

ISSN online: 2720-6327

Volume 11/2025

International Journal of Korean Humanities and Social Sciences



Faculty of Modern Languages and Literatures
Adam Mickiewicz University
Poznań, Poland

in co-edition with
Inha University, Incheon, South Korea
and
Yonsei University, Seoul, South Korea

**FACULTY OF MODERN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES
ADAM MICKIEWICZ UNIVERSITY, POZNAŃ, POLAND**

<https://pressto.amu.edu.pl/index.php/kr>
koreanhumanities@gmail.com

EDITORIAL BOARD

Editor-in-chief: Kyong-Geun Oh

Co-editors: Kang Sok Cho, Kyung Sup Woo, Soonmo Yang, Barbara Alicja Jańczak

Secretary: Barbara Alicja Jańczak

External Member of the Editorial Board:

Jong-seong Park (Korea National Open University, South Korea)

Section editors:

Linguistics: Barbara Alicja Jańczak

Literature: Jong-seong Park, Kyong-Geun Oh, Kang Sok Cho, Soonmo Yang

Social sciences: Kyung Sup Woo

Technical editor: Barbara Alicja Jańczak, Soonmo Yang, Jayoung Kim

Editorial Office

International Journal of Korean Humanities and Social Sciences
Faculty of Modern Languages and Literatures
Adam Mickiewicz University
al. Niepodległości 4, room 319B
61-874 Poznań, Poland
koreanhumanities@gmail.com

The electronic version serves referential purposes /
Wersja elektroniczna jest wersją referencyjną czasopisma

The journal has been indexed on ERIH PLUS since 2018

Copyright by Faculty of Modern Languages and Literatures,
Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland

Published in Poland
in co-edition with
Inha University, Incheon, South Korea
and
Yonsei University, Seoul, South Korea

ISSN online (e-ISSN): 2720-6327
<https://pressto.amu.edu.pl/index.php/kr/issue/archive>

Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland
Inha University, Incheon, South Korea
Yonsei University, Seoul, South Korea

Table of Contents

ARTICLES

- Chang-Dong RYUEM: *Colonial Korea's Perspectives and Literary Representations of the First World War: A Focus on the 1910s Maeil-Sinbo and Shinhan-Minbo (New Korea)* 9
- Hosung KIM: *Two Aspects of the "Individual" in Korean Lyric Poetry: Focusing on the Poems of Kim Sowol and Yoo Chihwan* 29
- Marlena OLEKSIUK: *A Study on the Voices of Resistance in Korean Poetry under Japanese Colonial Rule* 59
- Seok-Yeol CHOI: *A Colonial Intellectual's Project and Its Limitations in Transcending 'Nation'- Focusing on Jang Hyuk-ju's Novels The Man Who Was Divided (1933) and Pilgrimage (1943)* 79
- Seongho JANG: *Configurations of Vision in Korean Postwar Poetry: Cases of Jeon Bong-geon and Kim Gu-yong* 107
- Bokyoung KIM: *Aspects of Voices Appearing in Shin Kyung-Rim's Poetry* 129
- Seong-Ah LEE: *The transition from "fantastic reality" to the "realistic fantasy" in the 1990s and the novel as practice – Rereading Kim Young-ha's "Jeon Tae-il and Showgirl"* 151
- Hyo-Won LEE: *Changes in 18th-Century Japanese Academic Circles and Tongsinsa 通信使 Exchange: Focusing on the Emergence of the Sorai School 徂徠學派 and the Publication Process of the Pildamchanghwajip 筆談唱和集* 171

Ji Hoon CHUNG, Yeseul CHOI, Nayoung KIM, Minji YOU & Theodore Jun YOO: <i>Cultivating Effective Educators: Experiential Learning in Korean Language Teacher Education</i>	191
Soojin LEE & Nara YOON: <i>The Brain as Myth: Cinematic Representations and Mythic Reproduction in the Korean Science Fiction Film Jung_E</i>	233
LIST OF REVIEWERS	255

Spis Treści

ARTYKUŁY

- Chang-Dong RYUEM: *Perspektywy kolonialnej Korei i literackie reprezentacje pierwszej wojny światowej: ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem lat 1910. w Maeil-Sinbo i Shinhan-Minbo (Nowa Korea)* 9
- Hosung KIM: *Dwa aspekty „ja” w koreańskiej poezji lirycznej: ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem twórczości Kima Sowola i Yoo Chihwana* 29
- Marlena OLEKSIUK: *Badanie nad głosami oporu w poezji koreańskiej w okresie japońskiej okupacji* 59
- Seok-Yeol CHOI: *Projekt intelektualisty kolonialnego i jego ograniczenia w przekraczaniu „narodu”: ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem powieści Jang Hyuk-ju *The Man Who Was Divided* (1933) i *Pilgrimage* (1943)* 79
- Seongho JANG: *Konfiguracje wizji w koreańskiej poezji powojennej: przypadki Jeona Bong-geona i Kima Gu-yonga* 107
- Bokyoung KIM: *Aspekty głosów w poezji Shin Kyung-Rima* 129
- Seong-Ah LEE: *Przejście od „fantastycznej rzeczywistości” do „realistycznej fantazji” w latach 90. i powieść jako praktyka – ponowna lektura „Jeon Tae-il and Showgirl” autorstwa Kima Young-ha* 151
- Hyo-won LEE: *Zmiany w japońskich kręgach akademickich XVIII wieku oraz wymiana Tongsinsa 通信使: z uwzględnieniem pojawienia się szkoły Sorai 徂徠學派 i procesu publikacji Pildamchanghwajip 筆談唱和集* 171

Ji Hoon CHUNG, Yeseul CHOI, Nayoung KIM, Minji YOU & Theodore Jun YOO: *Kształcenie skutecznych nauczycieli: uczenie przez doświadczenie w edukacji nauczycieli języka koreańskiego* **191**

Soojin LEE & Nara YOON: *Mózg jako mit: filmowe reprezentacje i mitologiczna reprodukcja w koreańskim filmie science-fiction Jung_E* **233**

LISTA RECENZENTÓW **255**

목차

학술지논문

- 염창동 (Chang-Dong RYUEM): 제1차 세계대전에 대한 식민지 조선의 시선과 문학적 재현 연구: 1910년대 매일신보와 신한민보를 중심으로 9
- 김호성 (Hosung KIM): 한국 서정시에 나타난 ‘개인’의 두 양태: 김소월과 유치환을 중심으로 29
- Marlena OLEKSIUK: 일본 식민 통치 하 한국 시에서 저항의 목소리 연구 59
- 최석열 (Seok-Yeol CHOI): ‘민족’을 초월하기 위한 한 식민지 지식인의 기획과 한계: 장혁주 소설 <분기한 자>(1933)와 <순례>(1943)를 중심으로 79
- 장성호 (Seongho JANG): 한국 전후시에서의 시선의 양상: 전봉건과 김구용의 경우 107
- 김보경 (Bokyoung KIM): 신경림 시에 등장하는 목소리의 양상들 129
- 이성아 (Seong-Ah LEE): 1990년대 ‘현실의 환상성’으로부터 ‘환상의 현실성’으로의 전환과 실천으로서의 소설: 김영하의 “전태일과 쇼걸” 다시 읽기 151

이효원 (Hyo-Won LEE): 18세기 일본 학문계의 변화와 통신사 교류 - 徂徠학파의 대두와 『筆談唱和集』 간행 과정을 중심으로	171
정지훈, 최예슬, 김나영, 유민지, 테오도르 유준 (Ji Hoon CHUNG, Yeseul CHOI, Nayoung KIM, Minji YOU & Theodore Jun YOO): 효과적인 교사 양성: 한국어 교사 교육에서의 체험적 학습	191
이수진, 윤나라 (Soojin LEE & Nara YOON): 신화로서의 뇌: 한국 SF 영화 『정이(Jung_E)』에서의 영화적 표현과 신화적 재생산	233
심사위원들	255

**COLONIAL KOREA'S PERSPECTIVES
AND LITERARY REPRESENTATIONS OF
THE FIRST WORLD WAR: A FOCUS ON
THE 1910S MAEIL SINBO AND SHINHAN
MINBO**

CHANG-DONG RYUEM, PhD student

Department of Korean Language and Literature

Yonsei University, Republic of Korea

#205 Chungsong-gwan, 1, Yonseidae-gil,

Heungeop-myeon, Wongi-si, Gangwondo, Republic of Korea

dongdong1015@yonsei.ac.kr

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-1994-9288>

Abstract: This paper examines the reception and narrative appropriation of First World War in colonial Korea by analyzing serialized literary texts from two contemporaneous newspapers: the *Maeil Sinbo* and *Shinhan Minbo* (*The New Korea*). By comparing works such as *Guju Yeolgukji* in the *Maeil Sinbo* and *The Biggest Theatre in the World* and *Iron-Blooded Lovebirds* in *The New Korea*, the study reveals contrasting perspectives shaped by differing political and media environments. Serialized from 1914, *Guju Yeolgukji* initially conveyed the First World War through an entertainment-oriented lens, focusing on the ethnic tensions between Germanic and Slavic peoples. However, by 1915, its narrative shifted to the Battle of Qingdao, redirecting attention toward celebrating Japan's military achievements. The text makes no mention of any connection between the war and colonial Korea. In contrast, *The Biggest Theatre in the World* interprets the outbreak of the war as stemming from German ambition and Austrian vengeance, while highlighting the French people's will to resist aggression – thus offering a critical portrayal of the invading powers. Yet the work simultaneously laments the absence of

direct involvement by colonial Koreans, ultimately framing the war as a conflict among white European powers – a ‘foreign war.’ The subsequent serial *Iron-Blooded Lovebirds*, published between 1916 and 1917, returns to the Balkan Wars, one of the antecedents of First World War, and emphasizes the national spirit of the Serbian people. This shift reflects an emerging perspective that viewed the global war as an opportunity for the liberation of oppressed nations. This trajectory culminates in the subsequent work *Dongpo*, which envisions a future war for Korean independence, thereby extending the narrative toward an imagined postwar world order. The voice of hope and passion for the coming postwar world is vividly expressed in the poem *World Democracy* written by a Korean student who had participated in the war. After the end of First World War, the postwar world was imbued with a spirit of revolution. Korea’s March First Movement was situated within this global revolutionary current, and *Shinhan Minbo* referred to it as the ‘Korean Revolution’, aligning it with contemporaneous uprisings around the world. These past revolutions did not remain mere historical events; rather, they functioned as living memories that offered Korean independence activists new possibilities for political imagination and revolutionary praxis.

Keywords: First World War, *Maeil Sinbo*, *Shinhan Minbo (The New Korea)*, War Literature, Revolution.

제1차 세계대전에 대한 식민지 조선의 시선과 문학적 재현 연구: 1910년대 『매일신보』와 『신한민보』를 중심으로

초록: 이 논문은 제1차 세계대전(1914-1918)이 식민지 조선에 어떻게 수용되고 문학적으로 전유되었는지 살폈다. 이를 위해 1910년대 『매일신보』와 『신한민보』에 연재된 소설을 비교 분석하였다. 구체적인 작품은 『매일신보』의 작자미상의 「구주열국지」와 『신한민보』의 백일규의 「세계에 제일 큰 연극」, 홍언의 「철혈원앙」 등이다. 이 작품들은 서로 다른 정치적, 매체적 환경 속에서 상반된 시각을 보여준다. 1914년부터 연재된 「구주열국지」는 제1차 세계대전의 발발 원인을 게르만 민족과 슬라브 민족 간의 오랜 갈등으로 보며, 흥미 위주의 전쟁담을 서사화한다. 그러나 1915년부터 작품의 내용은 유럽의 전장이 아닌 아시아의 칭다오 전투를 그린다. 그러면서 주로 일본군의 위용을 선전하는 내용으로 변화한다. 이 작품은 제1차 세계대전을 서사화한 최초의 작품이지만, 전쟁과 식민지 조선의 관계는 언급되지 않는다. 반면 백일규의 「세계에 제일 큰 연극」은 전쟁의 원인을 사라예보 사건으로 인한 오스트리아의 복수심과 독일의 야욕으로 바라본다. 그러면서 이에 저항하는 프랑스 민중의 민족정신을 강조하고 있다. 그러나 동시에 전 세계가 주목하는 제1차 세계대전에 식민지 조선인들의 몫이 없음을 안타까워하며, 결국 이 전쟁을 유럽 백인들만의 전쟁으로 한정한다. 뒤이어 1916년에서 1917년까지 연재된 홍언의 「철혈원앙」은 제1차 세계대전의 전사(前史)인 발칸전쟁(1912-

1913)을 다루면서, 특히 세르비아 민족의 저항적 민족정신의 승리를 강조한다. 이는 세계대전의 한 원인을 세르비아를 비롯한 피억압 민족의 투쟁에서 찾는 새로운 시선을 보여준다. 이후 홍언은 후속작 「동포」에서 식민지 조선에서 벌어진 가상의 독립전쟁과 승리를 그린다. 이는 피억압 민족이 해방을 맞는 상상된 전후 세계의 질서를 통해 동시대 세계대전과 식민지 조선의 관계를 적극적으로 전유하는 것이다. 전후 세계가 다가오고 있음에 대한 희망과 열정에 찬 목소리는 참전한 한 유학생이 남긴 시 「세계 민주주의」에서 확연히 드러난다. 제1차 세계대전의 종전은 전 세계에 '혁명'의 분위기를 낳았다. 식민지 조선의 3.1 운동은 이 세계적 흐름 속에 위치한다. 특히 『신한민보』의 필진들은 3.1 운동을 '한국혁명', '대한혁명' 등으로 규정하고 전 세계의 혁명적 봉기와 견주었다. 식민지 조선인들은 전 세계의 혁명적 흐름 속에서 새로운 정치적 상상력과 가능성을 꿈꾸었다는 점에서, 과거의 혁명들은 살아있는 기억이었다.

