낳았다. ... 그러한 인물들의 착잡한 내면과 고단한 편력은 그것 자체로 모더니티에 특징적인 역동성과 가변성의 이미지를 구성하는 동시에 거기에 담긴 삶의 목가와 비가, 희극과 비극을 극명하게 보여준다. 그런 점에서 유럽의 교양소설, 혹은 성장소설을 ‘모더니티의 상징적 형식’이라고 보는 모레티의 주장은 확실히 일리가 있다” (황종연 2001: 55-56).

Franco Moretti's reading of *The Way of the World* is not distinct from Lukacs' *The Theory of the Novel*. For example, like critic Seo Youngchae, it is somewhat understandable to name the struggles of writers in the 90s as Lukacs' *Finding the Way* and make it the essence of the novel. But the bitter reflection of the cracking of the European bourgeois capitalist society, which is mainly conveyed by *The Way of the World*, is hard to find in his writings. In other words, against the background of the contradiction of the bourgeois capitalist society in the early modern era, the work of having the main character of 'youth' deal with the contradiction was bound to result in a bitter adaptation to the capitalist society. Therefore, the work of rewriting a bildungsroman called 'literature history', using young writers of the 1990s as characters, should have deeply considered the historical precedent pointed out by Moretti. But Hwang did not give enough answers to Moretti, saying, „I tend to believe that the ideology of aesthetic modernity is still productive in Korea, unlike in the West”.

Hwang Jongyeon: Thankfully, Jin Jeongseok reminded me, but I tend to believe that the ideology of aesthetic modernity is still productive in Korea, unlike in the West. The desires, oppressed desires, and insulted hopes that have been illegalized by bourgeois rationality still have vitality on the outskirts of the capitalist world system here, and I think their artistic expressions should be protected and encouraged in the name of aesthetic autonomy. ... However, adhering to the ideology of aesthetic autonomy is also likely to remain in modernism. I'm saying this at the same time as self-criticism, but I don't think it should be assumed that the alienation of literature on the premise of aesthetic autonomy, that is, alienation from science or morality, is natural. Doing so is, in the end, neglecting literature-art in favor of superstition and dogma, and withdrawing the right of literature-art to truth by itself. ... Shouldn't we now explore the cognitive and moral powers of literature-art rather than blessing the aesthetic alienation of literature-art? In Adorno's way, we have to think of "the reconciliation between Art and Truth." Somehow, it became a little speculative, but I hope that it will be accepted as meaning that aesthetic modernity is not a concept that guarantees the creative path of literature¹⁷ (Jin Jeongseok et al. 진정석 외. 1999: 71).

¹⁷ “진정석 씨가 고맙게도 상기시켜 주었지만, 저는 미적 근대성의 이념이 서구와는 다르게 한국에서는 아직 생산성을 갖는다고 믿는 편입니다. 부르주아적 합리성에 의해 불법화된 욕구, 억압당한 욕망, 모욕당한 희망은

In the sentence “Shouldn’t we now explore the cognitive and moral power of literature-art rather than blessing the aesthetic alienation of literature-art?” we confirm that Hwang Jongyeon is trying to take a step forward like Seo Youngchae, not a step back. In addition, it can be understood that Hwang will actively struggle with the world, that is, the market, by modifying the aesthetic modernity based on the autonomy of closed art. He argues that aesthetic modernity becomes active through ‘remaining negativity’, which can again serve as a mechanism of reflection on negative modern times. However, in his writing, it is difficult to find a specific way to protect himself or repeatedly reflect on himself in that enormous struggle with the enemy. Above all, the above struggle against reality and participation-oriented literaturism are questionable due to Adorno’s inappropriate citation, and according to Adorno, the above reconciliation is exactly ‘false reconciliation’.

Art works cannot be separated from sinful materialism, just as all sinful things are. This is because in a world mediated by a universal society, nothing is located outside the relationship of sin in this world. ... Art works that want to give up materialism through extremely suspicious political intervention are intertwined with socially false consciousness without exception through the inevitable simplification (Adorno 1984: 352).

While advocating for literaturism, Seo Youngchae and Hwang Jongyeon, who cite Adorno at a decisive moment, emphasize the ‘negativity’ of 90s novels about the world and seek repeated

이곳 자본주의 세계 체제 변동에서 아직 활력을 갖고 있고, 그것들의 예술적 표현은 미적 자율성의 이름으로 보호되고 권장되어야 한다고 생각합니다. ... 그런데 미적 자율성의 이념을 고수하는 것은 따지고 보면 근대주의에 머물 소지가 많은 것이기도 합니다. 자아비판을 겸해서 하는 말입니다만, 미적 자율성이 전제로 하는 문학-예술의 소외, 그러니까 과학이나 도덕으로부터의 소외를 당연한 것으로 가정해서는 곤란하다는 생각도 듭니다. 그렇게 하는 것은 결국 문학-예술을 미신과 도그마에 방치하는 일이기도 하고 진리에 대한 문학-예술의 권리를 스스로 철회하는 것이기도 합니다. ... 이제는 문학-예술의 미적 소외를 극복하기보다는 문학-예술의 인식적, 도덕적 권능탐구해야 하지 않을까요. 아도르노식으로 말해서 <예술과 진리의 화해>를 생각해야 하는 거죠. 어찌다보니 조금 사변적인 얘기가 되고 말았습니다만, 미적 근대성이 문학의 창조적 활로를 확실하게 보장해 주는 개념은 아니라는 뜻으로 받아들여졌으면 합니다” (진정석 외. 1999: 71).

expression of aesthetic modernity and modern reflection through them. However, through their reflection, the ‘bildungsroman’ seems more Hegelian (as a negative evaluation commonly used in discourse) than Adornian. Even if they stick to ‘denial’ to the end, if they ‘want to give up materialism through extremely suspicious political intervention’, their conception of the inner self and authenticity as a battlefield will already have become something ‘meaninglessly praised’. In short, when they claim that ‘truthfulness is dialectical’, it will be difficult to avoid countless criticisms imposed on the so-called 386 generation unless sufficient devices have been prepared to prevent the consequences from leading to paradoxes such as ‘the dialectic of enlightenment’.

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