키워드: 제1차 세계대전, 『매일신보』, 『신한민보』, 전쟁문학, 혁명

1. Introduction: Colonial Korean Literature in the Age of the First World War

Throughout history, human civilization has been marked by an unbroken succession of wars. War disrupts the established order of daily life and redefines the very conditions of human existence. Each war demarcates history into distinct periods of “before” and “after,” producing a rupture in the temporal continuum that separates pre-war from postwar eras. In this respect, human history may be understood as the history of war – or, more precisely, of postwar reconstruction. The institutional structures of modern society are grounded in the accumulated legacies of countless “postwar” moments. Among these, particular attention may be given to the First World War (1914–1918), which stands as one of the foundational events of modernity and the first truly modern total war.

Notably, Eric Hobsbawm regarded the First World War as the watershed dividing the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Similarly, the Hungarian historian Arnold Hauser observed that “the twentieth century begins after the First World War, that is, in the 1920s.” At the time, the war was often framed as a kind of holy war, encapsulated in the slogan “The War to End All Wars.” Yet alongside such rhetoric, anti-war sentiment emerged in response to the unprecedented scale of human sacrifice. In this respect, the First World War may be seen as an

event that simultaneously consummated and destabilized Western modernity.

In the aftermath of the First World War, Europe witnessed the collapse of empires and the consolidation of the nation-state system. Some have argued that the modern transformations set in motion by the French Revolution of 1789 found their realization in the war's end in 1918. At the same time, revolutionary movements erupted across the globe, spearheaded by the Russian Revolution during the war and subsequently spreading to former empires such as Germany and Hungary. Each revolution provoked a corresponding counter-revolution, yet these upheavals collectively marked the emergence of the first socialist federation in the 1920s. In this sense, the years around 1918–1919, the immediate 'postwar' era of the First World War, constituted a moment of profound upheaval standing at the threshold of the future.

The First World War was not merely a European phenomenon confined to the West. Its global impact on politics and the economy requires little elaboration. Japan's participation in the conflict, along with the mobilization of large numbers of Asian and African laborers as mercenaries, was particularly significant. In this sense, the war functioned as a "catalyst" for non-Western societies to enter an international order dominated by the West. (Kwon Bodurae, 권보드래 2011: 20) Colonial Korea, situated on the other side of the globe, was no exception. There, the First World War was introduced almost in real time under the name "Great European War" (구주대전), and contemporary intellectuals responded to it in diverse and complex ways. (Lee Tae-hun, 이태훈 2021; Kim dong-shik 김동식 2015; Choi Woo-seok, 최우석 2019; Moon Jun-ho, 문준호 2021)

This article examines contemporary perceptions of the First World War and its literary representations in both domestic and overseas newspapers during the 1910s. The focus is on two publications: the *Maeil Sinbo*, the official organ of the Japanese Governor-General of Korea, and the *Shinhan Minbo* (*The New Korea*), the official newspaper of the Korean National Association published in the United States. Both newspapers offered near real-time coverage of the war from its outbreak, yet their divergent political and institutional orientations inevitably produced contrasting narratives.

As the colonial government's official mouthpiece, the *Maeil Sinbo* tended to emphasize sensationalism and propaganda extolling the might of the Japanese military. It repeatedly urged Koreans to remain calm and obedient to Japanese directives, insisting that the war in

Europe bore no relevance to colonial Korea. At the same time, it underscored the necessity of future Japanese military action against China in relation to the global conflict. In observing the war's progression, the *Maeil Sinbo* even projected the possibility of future hostilities developing into a racial confrontation between the “white” and “yellow” races.

By contrast, the *Shinhan Minbo* (*The New Korea*) framed the war through a nationalist lens, drawing parallels between the imperial aggressions of European powers and those of Japan. This perspective was closely tied to its identity as an ‘ethnic media’ with strong diaspora and nationalist orientations, serving the Korean community in the United States. (Chong Han-na, 정한나 2024: 58)

Most colonial Koreans did not directly experience the First World War, which was unfolding on the opposite side of the globe. Notably, however, during the war, both newspapers serialized historical novels based on European wartime events. These include the anonymously authored *Guju Yeolgukji* (「구주열국지」, August 14, 1914–March 11, 1915) in the *Maeil Sinbo*, and Baek Il-gyu's (백일규) *The Biggest Theatre in the World* (「세계에 제일 큰 연극」, May 13–July 8, 1915) and Hong Eon's (홍언) *Iron-Blooded Lovebirds* (「철혈원앙」, May 4, 1916–April 19, 1917) in the *Shinhan Minbo* (*The New Korea*). Each work reflects a distinct perspective on the contemporary First World War. To fully understand these differences, it is necessary to examine them in relation to the characteristics of the media in which they appeared and the specific periods during which they were serialized.

Moreover, the *Shinhan Minbo* (*The New Korea*), published overseas, responded actively to the end of the First World War and the revolutionary atmosphere that followed – a response largely absent in the *Maeil Sinbo*, the colonial government's official organ. This study also examines the *Shinhan Minbo*'s engagement with postwar society around 1918–1919. During this period, keywords such as “national self-determination,” “revolution,” and “democracy” appear prominently in its pages. In this context, it is worth revisiting the First World War as a formative moment in the contemporary world order and exploring one dimension of colonial Korean perceptions of the war.

2. Case of the Maeil Sinbo: Guju Yeolgukji

The Maeil Sinbo demonstrated considerable interest in the First World War from its outbreak, as evidenced by numerous special issues and extra editions. For example, the feature article “The Wars in Europe and the Security of the East” (「구주의 전란과 동양의 안위」, August 3–13, 1914) discussed the potential impact of the global conflict on East Asia, including colonial Korea. The article argued that the war would have little direct effect on Korea, urging the Korean population not to be unsettled and to faithfully follow Japanese directives.

The day after the conclusion of this feature article, the *Maeil Sinbo* began serializing a historical novel titled *Guju Yeolgukji*. Although the author of this novel remains unidentified today, the work demonstrates considerable understanding of global affairs and the histories of various nations, suggesting the need to infer both the author's background and the sources of historical information employed. The main narrative centers on the course of the First World War in Europe. In terms of subject matter and style, the novel can be classified as a historical-biographical work that continues the tradition of classical military tales. (Park Sung-ho, 박성호 2019: 94)

The novel's title, *Guju Yeolgukji*, indicates that the war in Europe was unlike the wars depicted in classical Eastern texts such as the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (삼국지), which are characterized by their entertainment value and lively narratives. By invoking the popular recognition of the *Three Kingdoms*, the title suggests that the narrative may adopt a similarly engaging and accessible structure. The novel also provides an extensive account of the causes of the war. In particular, it surveys the histories of key countries such as Austria and Serbia, analyzing the First World War as the culmination of accumulated interethnic conflicts arising from a series of preceding European wars.

Fairly speaking, the conflict is nothing more than a struggle between the “German” peoples, descended from German blood, and the “Slavic” peoples, descended from Russian blood. Accordingly, the Emperor of Austria faced numerous anxieties and difficulties and often found himself in precarious situations. Nevertheless, Austria, sharing the same lineage as Germany, maintained an inevitably close relationship with it. Meanwhile, a “tiger-like” Russia sharpened its claws, and on its flank lay Serbia, a “Slavic” nation roughly akin to Russia's nephew, leaving

Austria with no moment of security¹

(*Maeil Sinbo* August 14, 1914: 5)

The quotation emphasizes two main points. First, it highlights the longstanding conflict between the “German” and “Slavic” peoples within Europe. Second, it underscores the alliance and protector-protégé relationships among states sharing the same ethnic lineage. Regarding the latter, particularly the role of ethnically based alliances and protector-protégé relations in the outbreak of the First World War, see a recent study of Lee Young-su (이영수 2022). This perception of international affairs can be considered quite accurate for the period. In this context, *Guju Yeolgukji* does not advocate for either the Slavic or German side.

However, it clearly portrays Serbia as a nation that had been “abused” by neighboring countries, reflecting the fact that the immediate spark of the war – the assassination in Sarajevo – was rooted in Serbian nationalism. Approximately 20% of the novel’s total length is devoted to explaining the causes of the war. Subsequently, the narrative unfolds the wartime experiences of major powers such as Germany, Belgium, the United Kingdom, and France, comprising roughly 50% of the total work.

However, after the serialization began in 1914, the narrative trajectory of *Guju Yeolgukji* underwent a noticeable shift in 1915. While the storyline up to 1914 was primarily set in Europe, from 1915 onward the narrative depicts battles between Japan and Germany against the backdrop of Qingdao. This represents a somewhat abrupt change. Such a shift is notable, as it reflects the evolving perception of the war within the work.

¹ “공평되히 말하면 독일 사람의 혈속을 받은 ‘게르만’ 민족과 러시아 사람의 혈속을 받은 ‘슬라브’ 민족이 서로 인종을 싸우는 싸움에서 지나지 못하는 일이라. 그러므로 오스트리아의 황제도 갖가지로 근심과 곤란을 겪은 일이 많고 위태한 지경도 많이 당하였으나, 오스트리아 같은 혈속을 받은 독일과 어찌할 수 없이 좋은 사이가 된지라. 뒤에는 호랑이 같은 러시아가 발톱을 갈고 옆으로는 ‘슬라브’의 혈속으로 러시아의 조카뻘쯤 되는 세르비아라 하는 가랑니가 붙어있는 고로 조금도 안심할 새가 없는 터이라.” (*매일신보* August 14, 1914: 5)

The original orthography and spacing have been adjusted to conform to contemporary usage. In addition, Chinese-character-based transliterations of country names, such as “덕국” and “오디리,” have been modified for clarity and convenience.

Prior to this narrative shift, approximately one month earlier, *Guju Yeolgukji* had made the following remarks regarding the course of the global conflict and its designation.

In general, the term *Guju Yeolguk* refers to empires such as the United Kingdom, France, Russia, Austria, Belgium, and Serbia; with Japan's participation, it could even be described as a "Chronicle of Eastern and Western Powers." As a result, a great global war erupted, shaking the metaphorical "house of punishment." Fires raged in all directions, and smoke obscured the skies, making it a conflict unlike any witnessed since the creation of the world.²

(*Maeil Sinbo* November 25, 1914: 4)

Originally, *Guju Yeolgukji* focused solely on the European conflict. However, the narrative perception of the war shifted with Japan's entry into the conflict. At the outset, Japan maintained a stance of "neutrality" regarding the global war. Yet, following a request from its ally, the United Kingdom, Japan declared war on German forces stationed in Qingdao on August 23, 1914, and subsequently captured the city on November 7, 1914, achieving victory. The quotation above refers to Japan's participation approximately two weeks after this victory over Germany. In doing so, it emphasizes that the war was not confined to Europe but had become a truly global conflict, encompassing both East and West.

Following this implication, from 1915 onward, *Guju Yeolgukji* shifted its narrative setting from Europe to Qingdao. Just as the novel sought to understand the causes of the European war in terms of accumulated ethnic conflicts from previous wars, it approaches Japan's entry into the conflict in a similar manner. Before describing the battles between Germany and Japan, the narrative traces back twenty years to 1894. Over the course of nine installments, the novel discusses the First Sino-Japanese War and the Triple Intervention, providing historical and geopolitical context for the Shandong Peninsula, where Qingdao is located. The account emphasizes that, despite Japan's victory in the

² "대저 구주열국이라 함은 영국, 프랑스, 러시아, 오스트리아, 벨기에, 세르비아 등 제국인데 그 외에 일본도 참여하였으니 이는 동서양 열국지라 하여도 가할지라. 그러므로 인하여 세계의 큰 전쟁이 일어났고 이른바 벌의 집 흔들여 놓은 모양이 되어 사면팔방에서 불질이 일어나고 연기는 세계 하늘을 가려 천지개벽 이래로 처음 보는 싸움이라." (*매일신보* November 25, 1914: 4)

First Sino-Japanese War, German intervention prevented Japan from fully asserting its claims, forcing it to relinquish Qingdao unjustly. In this way, *Guju Yeolgukji* frames Japan's declaration of war against Germany as historically justified.

Whereas the European situation had previously been depicted as a confrontation between the 'Slavic' and 'German' peoples, the narrative subsequently frames the conflict as a racial struggle between 'Whites,' represented by Germany, and 'Yellows,' represented by Japan. In the battle scenes that follow, the Japanese forces are portrayed as just and competent, while the German forces are depicted as evil and inept. This perspective aligns with the *Maeil Sinbo*'s coverage of the global war. However, *Guju Yeolgukji*, which had devoted roughly 30% of its content to the exploits of the Japanese army, was suddenly discontinued on March 11, 1915. The absence of subsequent works addressing the First World War suggests a decline in the *Maeil Sinbo*'s interest in the conflict.

3. Case of the Shinhan Minbo (The New Korea)

The *Shinhan Minbo* (*The New Korea*), the official newspaper of the Korean National Association published in California, reported on the ongoing developments of the global war almost in real time, similar to the *Maeil Sinbo*. However, unlike the colonial government's organ, the *Shinhan Minbo* was a medium with a strongly nationalist character. In addition to factual reports on the European war, it published numerous commentaries that interpreted the conflict from a nationalist perspective.

As previously noted, the *Maeil Sinbo*'s *Guju Yeolgukji* attempted to narrativize the war almost immediately after its outbreak. In the case of the *Shinhan Minbo*, works addressing the European conflict appear somewhat later. Let us now turn to the cases of Baek Il-gyu and Hong Eon. Baek Il-gyu (1880–1962) and Hong Eon (1880–1951) were independence activists who played leading roles in the Korean American community at the time, as well as close friends. Both men had ties to Ahn Chang-ho (안창호) and were active in the Heungsadan (흥사단, Young Korean Academy), and each also served as editor-in-chief of *Shinhan Minbo*.

Baek Il-gyu, for instance, began serializing *The Biggest Theatre in the World* (May 13–July 8, 1915) roughly one year after the war's

onset. Here, the term “theatre” serves as a metaphor for the war. This work represents the first substantial effort to narrativize the First World War in the *Shinhan Minbo*.

The first half of the work focuses on the royal houses of Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which declared war in the immediate aftermath of the Sarajevo assassination, while the latter half primarily depicts the French populace preparing to resist. In other words, the narrative divides the belligerents into the aggressor states in the first half and the resisting states in the second. In particular, the first half critically portrays the political ambitions of the German Emperor, whereas the French people’s consciousness of resistance in the latter half is depicted in a noble light.

At the same time, while narrativizing the outbreak of the First World War, the work also references past conflicts such as the Franco-Prussian War, similar to *Guju Yeolgukji*. However, whereas *Guju Yeolgukji* presents the accumulated confrontation between the “Slavic” and “German” peoples in a relatively objective manner, *The Biggest Theatre in the World* emphasizes the history of the resisting nation, France, and the French people’s consciousness of resistance. This emphasis reflects both the author’s perspective as a member of the colonial Korean diaspora and the strongly nationalist orientation of the *Shinhan Minbo*. In other words, the European war is understood through a comparison with the situation of the homeland under Japanese aggression. This provides insight into how a displaced intellectual from a colonized nation perceived contemporary European warfare.

While the work portrays the conflict through a dichotomous lens of aggressor and resisting nations and maintains a sympathetic view toward the resisting states, it simultaneously emphasizes that the European war is ultimately a “war of others.” In the introduction, the author laments the position of Koreans, who, despite the global population’s attention to the ongoing war, are unable to participate. In other words, the First World War has no direct relevance to colonial Korea. For the author, what truly matters is not the European conflict itself but the independence of colonized Korea.

Baek Il-gyu’s work reflects a perception of the First World War characterized by a state of “no alternative,” rooted in the condition of “impossibility of participation.” This arose from the impossibility of fulfilling the aspirations of an intellectual from a lost nation, who longed for resistance and independence of his homeland through the World War. In other words, colonial Koreans, while experiencing a sense of global “simultaneity” through the First World War, were at the

same time forced to despair over their “impossibility of participation.” Baek Il-gyu’s work ultimately remains unfinished. This absence of an ending itself reveals the author’s perception that no alternative or prospect could be derived from the World War.

However, Baek Il-gyu did not close his narrative with despair, but rather left it open-ended, a blank space. Readers could fill this blank ending with other possibilities through their own literary imagination. In fact, in the preface to his work, Baek Il-gyu wrote that the war had not yet reached its climax. He predicted that this climax would come in about three or four years. Considering that Baek Il-gyu serialized his work in 1915, it is easy to see that the climax he foresaw would fall around 1918–1919. This was the so-called postwar era. Might the climax he predicted have been the wave of declarations of revolution and the principle of national self-determination that swept the world in that era? And indeed, those voices resounded on the Korean peninsula in the cries of ‘Mansei’ during the March First Movement. Around this time, Baek Il-gyu devoted himself even more fully to the independence movement in the United States.

In sum, Baek Il-gyu’s work is an important case, as it represents the very first attempt within the *Shinhan Minbo* to narrativize the First World War. Yet because of the time of its publication, the work reveals little about the connections between colonial Korea and the war, or about imaginings of the postwar world. These aspects can be observed more fully in the case of Hong Eon, which we will turn to next.

The aspiration for the homeland’s resistance and independence in the context of the contemporary global conflict is even more actively reflected in Hong Eon’s work. In *Iron-Blooded Lovebirds* (May 4, 1916–April 19, 1917), Hong Eon narrativizes the Balkan Wars, which occurred immediately prior to the outbreak of the First World War. This work is notable for being both the longest and one of the most narratively sophisticated pieces serialized in the *Shinhan Minbo* during the 1910s.

The plot of the work unfolds as follows. The novel is set in Serbia, then under the rule of Turkey (the Ottoman Empire), during the Balkan Wars (1912-1913). ‘Florence’, the daughter of a distinguished Serbian patriot, meets by chance and falls in love with ‘Marker’, a young man with a strong sense of justice. Soon after, Florence’s father is killed by Turkish troops, and Marker enlists as a soldier, leaving for the battlefield. Left behind in grief, Florence is one day visited by ‘Cora’, the daughter of a Serbian traitor. Cora declares that she wishes to atone for her father’s betrayal. Disguised as soldiers, Cora and

Florence head to the battlefield to fight for Serbia's independence.

There, Florence reunites with her beloved Marker, but in the heat of battle both Marker and Cora are struck down by enemy bullets. Even so, Florence leaves the fallen behind and, bearing the Serbian flag, rallies the troops with unshaken resolve for Serbia's victory and independence. The soldiers, watching Florence with her golden hair streaming as she waves the national flag, regard her as a veritable goddess of the battlefield. Inspired, the Serbian army drives back the enemy with tremendous force and wins the war. Though both Marker and Cora are taken immediately to the hospital, only Marker survives, while Cora dies. In conclusion, Florence and Marker marry, and they visit Cora's grave, bringing the story to a close.

Judging from this plot, the novel's title symbolizes the iron-blooded spirit of the Serbian people – their national consciousness and unyielding determination to resist oppression.

The central narrative focuses on the Second Balkan War, depicting the struggle and eventual victory of the Serbian people, who had long endured foreign domination. The First World War can thus be understood as a "Third Balkan War," following the successive First and Second Balkan Wars of 1912. In this sense, Hong interprets the contemporary global conflict through the lens of the Balkan Wars, presenting them as its underlying cause.

Just as Baek Il-gyu emphasized the spirit of resistance among the French people, Hong Eon highlighted the national consciousness and resistance of the Serbian people. This portrayal seems intended to inspire a sense of national identity among Korean readers. In other words, the brave Serbians depicted in Hong's work represent the very image of the colonized Koreans he hoped to see. Thus, the Serbians are not merely a fictional construct, but an archetype of an oppressed nation. Their resistance and victory serve to legitimize the "wars of independence" of other subjugated peoples. In the work, the history of Serbia and the valor of its people are depicted as follows.

Before the Balkan Wars, Serbia had long been under the dominion of the Ottoman Empire, suffering persistent oppression and abuse. Yet the government was too weak to resist, and though the people were filled with deep resentment, they were restrained by authority and could not openly express their anger or rebel. (...) The hatred toward the Ottomans grew ever deeper, and each person thought: since death is inevitable, let us meet it boldly. Let us not proceed cautiously, like a man groping for a woman in the dark, but rise with courage and strike

down the Ottoman forces with fearless valor.³

(*Shinhan Minbo*, May 11, 1916: 4)

Interest in the Balkan Wars is also evident in the reporting of the *Shinhan Minbo*. The fact that the Sarajevo assassination, which directly triggered the First World War, was carried out by a Serbian nationalist youth led to increased attention and sympathy toward the Balkans and Serbia in the newspaper. As one example, a special feature analyzing the causes of the war appeared immediately after the outbreak of the First World War. The article, titled “An Outline of the Causes of the European War” (「유럽 전쟁원인의 개략」, August 13–September 10, 1914), explained the situation of various European countries and, in particular, described Serbia as “a small Balkan country long subjected to the interference of the great powers.” The article conveys a sense of sympathy toward such a powerless, small nation, naturally evoking parallels with Korea on the opposite side of the globe, whose sovereignty had been taken by the Japanese Empire.

Within this context, the contemporary global conflict was interpreted as an opportunity for the resistance and independence of oppressed, small nations. Hong Eon emphasizes the courage and noble national spirit of the Serbians during the Balkan Wars in *Iron-Blooded Lovebirds* for precisely this reason. Contemporary Korean readers in the United States likely drew parallels between the situation of Serbia in the Balkans and that of their homeland on the Korean Peninsula. In particular, as the European Balkans were imagined as a space of resistance and liberation, the geopolitical characteristics of the Korean Peninsula could similarly be conceived positively as an ‘Eastern Balkans.’

However, the Balkans in Europe and the ‘Eastern Balkans,’ that is, the Korean Peninsula, existed in a “non-synchronous” temporal relationship despite being contemporaneous. In the former, oppressed

³ “발칸전쟁이 일어나기 전에 세르비아는 튀르키예국 세력 범위 안에 있어 그 학대와 유린을 당한 지 오랜지라. 그러나 정부의 힘이 약하여 능히 이를 항거치 못하였으며 인민은 심히 분하게 여기지마는 정부에 눌러 드러내놓고 시비하거나 배척하지 못하였더라. (...) 튀르키예에 대한 악감정은 더욱 깊어 사람마다 생각하기를 우리가 기위 죽을진대 시원하게 죽는 것이 가하니 어두운 밤에 새색시 더듬 듯하지 말고 한번 용맹스럽게 일어나 튀르키예국 사람을 도륙하자고” (*신한민보*, May 11, 1916: 4)

peoples could mount resistance on the stage of the World War, whereas in the latter, the population remained under colonial subjugation. Hong Eon demanded a radical transformation in this context. In his subsequent work, *Dongpo* (「동포」, August 30–December 20, 1917), published roughly four months later, he employed a highly political imagination. The narrative envisions an independent Korea victorious in a liberation war on the peninsula, which in turn subjugates Japan as a colony. The depiction of independence fighters, sailing aboard a ship bearing the name Yi Sun-sin (이순신), planting the Korean flag on the Japanese Imperial Palace, and concluding a treaty identical to the Eulsa Treaty (을사조약) represents an extreme manifestation of political imagination regarding the postwar world. This contrasts with Baek Il-gyu's approach around 1915, which scarcely attempted to envision the postwar world. Notably, when Hong Eon's two works were published in 1917, the course of the war was in flux due to developments such as the United States' entry into the conflict and the Russian Revolution.

Thus, *Iron-Blooded Lovebirds* depicts the Balkan Wars, the origin of the First World War, as a noble war of independence at a time when imagining the postwar world, while *Dongpo* dramatically envisions the independence struggle of colonial Korea within an imagined postwar world. However, although *Dongpo* enacts a narrative of resistance and independence for an oppressed nation, it simultaneously reveals a limitation in combining excessive exclusivist nationalism with colonialist impulses.

4. The Postwar World: The Legacy of 'Revolution' and 'Mansei'

Although the impact of the First World War on colonial Korea was by no means negligible, literary works that narrativized it are exceedingly rare. In this respect, the 1910s examples we have examined – *Guju Yeolgukji* in the *Maeil Sinbo* and *The Biggest Theatre in the World* and *Iron-Blooded Lovebirds* in *Shinhan Minbo* – represent particularly significant cases.

In short, *Guju Yeolgukji*, serialized from 1914, conveyed the First World War primarily as an engaging narrative centered on the conflict between the German and Slavic peoples, but from 1915 onward, the focus shifted to the Battle of Qingdao, praising Japan. This

work makes no reference whatsoever to any connection between the First World War and colonial Korea.

In contrast, *The Biggest Theatre in the World* interpreted the outbreak of the First World War in terms of German ambition and Austrian desire for revenge, while highlighting the French populace's resistance, thereby criticizing the aggressor nations. Yet the work laments the lack of direct involvement of colonial Koreans, ultimately perceiving the war as a European affair – a “war of others.”

From 1916 to 1917, *Iron-Blooded Lovebirds* revisited the Balkan Wars, a precursor to the First World War, emphasizing the national spirit of the Serbians. This reflects a perception of the contemporary global conflict as an opportunity for the liberation of oppressed peoples. The subsequent work, *Dongpo*, projected an imagined postwar world through the depiction of an independence war in colonial Korea. Each of these works is closely linked to the medium in which it was published and the international context at the time of serialization. Notably, Baek Il-gyu and Hong Eon were leading figures in the Korean diaspora and overseas independence activists. Their works vividly demonstrate how exiled intellectuals' perceptions of contemporary wars evolved – from a stage of “no alternatives” to the imaginative consideration of a postwar world.

As the First World War drew to a close and imaginations about the postwar world spread globally, responses to this phenomenon are more clearly observed in *Shinhan Minbo* than in *Maeil Sinbo*. The final example to be introduced is the poem “World Democracy,” (「세계 민주주의」) published on the front page of *Shinhan Minbo* on May 2, 1918. According to the article, the poem was composed by the student Cha Ui-seok (차의석), who participated in the war and left a record of his sentiments. Although he was not a professional poet, the article introduces the poem in a tone that highly praises his national spirit and sense of justice. The full text of the poem is as follows.

Come, Sam, let us go together,
To fight for justice,
To crush the foe,
To build a world of fairness.

O people of freedom, come join,
Those oppressed under tyrant rule,
Let them taste the joy of liberty,
And we shall destroy the power of the oppressors.

Chang-Dong RYUEM: Colonial Korea's Perspectives...

The Stars and Strips stands before me,
You are the guardian of freedom,
For human rights we shall strive,
And peace alone will guide our path.

Children of Belgium, Britain, and France,
I shall fight alongside you,
For the fate of the world rests with you,
Why should we shy from the battle?

I am but a soldier of a fallen nation,
Shall I hesitate to sacrifice?
Though my body be small,
For the world I shall give my all.

When the war ends and victory is won,
Thus shall world peace begin,
As Serbia and Poland return home,
My country, too, shall be free.⁴

(Cha Ui-seok, Shinhan Minbo May 5, 1918: 1)

One of the most salient features of contemporary responses to the World War was the recognition of the conflict as an opportunity to achieve “world peace.” Although the author identifies himself as a subject of a vanquished nation, he envisions that when Serbians and Poles ultimately regain their peace, his own homeland too will enter a world of freedom and peace. Colonial Korea, though unable to participate directly in the war, nevertheless embraced the grand cause of “the fate of the world,” thereby projecting its own passion and optimism onto the imagined postwar order. In this respect, the so-called “Balkan of the East” could imagine itself standing on equal footing with

4“샘아 같이 가자/ 정의 위해 싸우러/ 대적을 부서치고/ 공평을 건설하러// 자유의 사람들아 같이 가자/ 전제학정에 눌린 저들로/ 자유의 행복을 누리게 하고/ 폭군의 세력을 멸하리라// 별기가 내 앞에 섰구나/ 자유의 옹호자가 네요/ 인권을 위해 싸우리라/ 그는 오직 평화와 난도// 벨지엄, 브리튼, 프렌취 아이들아/ 내 너희들로 더불어 같이 싸워주마/ 세계운명이 너희들에게 있거니/ 무엇이 더 중하여 싸움을 마다할까// 나는 한 망국 패줄이라/ 희생하기 아까워할까/ 나의 몸이 비록 작으나/ 세계를 위해 드리리라// 전쟁 끝나고 승리 얻을 때/ 세계의 평화는 이로 시작이라/ 세르비아, 폴란드 사람 집으로 갈 때/ 내 나라 동반도 자유하리라” (차의석, *신한민보* May 5, 1918: 1)

the international community.

The poem's very title, "Democracy," underscores the rise of the term as a universal political system in the postwar era. The decision to foreground this notion was likely influenced by President Woodrow Wilson's principle of national self-determination, announced in January 1918. Yet, while the poem abounds in the hopeful fervor characteristic of the war's closing phase, it neither defines democracy nor offers concrete means for its realization. What might appear to be an empty rhetoric of democracy nevertheless invited colonial Koreans to dream of hope and to envision an as-yet unrealized future.

Toward the end of the First World War, the global vocabulary for imagining the postwar order coalesced largely around the competing languages of Lenin and Wilson – "national self-determination," "reconstruction," and "revolution." The *Shinhan Minbo* was among the first media outlets to introduce the principle of national self-determination to a Korean readership.

At the same time, the prolonged war had left European populations exhausted, and popular discontent mounted under the strain of severe economic hardship. Ultimately, on November 11, 1918, the German Revolution provided the decisive catalyst that brought to a close a war which had once seemed interminable. Immediately after the armistice, the *Shinhan Minbo*, in its November 21 issue, proclaimed the "Victory of Democracy." Seizing upon this historical moment, the paper forcefully argued that colonial Korea, too, must raise its voice before the world.

The revolutionary ferment was by no means confined to Germany. In Hungary, dissatisfaction with the dual monarchy and mounting demands for independence culminated in the proclamation of a republic under Mihály Károlyi at the end of 1918. Soon thereafter, on March 21, 1919, socialist forces led by Béla Kun declared the establishment of the Hungarian Soviet Republic. The Hungarian Revolution marked the first successful revolution in Europe since the Russian Revolution of 1917. Nor was Hungary alone: between 1918 and 1919, revolutionary movements also erupted across Romania, Portugal, Poland, Egypt, India, Mexico, and Ireland. Observing this global chorus of revolutionary upheavals, the *Shinhan Minbo* expressed strong resonance, reporting almost daily on revolutionary struggles around the world through a wide array of articles.

At that very moment, the revolutionary fervor sweeping across the world found expression in colonial Korea through the resounding cries of the March First Movement. While the *Maeil Sinbo* dismissed

the uprising as a mere “disturbance,” newspapers abroad, including the *Shinhan Minbo*, referred to it as the “Korean Revolution” (한국혁명) or the “Daehan Revolution.” (대한혁명) Although the movement was undoubtedly shaped by the principle of national self-determination, it would be misleading to view this as a simple one-way influence. Rather, it illustrates how Koreans sought to live within the revolutionary era and simultaneously to claim solidarity with the global revolutions of their time.

Yet every revolution is accompanied by the resistance of counterrevolution. The German Revolution, which brought First World War to an end, ultimately failed, fueled by the resentment and hostility of soldiers returning from the front. Many of them placed the blame for defeat on radical socialists – an accusation that would later provide fertile ground for the rise of Nazism. Likewise, Hungary, which had proclaimed the first Soviet republic in Eastern Europe after Russia, achieved only a brief success before ultimately being defeated in wars with its neighboring states.

The cries of ‘Mansei’ likewise failed to bring about national independence and, in the end, were marked as a failure. The resulting “frustration” and “despair” even came to serve as key terms in describing the era that followed in the 1920s. Yet it must also be noted that many continued to discover new possibilities or to live through what might be called a “revolution after the revolution.” The contributors to *Shinhan Minbo* likewise did not relinquish the necessity and inevitability of a “Korean Revolution” well into the early 1920s. The political imagination that Hong Eon had articulated in his fiction, and Cha Ui-seok’s yearning for democracy as a universal principle of justice, were transformed within the “manse” revolution but nonetheless persisted with remarkable consistency.

Thus, the multitude of “revolutions” has receded into the past. Yet they continue to leave behind a range of possibilities and unresolved questions. The imaginative force that once envisioned the “after” and “beyond” from the vantage point of a historical “origin” of modern society, I would argue, still carries significant implications for the here and now.

Conflict of interest statement: The author has no conflict of interest to disclose.

Bibliography

- Baek, Il-gyu (백일규). *The Biggest Theatre in the World*. In *Shinhan Minbo*, May 13–July 8, 1915.
- Choi, Woo-seok (최우석). 2019. Colonial Korean Recognition of World War I and the March 1st Movement. In *SARIM, The Historical Journal*, No. 70 : 161–189.
- Chong, Han-na (정한나). 2024. How Does Ethnic Media Report on Compatriots' Disasters? In *Gubo Hakbo-The Journal of Korean Modern Literature*, No.36: 57-101.
- Guju Yeolgukji, In *Maeil Sinbo*, August 14, 1914–March 11, 1915.
- Hong, Eon (홍언). *Iron-Blooded Lovebirds*, In *Shinhan Minbo*, May 4, 1916–April 19, 1917.
- Hong, Eon (홍언). *Dongpo*, In *Shinhan Minbo*, August 30–December 20, 1917.
- KIM, Dong-Shik (김동식). 2015. Evolution, Belatedness and the First World War. In *한국학연구*, No. 37: 157–188.
- Kwon, Bodurae (권보드래). 2011. The Individualized Form of Modern Time and Space – The Concepts of Spirit, Life, Universe in 1910s Korea. In *CONCEPT AND COMMUNICATION*, No. 7: 5–34.
- Kwon, Bodurae (권보드래). 2019. *The night of March Frist*, Paju: Dolbegae.
- Lee, Tae-hun (이태훈). 2012. Attitudes and Perceptions about the First World War by Members of Joseon Society During the 1910s and 20s. In *The Review of Korean History*, No. 105: 187–228.
- Lee, Young-soo (이영수). 2022. A Study on the Origin of First World War: Focusing on the Patron-Client Relationship between States in the Balkans. PhD diss, Hansin University.
- Moon, Jun-ho (문준호). 2021. The Trend of the Maeil Shinbo (每日申報) Reports on the First World War: Outbreak of the War to the Exhortation for Asian Solidarity. In *Asia Review*, No. 21: 291–320.
- PARK, Sung-ho (박성호). 2019. A Study on Acceptance Aspects of Historical Facts in Historical and Biographical Novels, Especially by “Gujuryulgukji” Serialized in Maeilshinbo. In *Comparative Korean Studies*, Vol. 27 No. 2: 91–119.
- Ryuem, Chang-dong (염창동). 2024. The Appropriation of World War I in The New Korea(Shinhan-Minbo) in the 1910s from a Trans-War Historical Perspective). In *The Journal of Korean Fiction Research*, No. 96: 189–224.

TWO ASPECTS OF THE “INDIVIDUAL” IN KOREAN LYRIC POETRY: FOCUSING ON THE POEMS OF KIM SOWOL AND YOO CHIHWAN

HOSUNG KIM, PhD

Soongsil University

369, Sangdo-ro, Dongjak-gu, Seoul, Republic of Korea

newnewid415@gmail.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-1465-2237>

Abstract: This paper examines how the notion of the individual is poetically realized in modern Korean lyric poetry through a comparative reading of Kim Sowol and Yoo Chihwan. In Korea, modernity unfolded not as gradual cultural change but as a rupture shaped by colonization and liberation, making questions of subjectivity and identity especially acute in literature. Lyric poetry became a sensitive medium for registering shifts in interiority, affect, and world perception. Sowol’s poems construct a speaker who embraces separation from the world while actively reappropriating traditional sentiment; by organizing seemingly passive emotions into deliberate poetic structures, his work performs a politics of emotion, intervening in the world through inwardness. By contrast, Yoo confronts the absence of transcendence and treats nihilism as the starting point for ethical self-constitution; the self emerges as a resolute, responsible agent that shapes life without external guarantees. Reading these opposing yet complementary strategies together reveals a dynamic of convergence and divergence: while one turns inward to reclaim

affective depth, the other expands outward through existential engagement. This dialectic shows how early modern Korean lyricism articulated and transformed the figure of the individual, offering a broader perspective on the evolving configurations of selfhood at the threshold of modernity.

Keywords: Individual, Kim Sowol, Yoo Chihwan, Korean Lyric Poetry, Interiority, Modernity.

한국 서정시에 나타난 '개인'의 두 양태: 김소월과 유치환을 중심으로

초록 본 논문은 한국 서정시의 형성 과정에서 '개인'이라는 존재가 어떻게 시적으로 형상화되었는지를 김소월과 유치환의 작품을 중심으로 비교 고찰한 것이다. 한국 근대는 단순한 문명사적 변화가 아니라, 식민지 지배와 해방이라는 격변의 역사적 조건 속에서 개인의 주체성과 정체성 문제가 문학의 핵심 화두로 부상한 시기였다. 특히 서정시는 이러한 변화의 흐름 속에서 개인의 내면성과 정동, 세계 인식의 전환을 예민하게 포착하는 장르로 기능하였다. 김소월과 유치환은 각기 상이한 시적 태도와 세계 인식을 바탕으로 '개인'이라는 문제에 접근하였으며, 이들의 시는 근대적 자아 형성의 상반된 양상을 선명히 보여준다. 김소월의 시는 세계와의 단절을 감수하면서도 전통 정서를 능동적으로 전유하고 정서적 표현을 통해 타자에게 미묘한 파장을 유도하는 전략적인 주체를 형상화한다. 그는 수동적으로 보일 수 있는 감정을 시적 구성 속에서 정교하게 조직함으로써, 내면을 통해 세계에 개입하는 '감정의 정치학'을 실현한다. 반면 유치환은 신의 부재와 초월의 상실이라는 실존적 조건을 직시하며, 허무의 인식을 통해 인간 주체가 자기 삶의 방향을 스스로 결정해야 함을 강조한다. 그의 시에서 개인은 공동체나 초월적 질서가 아닌 자신의 의지와 책임에 따라 삶을 구성해 나가는 존재로 나타난다. 이처럼 김소월과 유치환은 각기 '개인'을 '수렴'과 '발산'의 방식으로 형상화하며, 한국 서정시가 근대의 문턱에서 개인이라는 존재를 어떻게 의미화하고 변형해 왔는지를 입체적으로 보여준다. 본 논문은 이 두 시인의 비교를 통해 한국 근대 서정시의 역사적 전환 속에서 주체 형성과 존재 인식의 스펙트럼이 어떻게 확장되어 갔는지를 새롭게 조망하고자 한다.

핵심어: 개인, 김소월, 유치환, 한국 서정시, 내면, 근대성

1. Introduction

Since the 18th and 19th centuries, when German Romanticists foregrounded subjectivity as the essence of lyricism, the concept of the self has been regarded as a central axis in the construction of modernity. This perspective is well illustrated in the observation that “the moment lyricism is understood as the expression of subjectivity, it necessarily encompasses a decisive view on the relationship between poetry and the world, or the poetic attitude towards it.” (Jeong Myeong-Kyo, 정명교 2006: 54) Once established through lyricism, the poetic subject is no longer a being naturally embedded in the world, but rather a consciousness that stands apart and gazes upon it. In this context, both distancing from the world and self-awareness are equally necessary conditions, making the existence of the Other a prerequisite for the emergence of the “I.” In other words, the Other becomes the sole conduit through which the self can come to recognize itself. By departing from a sense of unity with the world and encountering a foreign Other, the tensions and conflicts that arise serve only to sharpen the contours of the self. Ultimately, any genuine relationship that poetry seeks to establish with the Other must first presuppose the construction of an autonomous and differentiated “I” as the subject of that relationship.

In Korea, this process of establishing a modern subject unfolded within the externally imposed constraints of colonization and liberation, rendering the issue of identity and the relationship between the self and the world all the more acute and urgent. As communal foundations disintegrated and individuals came to be defined by the gaze of the Other, a desire emerged to affirm the self through an inner voice. The lyric poem, in this context, functioned as a linguistic laboratory uniquely sensitive to such internal agitation and signs of resistance. The poems of Kim Sowol and Yoo Chihwan stand at opposite poles of Korean lyricism, each offering a distinct formal approach to the representation of the individual in their time. A comparative analysis of their work, therefore, offers a crucial path for understanding the diverse configurations of the individual and the broader landscape of Korean lyric poetry.

Previous studies on the modern subjectivity found in the works of Kim Sowol and Yoo Chihwan have largely focused on each poet's individual characteristics and historical positioning. Representative works on Kim Sowol include (Jeong Myeong-Kyo, 정명교 2006; Lee

Hye-won, 이혜원 2006; Kwon Hui-cheol, 권희철 2009; Nam Ki-hyeok, 남기혁 2010; Jeon Young-joo, 전영주 2011; Lee Kwang-ho, 이광호 2013; Shim Jae-hui, 심재휘 2017), while studies on Yoo Chihwan include (Kim Yun-sik, 김윤식 1984; Kim Hyun, 김현 1992; Kim Yong-jik, 김용직 1996; Kim Jong-gil, 김종길 1999; Moon Dok-su, 문덕수 2003; Sohng ki-han, 송기한 2009; Kim Yun-jeong, 김윤정 2015). These prior studies suggest that the individual in Kim Sowol's poetry seeks to establish subjectivity and interiority through a rupture from the traditional world, whereas in Yoo Chihwan's work, the individual is portrayed as one who must confront the void and reconstruct the grounds of life in a world where transcendence has already collapsed. If Sowol constructs the self by demarcating boundaries with the Other, Yoo Chihwan attempts to build the self ex nihilo within a decentered world.

Yet despite the depth and rigor of these individual studies, there has been a lack of comparative research examining both poets as axes along a shared continuum – research that interrogates the diverse modalities of the individual and their lyrical expressions in the formation of modern Korean lyric poetry. Although both poets articulate the lyric subject in highly distinctive ways amid historical upheaval, their starkly contrasting poetic worlds have perhaps made such comparative approaches rare. However, the very fact that they adopt opposing postures in confronting the Other and shaping interiority makes it essential to explore the relational dynamics between their respective poetics. Doing so is key to a comprehensive understanding of how the individual was figured in the Korean poetry of their time.

Accordingly, this study defines and compares the poetic worlds of Kim Sowol and Yoo Chihwan in terms of the interiorization of rupture (convergence) and the transcendence of rupture (divergence), respectively. Through this comparison, it aims to analyze the development and ontological deepening of the concept of the individual in modern Korean lyric poetry. The two modalities of the individual revealed in their poetry demonstrate that the formation of subjectivity in the modern era was by no means unidirectional.

2. The Interiorization of Rupture: Kim Sowol's Convergent "Individual"

"For reasons unknown to me, Sowol disliked being called a folk song poet. He wished simply to be addressed as a poet, if anything."¹ (Kim Eok, 김억 1935)

Recalling the testimony that Kim Sowol was displeased with the label "folk song poet," one can surmise that he was already gazing beyond the inherited world and tradition toward a new poetic horizon. Indeed, while his poetry drew heavily from traditional sentiments, it simultaneously restructured them as a foundation for the emergence of a modern self. This dual operation – of continuity and transformation – ultimately positioned his work as a critical point of departure in the history of modern Korean poetry.

On the mountain, flowers bloom,

They bloom,

Regardless of whether spring or summer has come,

They bloom.

On the mountain,

On the mountain,

The flowers that bloom

Stand alone in the distance.

Oh, little bird crying in the mountain,

Loving the flower,

¹ “소월 자신은 어떤 이유인지 모르거니와 민요시인으로 자기를 부르는 것을 그는 싫어하여 시인이면 시인이라 불러주기를 바라던 것이외다.” (Kim Eok 김억 1935)

Living there,

In the mountain.

On the mountain, flowers wither,

They wither,

Regardless of whether spring or summer has gone,

They wither.²

(Kim Sowol, 김소월 2007: 308)

As suggested by the poetic setting, *Mountain Flowers* (산유화) portrays a flower blooming alone in the distance, bearing solitude in isolation. Even as time flows – whether spring or summer – it blossoms and withers without clear purpose or reason, wholly apart from the world it once belonged to. Its only companion is a little bird crying in the mountain, an ephemeral Other that lingers briefly beside it.

Here, the flower becomes a self-conscious subject: by blooming alone in the distance, it not only affirms its detachment from the surrounding world but also constructs an interior space of its own. Within this secluded domain, the presence of the bird – a figure capable of witnessing and understanding the flower’s solitude – serves as a mediator. The bird bears testimony to the flower’s existence, allowing its selfhood to endure even after its disappearance.

What is equally significant in this poem is the veiled presence of the lyrical subject, the “I.” The narrator remains hidden, observing the flower from afar. The repetition of the word “in the distance” implies a gap not only between the flower and the world, but also between the flower and the speaker. While the flower shares its solitude with the bird, the “I” is left in absolute isolation, bereft even of that minimal relationality. As a result, a double rupture unfolds: first, the flower is separated from the world; then, the speaker is separated from the flower.

²“산에는 꽃 피네/ 꽃이 피네/ 갈 봄 여름 없이/ 꽃이 피네// 산에/ 산에/ 피는 꽃은/
저만치 혼자서 피어 있네// 산에서 우는 작은 새요/ 꽃이 좋아/ 산에서/ 사노라네//
산에는 꽃 지네/ 꽃이 지네/ 갈 봄 여름 없이/ 꽃이 지네” (김소월 2007: 308)

Thus, the sorrow the flower experienced in severing ties with the world is compounded by the speaker's own sorrow in being distanced from the flower itself. The speaker inhabits a space of double bind – neither belonging to the world nor to the flower's realm. Yet through this multi-layered detachment, the lyrical "I" gradually becomes aware of itself as a distinct subject, formed in the very act of observing the Other from afar.

O shattered name!

O name parted in the air!

O name with no one left to answer!

The name I shall die calling!

The last word left deep in my heart

Could never be fully spoken.

O you, my beloved one!

O you, my beloved one!

The red sun has hung on the western ridge.

Even the deer cry out in sorrow.

From the hill, set apart and alone,

I call your name.

I call out, again and again, overcome with sorrow.

I call out, again and again, overcome with sorrow.

Though my voice slips past unheard,

The space between heaven and earth is far too wide.

Even if I turn to stone standing here,

Name I will call until I die!

O you, my beloved one!

O you, my beloved one!³

(Kim Sowol, 김소월 2007: 257)

In *Invocation of the Spirit* (초혼), the lyrical “I” grieves over the death of a beloved and expresses intense emotional anguish. This extreme atmosphere clearly embodies the speaker’s sense of rupture and disconnection. As seen in the opening lines – “O shattered name!”, “O name parted in the air!”, “O name with no one left to answer!” – this poetic invocation dramatizes the divide between the living and the dead, and the speaker’s sorrow escalates to its peak in the final line of the first stanza: “The name I shall die calling!” The speaker expresses a willingness to die for this calling, thereby amplifying the pain of severance.

In the second stanza, the reason for this emotional outburst becomes clear: the speaker laments that they could not utter even one last word to the person they loved – “The last word left deep in my heart / Could never be fully spoken.” Compared to the slow intensification of feeling in the first stanza, the second stanza directly reveals the cause of this sorrow, raising the emotional temperature to a new high.

Kim Sowol’s transformation of the 7-5 syllabic pattern typically features a longer line (7 syllables) that serves as a leap in meaning, followed by a shorter line (5 syllables) that provides closure, forming a small semantic unit. (Kim Jong-hoon, 김종훈 2011: 393) In

³ “산산이 부서진 이름이여! 허공중에 헤어진 이름이여! 불러도 주인 없는 이름이여! 부르다가 내가 죽을 이름이여!// 심중에 남아 있는 말 한마디는/ 끝끝내 마저 하지 못하였구나./ 사랑하던 그 사람이여! 사랑하던 그 사람이여!// 붉은 해는 서산 마루에 걸리었다./ 사슴이의 무리도 슬피 운다./ 떨어져 나와 앉은 산 위에서/ 나는 그대의 이름을 부르노라.// 설움에 겹도록 부르노라./ 설움에 겹도록 부르노라./ 부르는 소리는 비껴가지만/ 하늘과 땅 사이가 너무 넓구나.// 선 채로 이 자리에 돌이 되어도/ 부르다가 내가 죽을 이름이여! 사랑하던 그 사람이여! 사랑하던 그 사람이여!” (김소월 2007: 257)

Invocation of the Spirit, we see this clearly in the first stanza: “O shattered / name!”, “O name parted in the air / name!”, “O name with no one left / to answer!”, “The name I shall die / calling!” Each seven-syllable portion precedes and modifies the five-syllable portion, forming a complete unit of meaning. The longer segment sets the premise, while the shorter delivers its emotional consequence.

However, in the second stanza, the cadence is disrupted by the repeated cry, “O you, my beloved one!” – a pair of consecutive short utterances that arrest the verse’s rhythm. The overlapping rhythm of long and short lines is here inverted into a short-to-long sequence, halting the forward flow of the verse. (Kim Jong-hoon, 김중훈 2011: 394) This rupture intensifies the sense of absence and renders the speaker’s grief all the more poignant. The second stanza transforms the established rhythmic flow to unleash the emotional climax.

This means that he “sought to compose poems as faithfully as possible to his own breathing and voice in order to break free from the traditional 7–5 metric form,” and that “Kim So-wol repeatedly experimented with arranging his verses in accordance with his own intended rhythm.” (Ku In Mo, 구인모 2002: 174)

In *Invocation of the Spirit*, both thematically and rhythmically, the speaker asserts the self through the experience of rupture. The cry “The name I shall die calling!” does not portray the speaker as a mere extension of the beloved, but rather as a separate, equal being. If the speaker were fully identified with the beloved, they would have collapsed at the moment of witnessing death. That the speaker is calling out the name – and enduring – signifies a lyric subject who, emerging from disharmony with the world, forms a self and participates in reality on their own terms.

In the third stanza, the spatial background – “From the hill, set apart and alone” – is explicitly introduced. The speaker, “torn away,” is situated in a space separate from the beloved. From this interior space, the imagery of the red sun and a herd of deer mirrors the speaker’s emotional state; they too cry out the beloved’s name. Though the call resounds with deep sorrow, the distance between heaven and earth is too vast, and the cry only glances away. The speaker’s tireless effort, paradoxically, reinforces the very disconnection they seek to overcome.

This impossibility ignites emotion once more. In the fifth stanza, the speaker’s resolve transcends death itself. The line Even if I turn into stone here, standing still evokes the Korean folktale of the Mangbuseok (망부석), the Stone of Waiting Wife – a woman who waits so long for her husband that she becomes a rock. This line echoes

and expands the first stanza's "The name I shall die calling!", transforming it into a vow to continue calling even beyond death, reaching into the timelessness where the beloved resides.

Whereas in the first stanza the speaker's relationship to the beloved is rooted in longing, by the fifth stanza this relationship becomes oppositional – defined by the speaker's determination to wait, even if it takes hundreds or thousands of years. The speaker's self is suspended in tension between life and death, rejecting a future without the beloved and choosing instead to inhabit the eternal present of calling their name.

When you leave me,
because you find me loathsome,
I shall let you go in silence, with grace.

From Yak Mountain in Yeongbyeon,
I will gather armfuls of azaleas
and strew them on the path you take.

With every step you walk away,
tread softly upon those flowers –
gently, and without regret.

When you leave me,
because you find me loathsome,

even in death, I shall not shed a single tear.⁴

(Kim Sowol, 김소월 2007: 290-291)

The Azaleas (진달래꽃) is often interpreted as a poem that conveys the emotions of a woman abandoned by her beloved. What is most emphasized in this reading is the speaker's declaration that she will not shed a single tear, even in death. Even as she is abandoned, the speaker remains gentle and accepting, scattering flowers along the path her beloved takes. Her forbearance reaches its peak in the final line, where she insists she will not cry, not even in death. This has led to the dominant interpretation that her pain is so deep because she has not fully given up her longing or resentment toward her beloved. Such a reading ultimately reduces the relationship between the speaker and the beloved to a one-sided and subordinate dynamic.

However, rather than focusing on the speaker's attitude, what deserves closer attention is her action. "The speaker's attitude is not presented as an established fact, but as a performative revelation" (Jeong Kwari, 정과리 2012a: 39). That is, the many gestures described in the poem – gathering azalea flowers from Mount Yak (약산) in Yeongbyeon (영변), scattering them along the path the beloved will take, and the act of asking him to gently tread upon them – are all hypothetical, yet to occur. These are not descriptions of things that have already happened; rather, they indicate intentions or possibilities for future events. When the speaker says she will scatter the flowers along his path, what she truly intends remains unspoken. She is, in fact, making a wager, concealing her true motives.

"All of this is the speaker's strategy to provoke a response from the lover" (Jeong Kwari, 정과리 2012a: 40). From this moment of tension, the beloved is placed at a crossroads of choice. After hearing the speaker's cold threat that she will not shed a tear, even in death, it will be difficult for him to simply tread upon the azaleas – symbols of their shared memories – without hesitation.

We can quickly identify who the speaker of *The Azaleas* (진달래꽃) is: one who not only accepts separation as their present condition but also

⁴ “나 보기가 역겨워/ 가실 때에는/ 말없이 고히 보내드리우리다// 영변에 약산
진달래꽃/ 아름 따다 가실 길에 뿌리우리다// 가시는 걸음걸음/ 놓인 그 꽃을/
사뿐히 즈려 밟고 가시옵소서// 나 보기가 역겨워/ 가실 때에는/ 죽어도 아니 눈물
흘리우리다” (김소월 2007: 290-291)

intervenes in that separation through their own deliberate action. In other words, the speaker is someone who possesses both individuality and agency – the defining traits of a truly modern subject. As an individual, the “I” confirms their separation from others, including the community to which they once belonged. As an agent, however, this “I” actively seeks to overcome that separation by investing mental and emotional labor in the creation of a shared world, a society in which coexistence becomes possible. Yet a truly modern subject, one who fully understands the duality of individuality and action, also knows that such action cannot immediately overcome separation. It will necessarily be a long and arduous struggle. One must scheme with the mind and appeal with the heart; one must deceive and plead in turn. This is precisely why the speaker of “Azaleas” sets up a theatrical space before the departing lover, staging a psychological game through the imagined *mise-en-scène*. (...) By reintroducing this familiar, traditional setting, the speaker first satisfies the reader’s emotional expectations through a surface-level empathy. But then, paradoxically, the speaker begins to discard those conventional responses, opening up a space for new emotional reactions to emerge.⁵ (Jeong Kwari, 정과리 2012b: 41-42)

As a result, the speaker of *The Azaleas* accepts the separation from the lover as their own situation and responds by asserting the modern individual – *I* – at the forefront. By inserting this modern subject into the traditional situation of parting with a lover, the poem generates a distinct individuality. The speaker is no longer simply the

⁵ “[진달래꽃]의 화자가 누구인가를 금세 확인할 수 있을 것이다. 바로 단절을 자신의 상황으로 받아들이는 사람이자 동시에 그 단절을 극복하기 위해 자신의 행동을 개입시키는 사람인 것이다. 다시 말해, ‘나’의 단독성과 나의 ‘행위성’을 갖춘 이가 그이다. 바로 그 존재가 진정한 의미에서의 ‘근대인’이다. 단독자로서의 ‘나’는 주변의 다른 존재들, 자신이 속한 공동체로부터 자신이 떨어져 있음을 확인한다. 반면 ‘행위자’로서의 ‘나’는 그 단절을 극복해 함께 어울려 사는 ‘사회’를 만들기 위해 자신의 정신과 노동을 투여한다. 그런데 ‘단독성’과 ‘행위’의 양면성을 정확히 인식하고 있는 근대인이라면, 그의 행위가 단숨에 단절을 이길 수 없다는 것을 잘 알고 있다. 그것은 매우 지난한 싸움이 될 수밖에 없다. 머리를 짜고 가슴을 열어야 한다. 속이고 호소해야 한다. 「진달래꽃」의 화자가 떠나는 임 앞에 가상의 무대를 설치할 것을 예고하고, 그것에 의지해, 연인과 심리전을 벌이는 것은 그 때문이다. (...) 그는 이 전통적인 상황을 재도입함으로써, 독자와의 정서적 친화성을 충족한 후에, 그 다음엔 거꾸로 전통적인 반응을 폐기하고 새로운 반응을 창출하는 작업을 해나갔다.” (정과리 2012b: 41-42)

emotional object of loss, but rises as a lyrical agent who constructs and regulates the situation. In this way, the poem breaks free from the conventional mold of farewell songs and illustrates how the modern individual actively positions themselves between internal affect and the external world. Put differently, *The Azaleas* can be seen as a representative lyrical text that enacts the formation of a modern subject through the dual axes of “individuality” and “agency.”

What is particularly noteworthy is that this strategic articulation does not aim to overturn or disrupt the order of the external world, but instead demonstrates a politics of emotion that seeks to achieve its aims by delicately working within that order’s existing affective structure. The speaker does not prove their existence through overt confrontation or opposition, but rather creates subtle emotional reverberations that elicit a response from the other, thereby asserting their presence. This suggests that Kim Sowol’s lyrical self, while appearing weak or submissive on the surface, is in fact a far more refined and active subject. The controlled and repressed emotions themselves become expressions of will, and it is through this mode of restraint that the speaker’s desire to intervene in the world and in relation to the other emerges. Thus, *The Azaleas* is not merely a song of resignation or sacrifice, but rather a complex exercise in self-positioning – one in which the modern subject negotiates and affirms their own place in relation to the other.

O bird,
floating in the sky –
your body is covered in feathers and collar.

In the fields, there’s barley;
in the paddies, rice.
Heavily ripened, all now bowed low.

Past Mount Chosan (조산 楚山),
across Jeokyuryeong (적유령 狄踰嶺) Pass –

But why do you, pack-laden donkey,

trudge over those mountains?⁶

(Kim Sowol, 김소월 2007: 509)

In *Clothes, Food, and Freedom* (옷과 밥과 자유), the lives of the bird and the donkey are sharply contrasted. The bird’s existence – marked by clothing (feathers and collar), food (barley in the fields and rice in the paddies), and above all, freedom (floating in the sky) – is portrayed positively. In contrast, the donkey’s life, reduced to that of a mere beast of burden, is presented in a negative light.

Despite the donkey’s labor in cultivating the fields and paddies, it is the free bird who ultimately enjoys the harvest. Yet the donkey quietly trudges on, crossing mountains and passes while carrying its load. At this point, the speaker intervenes directly, asking the donkey why it continues to climb the pass under such unjust conditions.

It is striking that the poem’s title is “*Clothes, Food, and Freedom*”, yet the speaker’s attention is directed not at the bird who possesses these things, but rather at the donkey who lacks them. This suggests that the speaker identifies more with the donkey and the earth than with the bird and the sky. Like the donkey, the speaker too lives a reality devoid of feathers, collar, or freedom.

Thus, by recognizing the rupture from the ideal space of the sky and turning toward the ground – toward reality – the speaker seeks to participate in that reality as an “I.” The question, “But why do you, pack-laden donkey, trudge over those mountains?”, signals a desire to confront the contradictions of the present. This attitude of facing reality head-on aligns with the stance of the modern individual.

3. Constructing Being from Nothingness: Yoo Chihwan’s Divergent “Individual”

The poetic world of Yoo Chihwan secures a distinctive place in the

⁶ “공중에 떠다니는/ 저기 저 새여/ 네 몸에는 털 있고 깃이 있지./ 발에는 발곡식
눈에 물벼./ 놀하게 익어서 수그러졌네./ 초산(楚山) 지나 적유령(狄踰嶺)/
넘어선다./ 짐 실은 저 나귀는 너 왜 넘니?” (김소월 2007: 509)

history of modern Korean poetry through an uncompromising trajectory of self-inquiry. He persistently delves into the fundamental conditions of human existence – namely, the tragic rift between finite life and a yearning for the infinite. Without turning away from the existential dilemmas of the individual amid the turbulent tides of history, Yoo expands them to a cosmic scale. His poetic thinking advances toward a deeper dimension, one in which nihilism is understood as the very essence of the world. Yoo’s poetry confronts a reality in which God, as a transcendent order, can no longer serve as a central axis of human life. Consequently, the world is recognized as a space devoid of salvation – an absolute void.

Here, the void does not merely signify emptiness; rather, it becomes the very condition that compels the individual to rediscover their existence and actively seek new directions for life. Yoo Chihwan affirms the solitude and freedom of the human individual, not by relying on communal norms or transcendent beings, but by embracing the rupture from them. The consciousness of nothingness that pervades his work reveals the modern individual, cast into a godless world, who becomes aware of their responsibility for existence and strives to construct a meaningful life through will and reflection. In this sense, Yoo’s poetic world may be understood not merely as a space of lamentation or despair in the face of oppressive realities, but rather as a testimonial terrain tracing the formation of the modern subject.

Accordingly, Yoo’s poetry confronts the paradoxical and essential questions of life head-on, through a tone marked by “indignation, lamentation, resistance, and rebuke.” (Kim Hyun, 김현 1992: 78) The dialectical tensions that dominate his work – nothingness/will, finitude (human)/infinity (divine), emotion/unemotion – do not remain mere oppositions. Instead, they are organically interwoven under the overarching theme of *life*. These tensions reflect Yoo’s lifelong preoccupation with the duality of life and death, and the belief that finite human beings must always engage in thought within a horizon that encompasses both. Thus, his poetry prioritizes a mode of expression that exposes the unvarnished truths of life over refined techniques, and reveals a poetic ethos grounded in sincerity and existential engagement.

The simple and recent vow to become a human being before becoming a poet weighs more heavily on me with each passing day, as I come to

a deeper and deeper realization of how difficult it is to uphold.⁷ (Yoo Chihwan, 유치환 1939: 5-6)

This is because literature can never be born without being rooted in a deep sense of ethics. Writing that lacks ethics, literature that is not born from an ethical spirit, will first and foremost have no readers. The reason is simple: without resonance, no one will feel the need or interest to read it.⁸ (Yoo Chihwan, 유치환 2007: 161)

As the quoted passages illustrate, for Yoo Chihwan, poetry and the poet are inseparable. Literature, in his view, is fulfilled through each individual's ethical pursuit. In other words, “the transformation of poetry is not achieved through changes in technique, but only when a person's worldview and attitude toward life undergo a fundamental shift” (Hong Jungsun, 홍정선 2000: 144). He rejected the image of the artificially constructed poet, asserting instead that true poetry is born from the vital dynamism that wells up from within ourselves. Therefore, he emphasized that poetry is not the product of calculated experimentation. The poetic subject must internalize the problems of reality and overcome the many contradictions of life through a will formed upon that internalization. For this reason, among his contemporaries, Yoo Chihwan raised his voice more fiercely than anyone else in criticizing the contradictions of reality, such as the corruption of the Liberal Party⁹ regime. This piercing self-reflection and determined stance are deeply connected to his way of perceiving the world.

It is certain that He [God – the one cited, K.H.S.] must by now be dozing somewhere in idleness, or else has vanished without a trace. For, having already fulfilled His role, there is no longer any necessity or reason for Him to remain or to assert His presence. If, on the other hand, He were required to remain eternally – to supervise and remain preoccupied with

⁷ “시인이 되기 전에 한 사람이 되리라는 이 쉬웁고 얼마 안 된 말이 내게는 갈수록 감당하기 어려움을 깊이깊이 뉘우쳐 깨닫습니다.” (유치환 1939: 5-6)

⁸ “문학이란 언제나 높은 윤리의 태반을 갖지 않고서야 낱아지지가 않기 때문입니다. 윤리를 갖지 않은 글, 윤리의 정신에서 생산되지 않은 문학은 무엇보다 첫째, 그것을 읽어줄 독자가 없을 것입니다. 그 이유는 읽어서 공명을 맛볼 수 없으므로 읽을 필요나 흥미를 아무도 안 느낄 것이기 말입니다.” (유치환 1959: 151-152)

⁹ The Liberal Party was the ruling party during South Korea's First Republic (1948–1960), led by President Syngman Rhee, and is historically associated with authoritarianism and systemic corruption.

all things He once commanded into being – then this would merely serve as proof that His creations are, in the end, incomplete, and thus a tacit admission of His own lack of omnipotence.¹⁰ (Yoo Chihwan, 유치환 1984: 345)

I acknowledge the existence of God. Yet the God I acknowledge is not one who bestows any grace beyond what exists here today, but rather a kind of will that brings into being time and space – and, through them, all things that exist. My God is a formless, overflowing, and ambiguous being. (...) And so, it is precisely today that human beings must, by the clarity of their moral conscience¹¹ and innate goodness¹², face this absolute will of nihilism head-on and, in so doing, choose the path of their truest selves and chart a course for the future.¹³ (Yoo Chihwan, 유치환 1999: 158-159)

For Yoo Chihwan, God may have once existed as the creator of the world, but now he is merely a being who must be off somewhere napping without anything to do, or else has vanished without a trace. God, who created all things, is said to have produced only unfinished products, which serve as proof of his deficient power. This statement underscores Yoo's belief that the influence of God as a creator who controls and watches over us has entirely disappeared in the modern

¹⁰ “별써 그(신-인용자) 는 어디에 가서 할 일 없이 낮잠이나 자고 있든지, 그렇찮으면 묘연히 행방을 감춰버리고 말았을 것임에 틀림없다. 왜냐하면 이미 그의 직분을 완수한 그는 구태여 그가 있어야 되고 자신을 내세워야 되는 그럴 필요나 이유조차도 없어지고 만 때문이다. 만약에 그렇찮고 신이 언제나 그가 있어서 일단 그가 있게 명령한 만유를 감시하고 더욱 용념(用念)하여야만 한다면 그것은 그가 창조한 것들이 결국 미완성품이라는 그의 능력의 미급을 자인하는 증좌 밖에 아닌 때문이다.” (유치환 1984: 345)

¹¹ Moral conscience (양지 良知): A Neo-Confucian concept referring to the innate moral awareness or intuitive knowledge of good possessed by every person.

¹² Innate goodness (선성 善性): A philosophical notion emphasizing the fundamental goodness inherent in human nature, often associated with Mencian and Eastern moral thought.

¹³ “나는 신의 존재는 인정한다. 내가 인정하는 신이란 오늘 내가 있는 이상의 그 어떤 은총을 베풀 수 있는 신이 아니라 이 시공(時空)과 거기 따라 존재하는 만유(萬有)를 있게 하는 의지 그런 것이다. 나의 신은 형상도 없는 팽배(澎湃) 모호(模糊)한 존재이다. (...) 오늘이야 말로 인간은 그의 양지(良知)와 선성(善性)으로서 이 절대한 허무의 의지를 정시(正視) 인정하므로 진실한 자신의 길을 택하여 앞날을 설계하여야 될 것이다.” (유치환 1999: 158-159)

world. God remains only as “a latent will that governs the universe or the world” (Oh Sae-young, 오세영 1999: 226). He no longer intervenes in human life or judges it by standards of good and evil. In the present, God has receded into the order of nature and the cosmos, becoming a shapeless, overflowing, ambiguous being. In this situation, where God has been reduced to a silent cosmic order, there is no one left to oversee the human world. As a result, human beings living in the present feel an ineffable sense of nothingness, for they can no longer be saved through any transcendent other. How, then, is the finite human being to lead their life? This is where Yoo Chihwan’s concept of will becomes clearer. Ultimately, the only one who can solve the problems of humanity is humanity itself, and the only way to survive in a godless world is to accept absolute nothingness and solitude, and choose one’s true path and plan for the future. This is expressed in his writings as the will to nothingness, a theme he persistently explores in his poetry. The human being, now responsible for managing the world in place of God, must be ethical. And to be ethical, one must embrace the contradictions between good and evil, justice and injustice, finitude and infinity, and nothingness and will. The world cannot be fully understood from just one side of these oppositions. It is from this point that Yoo Chihwan’s poetry begins.

When I die, I shall become a single rock,
Unstained by affection,
Unmoved by joy or sorrow,
Chiseled by rain and wind as it may be –
In the unfeeling silence of a million years,
I shall scour inward, ever inward,
Until even life is forgotten.
Though clouds drift above,
Though distant thunder rumbles,
I will not sing, not even in dreams.
Even if split clean in two,

I shall not make a sound –

I shall become a rock.¹⁴

(Yoo Chihwan, 유치환 1984: 77)

In the poem *The Rock* (바위), images of the infinite and the finite are set in stark opposition, and this tension is mediated through the motif of death. As the line “When I die, I shall become a single rock” suggests, the act of becoming a rock presupposes death. What is thereby attained is an unfeeling silence, in which one remains unstained by affection and unmoved by joy or sorrow – an expression of the speaker’s resolute will not to succumb to any form of hardship. The reason the speaker seeks to scour inward, ever inward, to the point of forgetting even life, is that he wishes to embrace new life through death.

This gesture embodies “a life that is affirmed only through total negation” (Choi Dongho, 최동호 1985: 332): for the finite being that is the human, to overcome the contradictions of reality – symbolized by “rain and wind,” or “distant thunder” – requires a complete transformation of life, which in turn necessitates a radical break from the existing world. This renewal of life is figured in the lines “I will not sing, not even in dreams. / Even if split clean in two, / I shall not make a sound.” Faced with a world of contradiction, the speaker reaches self-affirmation only through a continuous movement of self-negation – a new encounter with life forged in opposition.

However, the task of denying and renewing one’s world inevitably entails conflict with the existing order, and as such, cannot be free from pain. This pain, in turn, awakens within the speaker a desire to remain in the world as it is. Hence the urge to remain “silent” in the face of “affection” and “joy or sorrow.” For Yoo Chihwan, then, the act of writing poetry becomes an attempt by a finite being to draw near to the infinite. That is to say, the goal is not to become a new god, but rather to continually renew oneself through the mirror of the infinite. It is the will to negate countless contradictions of the world and to make

¹⁴ “내 죽으면 한 개 바위가 되리라/ 아예 애련에 물들지 않고/ 희노에 움직이지 않고/ 비와 바람에 깎이는 대로/ 억 년 비정의 함묵(緘默)에/ 안으로 안으로만 채찍질하여/ 드디어 생명도 망각하고/ 흐르는 구름/ 머언 원뢰(遠雷)/ 꿈꾸어도 노래하지 않고/ 두 쪽으로 깨뜨려져도/ 소리하지 않는 바위가 되리라” (유치환 1984: 77)

that world just slightly better than before.

When my knowledge cannot rescue bitter doubt,
And I too cannot shoulder all the love and hatred of life,
When life strains and shudders like a sickly tree –
Then let me go to the faraway deserts of Arabia.

There, the sun once risen blazes like an immortal,
And all things vanish in sand-bound, eternal silence;
Only Allah, god of the Arab lands,
Wanders and agonizes each night across the burning dunes.

In that ardent solitude,
When I stand alone, robe fluttering in the wind,
I shall, as if by fate, come face to face with “myself.”
And if I cannot relearn
The primal, original shape of what I am – what my life is –
Then let my sun-bleached bones rest without regret
Beneath the sands of some nameless dune.¹⁵

(Yoo Chihwan 유치환 1984: 86)

In *Book of Life, Chapter One* (*생명의 서(書) 일장(一章)*), the

¹⁵ “나의 지식(知識)이 독한 회의(懷疑)를 구(救)하지 못하고/ 내 또한 삶의 애증(愛憎)을 다 짐지지 못하여/ 병든 나무처럼 생명이 부대길 때/ 저 머나먼 아라비아의 사막으로 나는 가자// 거기는 한 번 뜬 백일(白日)이 불사신같이 작열(灼熱)하고/ 일체(一切)가 모래 속에 사멸한 영겁의 허적(虛寂)에/ 오직

speaker expresses a “bitter doubt” over his failure to improve the world through his own “knowledge.” As a result, he is left struggling “like a sickly tree” and decides to depart for the “deserts of Arabia.” However, the desert is not simply a place of escape. It is a space of death, of eternity, of nothingness, where the blazing sun burns “like an immortal” and all things are annihilated in the sand. Only Allah, the god of that land, remains there, wandering and agonizing each night.

What is intriguing is that, even as the speaker is pushed into the desert by the bleakness of reality and experiences fervent solitude, he is confident that he will inevitably come face to face with [him]self, as if by fate. What, then, is this self? Here, it becomes clear that the desert is not merely a site of retreat. The self the speaker seeks to encounter is not his present self but another – one that retains its primal, original shape, untainted by the contradictions of reality. As seen earlier in “*The Rock*,” this journey into the infinite space of the desert serves to annihilate the self steeped in bitter doubt and to recover the life that is I, the pure, primordial being that once was.

Thus, the Arabian desert is not a place of escape but a space for reflection and introspection. The line “Then let my sun-bleached bones rest without regret / Beneath the sands of some nameless dune” expresses the speaker’s unwavering will: if he cannot renew himself beyond the contradictions of reality, he would rather accept death than remain unchanged.

This poetic stance also resonates with Yoo Chihwan’s own experience in Manchuria. “In 1940, he moved with his family to Xinqu (신구 新區), a village in Yanshou County (연수현 延壽縣), Binjiang Province (빈강성 濱江省), located beneath the Xing’an Mountains (흥안령 興安嶺) east of Harbin. There, he worked as a farm manager until returning to Korea in 1945” (Hong Jungsun, 흥정선 2000: 150). The poems in the collection *Book of Life* are closely connected to his experiences in northern Manchuria. For Yoo Chihwan, who could not resist the desperate and dismal circumstances of the time and had to leave for Manchuria, it is only natural that he would harbor feelings of bitter doubt and regret. Yet rather than concluding this experience as

아라—의 신(神)만이/ 밤마다 고민하고 방황하는 열사(熱沙)의 끝// 그 열렬한
고독 가운데/ 옷자락을 나부끼고 호올로 서면/ 운명처럼 반드시 ‘나’와 대면(對
面)케 될지니/ 하여 ‘나’란 나의 생명이란/ 그 원시의 본연한 자태를 다시 배우지
못하거든/ 차라리 어느 사구(沙丘)에 회한(悔恨) 없는 백골을 쪼이리라” (유치환
1984: 86)

Hosung KIM: Two Aspects of the "Individual" in Korean...

mere escapism or nihilism, he transforms it into an opportunity for renewal – through a process of reflection so intense it borders on self-flagellation.

At the end of this vast plain

near Xing'an Mountains (흥안령 興安嶺) in the northern frontier,

I stand with a heart that refuses to repent, even in death.

Today, for the seventh day, a rain of dark sorrow falls upon it.

Even as I imitate the village ruffian,

flipping over the cards of hwatu,

pressing out my cigarette –

within, my heart endlessly resounds with silent wailing.

Ah – am I once again blaming myself?

Having already renounced all things,

on this path of self-torment

where I refuse even myself,

I could throw away this life,

this life that has failed tenfold.

But alas, there is no place

to cry out this anguished remorse.

Rising in silence,

I open the door and stand,

yet the sky of thoughts I wish to flee into is nowhere in sight.

The nearest train station is two hundred li away –

this wilderness of despair,

shut in by dark mire like an iron wall!¹⁶

(Yoo Chihwan, 유치환 1984: 116)

Like the previous poems, *Upon Arriving in the Wilderness* (광야에 와서) is also based on Yoo Chihwan's experience in Manchuria. The speaker, who works as a farm manager in this vast plain near the Xing'an Mountains, feels a deep sense of guilt for having left behind the contradictions of a ravaged reality. He continuously revisits his past faults in order to abandon the mindset that seeks to justify himself – his resolve never to regret even in death. Throwing himself into this path of self-torment, having already abandoned all things, the speaker declares that he is willing to cast away his life of ten failures. As the line “this wilderness of despair, / shut in by dark mire like an iron wall” suggests, the speaker appears trapped in a tragic world from which there is no escape. The future seems foreclosed; only a present time filled with despair remains.

Yet, as we have seen in earlier poems, the reason the speaker applies such severe judgment to himself is in order to face a *new life* through thorough self-reflection. What must be noted here is not the act of self-flagellation itself, but the fact that it is directed entirely inward. The poet's persistent willingness to embrace death, seen throughout Yoo Chihwan's work – this act of metaphorically killing the self – is deeply connected to an ethics of self-reflection. Through such bone-deep reflection, the despairing experiences of northern Manchuria are

¹⁶ “흥안령(興安嶺) 가까운 북변의/ 이 광막한 벌판 끝에 와서/ 죽어도 뉘우치지 않으려는 마음 위에/ 오늘은 이레째 암수(暗愁)의 비 내리고/ 내 망나니에 본받아/ 화투장을 뒤치고/ 담배를 눌러 꺼도/ 마음은 속으로 끝없이 울리노니/ 아아 이는 다시 나를 과실(過失)함아려뇨/ 이미 온갖을 저버리고/ 사람도 나도 접어주지 않으려는 이 자학의 길에/ 내 열 번 패망의 인생을 버려도 좋으련만/ 아아 이 회오(悔悟)의 앓음을 어디메 호읍(號泣)할 곳 없어/ 말없이 자리를 일어나와 문을 열고 서면/ 나의 탈주할 사념의 하늘도 보이지 않고/ 정차장도 이백 리 밖/ 암담한 진창에 갇힌 철벽 같은 절망의 광야!” (유치환 1984: 116)

transformed into a new possibility for life that can overcome the contradictions of reality. “Because he first directed such harshness toward himself, he could later confront the world and others with a sense of righteous indignation and unwavering moral clarity” (Hong Jungsun, 홍정선 2000: 151). This ethos aligns with Yoo Chihwan’s poetics, which valued ethical resolve over poetic form or technique.

This is a silent outcry –
a handkerchief of eternal nostalgia
waving toward that blue open sea.
Innocence flutters in the wind like waves,
atop the flagpole of a clear and upright ideal.
Sorrow, like an egret, spreads its wings.
Ah, who was it –
who first knew
to hang such a sorrowful and aching heart
in the sky?¹⁷

(Yoo Chihwan 유치환 1984: 14)

In the poem *Flag* (깃발), the flag stands firmly on the earth yet waves toward that blue open sea, and at the top of the flagpole of a clear and upright ideal, it spreads its wings like an egret. From this we see that the sea and the sky symbolize an ideal realm where the innocence of a handkerchief of eternal nostalgia flutters in the wind, while the land represents the base reality that fails to achieve it. These two worlds stand in opposition. The fluttering flag continually recalls the desire to return to the ideal world symbolized by home. Then, sorrow spreads its wings like an egret atop the flagpole of a clear and upright ideal. The

¹⁷ “이것은 소리 없는 아우성/ 저 푸른 해원(海原)을 향하여 흔드는/ 영원한
노스탈자의 손수건/ 순정은 물결같이 바람에 나부끼고/ 오로지 맑고 곧은 이념의
푹대 끝에/ 애수는 백로처럼 날개를 펴다/ 아아 누구던가/ 이렇게 슬프고도
애달픈 마음을/ 맨 처음 공중에 달 줄을 안 그는” (유치환 1984: 14)

flag hurls itself toward the realm that its ideals point to, yet because it remains bound to the pole rooted in the earth, it cannot break free, and so it spreads its wings in grief.

In summary, the flag embodies the image of a solitary human being who, though tethered to the contradictions of reality (the pole), cannot abandon the yearning for an ideal world. It is a figure suffused with emotions – such as innocence – that had to be let go in the pursuit of ideals or in the experience of their failure. The flag’s fluttering captures both the infinite desire symbolized by the sea and sky, and the constraints of repression symbolized by the land to which the pole is bound. Importantly, these opposing forces do not lead to rupture, tearing the flag apart; rather, they intensify its movements into ever more vigorous fluttering. Each time the wind rises, the flag will flutter again, and those who see it will be reminded once more of ideals and nostalgia, reflecting on and continuing their own lives.

In Yoo Chihwan’s poetry, transcendence never flows in only one direction. Contradictory forces overlap and collide, generating new possibilities for life. The poet names this process of confronting contradictions and engaging in quiet self-reflection at the core of existence a silent outcry. The flag, then, is not a symbol of despair but a means for redirecting life toward renewal. Because life is complex, there are times when it must release its desires outward and other times when it must conceal them. As these two forces intersect, life becomes more finely differentiated and diverse. The imagination in this poem is “not bound by the tension between ascending and descending forces, nor does it cling to either extreme.” (Kim Hyun, 김현 1992: 98) In other words, the tension between the two does not vanish upon reaching one pole or the other; it is a process of renewal that continually affirms the diverse facets of desire and generates new life.

O wave, what am I to do?

O wave, what am I to do?

My beloved stays still, like the land –

O wave, what am I to do?

What am I to do with myself?¹⁸

¹⁸ “파도야 어쩌란 말이냐/ 파도야 어쩌란 말이냐/ 임은 물같이 까딱 않는데/

(Yoo Chihwan, 유치환 1984: 205)

This poem, *Longing* (그리움) was written by Yoo Chihwan while thinking of the sijo poet Lee Yeongdo (정운 이영도 丁芸李永道), who did not return his affections. At the time, Lee was a young widow, and Yoo was a married man, making their relationship socially unacceptable. Unlike the cold, resolute tone often seen in his earlier poems, the speaker here lays bare his aching emotions. While the beloved remains unmoved, like the land, the speaker’s longing surges relentlessly, like the waves. The repeated crashing of waves metaphorically expresses the inescapable desperation of his love.

This poem reveals that Yoo Chihwan’s poetic world does not rely solely on strength, detachment, or oppositional forces such as meaninglessness versus will. Instead, it embraces both sides – exposing his personal struggles as they are. While he often advocates for a life of will and moral austerity in pursuit of a better world, he does not suppress his own aching passions. For Yoo, poetic ethics mean recognizing that “one cannot live a life sustained solely by sorrowful oppositions” (Kim Hyun, 김현 1992: 99) even inner contradictions must be acknowledged as a valid part of life to become truly human.

4. Conclusion

Kim Sowol and Yoo Chihwan are two emblematic poets who, grounded in contrasting poetic attitudes and worldviews, each gave form to the notion of the “individual” amid the tumultuous period of modernity. Their poetic worlds represent a pivotal literary moment in which Korean lyric poetry began to articulate and define the modern self in language.

Kim Sowol’s poetry, while rooted in traditional sentiment and the folk song form, transforms these inherited structures into opportunities for new subject formation through the *internalization of rupture*. The ‘I’ that emerges in his poems is no longer emotionally fused with the world, but instead becomes self-aware through distance and separation from the other. This self is not passive or resigned; rather, it is an active agent that reconfigures its relationship to the world

파도야 어찌란 말이냐/ 날 어찌란 말이냐” (유치환 1984: 205)

through delicate strategies. In this sense, it signifies the emergence of a modern actor through a politics of emotion.

In contrast, Yoo Chihwan's poetic world moves in the opposite direction – he envisions the individual through an expansive meditation on *being constructed from nothingness*. Yoo confronts the existential reality of being cast alone into a world devoid of God and bereft of transcendence. However, this confrontation with meaninglessness is not simply a source of despair; it becomes, for Yoo, the very point of departure for an ethical decision to reconstitute the self. The individual revealed in his poetry is a subject of resolute will, one who strives to live and take full responsibility for that life even without recognition from others or society. This is perhaps the most radical form of the modern self: a being who, through ethical practice and personal renewal, seeks to create a new kind of *singularity* within a godless world.

Thus, whereas Kim Sowol shaped a convergent, affect-centered individual through the internalization of rupture, Yoo Chihwan articulated a divergent individual by embracing existential tension and ethical resolution within the fundamental condition of transcendental absence. The former actively appropriated the affective structures of tradition to establish an inward logic of subject formation, while the latter drew a life-ethic from the depths of nihilism, crafting a dynamic image of the self.

Ultimately, the divergent visions of the “individual” presented by Kim Sowol and Yoo Chihwan serve as critical signposts for understanding how Korean lyric poetry negotiated the tensions between self and world, emotion and thought, tradition and modernity. These two polar approaches encapsulate the ontological evolution Korean poetry underwent in the age of modernity. They show that the “individual” was not merely a vehicle for subjective sentiment, but increasingly came to be understood as a complete and autonomous subject capable of perceiving and intervening in the world.

In this light, the present study aimed to examine the process and scope of individual formation in Korean lyric poetry through a comparative reading of the two poets. This entailed not only a deep engagement with each poet's distinctive world, but also an effort to uncover the relational dynamics between them. The poetic praxis of Kim Sowol and Yoo Chihwan demonstrates how, at the threshold of modernity, Korean lyric poetry linguistically grappled with rupture, nihilism, loss, and rebirth – and in doing so, illuminated the multifaceted evolution of the entity we call the “individual”.

Conflict of interest statement: The author has no conflict of interest to disclose.

Bibliography

- Choi, Dongho (최동호). 1985. Where the Flag in Cheongma’s Poetry Is Headed. *The Intellectual History of Modern Poetry*, 325–338. Seoul: Yeoleumsa.
- Kim, Hyun (김현). 1992. The Poetics of The Flag. In *The Agony of Reading Books / Living Poems – Collected Works Vol. 5*, ed. Munhakgwa Jiseongsa, 78–99. Seoul: Munhakgwa Jiseongsa.
- Kim, Jong-gil (김종길). 1999. A Study on Cheongma Yoo Chihwan. In *Yoo Chihwan*, ed. Cheolseok Park, 245–262. Seoul: Munhaksegyesa.
- Kim, Yong-jik (김용직). 1996. The Aesthetics of Absolute Will – A Study on Yoo Chihwan. *History of Modern Korean Poetry II*, 303–332. Seoul: HangukMunyeon.
- Kim, Yoon-sik (김윤식). 1984. The Will to Nihilism and Rhetoric. In *The Complete Works of Yoo Chihwan, vol. 2*, ed. Injeon Yoo, 353–378. Seoul: Jeongeumsa.
- Moon, Dok-su (문덕수). 2003. The Will to Life. In *Beyond Nihilism*, 9–28. Seoul: Simunhaksa.
- Yoo, Chihwan (유치환). (1959) 2007. *Drawn on a Cloud*, Revised ed. Masan: Gyeongnam.
- Yoo, Chihwan (유치환). 1939. *The First Poems of Cheongma*. Seoul: Cheongsaekjisa.
- Yoo, Chihwan (유치환). 1984. The Sorrow and Hope of Being Human. In *The Complete Works of Yoo Chihwan, vol. 3*, ed. Injeon Yoo. Seoul: Jeongeumsa.
- Yoo, Chihwan (유치환). 1999. Before the Will of Nihilism (On the Preface to *Cheongma Poetry Collection*). In *Yoo Chihwan*, ed. Cheolseok Park. Seoul: Munhak Segyesa.
- Hong, Jungsun (홍정선). 2000. Yoo Chihwan and Lee Yuksa. In *Hwanghae Review*, No. 29 (December): 142–162.
- Jeon, Young-joo (전영주). 2011. Kim So-wol’ poetry and Seodo folk song – Concentrated on Chindalrae (Azalea진달래꽃) and “Chohon (Invocation조흔). In *The Studies of Korean Literature*, Vol. 33: 351–371.
- Jeong, Kwari (정과리). 2012a. Why ‘Azaleas’ Is Not a Folk Song but a Modern Poem (1). In *Munhakgwan*, No. 54 (Fall): 36–41.
- Jeong, Kwari (정과리). 2012b. Why ‘Azaleas’ Is Not a Folk Song but a Modern Poem (2). In *Munhakgwan*, No. 55 (Winter): 39–42.
- Jeong, Myeong-Kyo (정명교). 2006. Before the Expansion of the Lyricism in Korean Modern Poetry. In *The Korean Poetics Studies*, No. 16: 49–80.

- Kim, Eok (김억). 1935. "Reminiscences of the Ill-Fated Poet Kim Sowol (4)." In *The Chosun Joongang Daily*, January 25: 2.
- Kim, Jong-hoon (김종훈). 2011. The mechanism of Emotion Spurt shown in Kim So-wol's Cho-hon. In *The Study of Korean Language and literature*, No. 39: 387-409.
- Kim, Sowol (김소월). 2007. *The Complete Poems of Kim Sowol*. ed. Youngmin Kwon, Seoul: Munhaksasang.
- Kim, Yun-Jeong (김윤정). 2015. The Study about the Humanistic Metaphysics in the Yuchihwan's Literature. In *Hanminjok Emunhak*, Vol. 69: 477-509.
- Ku In Mo, (구인모). 2002. A Study on Metrics of the Modern Korean Poetry: Focusing on Kim, So-wol. In *Journal of Korean Studies*, Vol. 28: 163-183.
- Kwon, Hui-cheol (권희철). 2009. A topographical map of question and answer about 'Who am I?' in 1920's Korean literature - focussing on an aspect of relation poems of 'fire festival' line and poems of Kimsowol. In *The Journal of Modern Korean Literature*, Vol. 29: 141-173.
- Lee, Hye-won (이혜원). 2006. The Meaning and Aspects of "Place" in the Kim Sowol's poetry. In *The Leaned Society of sanghur's Literature*, Vol. 17: 79-106.
- Lee, Kwang-ho (이광호). 2013. Regard subject and aesthetic modernity shown in poetry of Kim So-wol. In *The Journal for Oversea Korean Literature*, No. 11: 125-148.
- Nam, Ki-Hyeok (남기혁). 2010. The Modern and The Anti-Modern Consciousness In Kim So-Wol's Poems. In *The Korean Poetics Studies*, No. 11: 219-261.
- Oh, Sae-young (오세영). 1999. The Nihil and the Will in Yu Chi Hwan's Poetry. In *The Korean Poetics Studies*, No. 2: 224-251
- Shim, Jae-hui (심재휘). 2017. The Modernity of Space in Sowol's Poetry. In *The Studies of Korean Literature*, Vol. 56: 423-456.
- Sohng, Ki-han (송기한). 2009. The Study of Meaning of Infinity In the Poetry of Yu Chi-Whan. The Research Society of Language and Literature, Vol. 60: 261-282.

A STUDY ON THE VOICES OF RESISTANCE IN KOREAN POETRY UNDER JAPANESE COLONIAL RULE

MARLENA OLEKSIUK, Assistant Professor

Institute of Classical, Mediterranean and Oriental Studies,

University of Wrocław, Poland

marlena.oleksiuk@uwr.edu.pl

ORCID 0000-0002-0114-9259

Abstract: The Japanese occupation of Korea (1910–1945) marked one of the darkest periods in the nation’s history, as Koreans endured political repression, cultural suppression, and constant fear under colonial rule. Beyond the physical struggles of survival—forced labor, sexual slavery, and the eradication of the Korean language—Koreans sought alternative forms of resistance. Among the most powerful of these was literature. This paper examines how prominent writers such as Yi Sang, Yi Sanghwa, Yi Yuksa, Yoon Dongju, Kim Sowol, and Yi Hyoseok used poetry and prose to express resistance, preserve cultural identity, and sustain hope for independence. Although these writers did not live to witness liberation, their works became enduring voices of defiance and continue to shape the cultural memory of modern Korea (Lee Peter H. 1974:161-193).

Keywords: Korean literature; resistance writing; Japanese colonial rule; cultural identity; modern Korean history; Yi Sang; Yi Sanghwa; Yi Yuksa; Yoon Dongju; Kim Sowol.

일본 식민 통치 하 한국 시에서 저항의 목소리 연구

초록: 본 논문은 일제 강점기(1910~1945)에 대해 다룬다. 당시 한국인들은 식민지 지배 하에서 정치적 억압, 문화적 억압, 그리고 끊임없는 공포에 시달렸다. 생존을 위한 육체적 투쟁(강제 노역, 성노예, 한글 말살)을 넘어 한국인들은 대안적인 저항 방식을 모색하였다. 그 중에서도 가장 강력한 저항은 문학이었다. 이 글은 이상, 이상화, 이육사, 윤동주, 김소월과 같은 저명한 작가들이 시와 산문을 통해 저항을 표현하고, 문화적 정체성을 보존하며, 독립에 대한 희망을 어떻게 이어갔는지 살펴본다. 비록 이 작가들은 해방을 직접 목격하지는 못했지만, 그들의 작품은 저항의 목소리로 남았고, 현대 한국의 문화적 기억을 형성해 왔다.

키워드: 한국 문학; 저항 문학; 일제 식민 통치; 문화적 정체성; 한국 현대사, 이상, 이상화, 이육사, 윤동주, 김소월.

BADANIE NAD GŁOSAMI OPORU W POEZJI KOREANSKIEJ W OKRESIE JAPOŃSKIEJ OKUPACJI

Abstrakt: Japońska okupacja Korei (1910–1945) stanowiła jeden z najciemniejszych okresów w historii narodu, w którym Koreańczycy doświadczali represji politycznych, ucisku kulturowego i ciągłego strachu pod rządami kolonialnymi. Poza fizyczną walką o przetrwanie – pracą przymusową, niewolnictwem seksualnym i wykorzenianiem języka koreańskiego – Koreańczycy poszukiwali alternatywnych form oporu. Jedną z najpotężniejszych z nich była literatura. Niniejszy artykuł analizuje, jak wybitni pisarze, tacy jak Yi Sang, Yi Sanghwa, Yi Yuksa, Yoon Dongju i Kim Sowol, wykorzystywali poezję i prozę do wyrażania oporu, zachowania tożsamości kulturowej i podtrzymywania nadziei na niepodległość. Choć pisarze ci nie dożyli wyzwolenia, ich dzieła stały się trwałymi głosami buntu i nadal kształtują pamięć kulturową współczesnej Korei.

Słowa-klucze: Literatura koreańska; pisarstwo ruchu oporu; japońskie rządy kolonialne; tożsamość kulturowa; współczesna historia Korei; Yi Sang; Yi Sanghwa; Yi Yuksa; Yoon Dongju; Kim Sowol.

1. Introduction

The purpose of this research is to explore how Korean writers under

Japanese occupation used literature as a form of resistance and national expression. By examining the biographies and writings of several key authors, this study demonstrates how literature became a vital medium for sustaining cultural identity and hope during a period of political repression and cultural suppression. In 1910, the last Emperor of Korea, King Sunjong, signed an annexation treaty that created the General Government of Korea. From that time Korea was a colony completely subordinate to Japan- a situation that lasted until the end of World War II in 1945, when Japan's political situation changed radically. The dominant country, calling itself the “elder brother of Korea”, implemented a series of changes across the Korean Peninsula beginning in 1910. These restrictions affected various areas of life, including severely limiting Koreans' access to education, introducing school uniforms resembling military attire, and restricting Koreans' ability to hold public office or work in government agencies. Only Japanese people had access to these spheres, and the only Koreans who had a chance for social advancement were collaborators or those who had become Japanese-educated. Japanese occupation of the Korean peninsula lasted 35 years. During this period, Koreans had lived under constant-oppression: Japanese authorities forced Koreans to change their names, they banned the teaching of Korean language at schools, and conscripted many Korean men into the Japanese army. Despite these conditions, the literary spirit of the Korean nation persisted. Korean literature developed under extremely turbulent circumstances. Korean writers contributed to the survival and spiritual salvation of the Korean nation, often at great personal risk, including the threat of death and persecution (Rurarz, 2005: 327–351).

“(…) the pressure to become “Japanese” took place under the banner of “Japan and Korea as one body” (naisen ittai). For example, full-blown imperialization policies (kōminka seisaku) such as forced name changes from Korean to Japanese (sōshi kaimei) or “worshipping the Imperial Palace from afar” (kyūjō yōhai) were required rituals for becoming “Japanese.” Because these policies affected all Koreans, in contrast to the expropriation of land or labor-power, they constituted the first form of directly experienced Japanese rule for most people”(Rurarz 2005: 327-351).

This research focuses on Korean literature produced under Japanese colonial rule (1910–1945), a period during which Koreans were deprived of basic freedom, including assembly, association, the press, and speech. The colonial government employed education as a

key tool of assimilation, banning the teaching of Korean language and history while enforcing instruction in Japanese. Within this context, two primary literary approaches emerged: one that maintained the didactic tradition of enlightenment literature as a form of adaptation and resistance, and another that embraced literature as autonomous art, influenced by Western aesthetics. Both approaches grappled with themes of separation, alienation, and identity under colonial oppression. The study also acknowledges the brief rise and swift suppression of Korean women writers during this period. By situating these developments within the larger framework of colonial domination, this research highlights how Korean literature simultaneously reflected and resisted the realities of occupation. This research employs historical-literary analysis, combining close reading of texts with historical contextualization. Primary works of the authors are examined alongside secondary scholarship on Korean history and literature. A qualitative approach is adopted, aiming to interpret symbolic language, thematic structures, and the role of censorship, translation, and colonial education in shaping literary production in the history of Korea (Rurarz 2005: 327-351). The study draws upon literary theory; according to Alain Viala “a theory is a set or more precisely a chain of concepts organized in such a way as to describe a phenomenon” (Viala 2006). In Viala’s view, the literary field is an important connector between social life and literature. In the context of the colonial era in Korea (1910-1945), this perspective is particularly significant, as literature reflected the social realities of Koreans during that time. The study draws upon primary source – poetry produced during the Japanese occupation – as well as scholarship analyzing their cultural and social significance. Given that poetry was one of the preferred genres of the period due to its accessibility and immediacy, particular attention is paid to how this form captured the social problems of the colonial era. The analysis further considers how Japanese authorities sought to efface Korean culture by controlling education, language, and public life, and how writers responded to these pressures through literature. Close reading of selected texts allows for the identification of recurrent themes such as nationalism, identity, and resistance (Seth 2006). This study focuses on Korean poetry written during the Japanese colonial period (1910–1945), examining selected poems and biographical details of five major writers – Yi Sang, Yi Sanghwa, Yi Yuksa, Yoon Dongju, and Kim Sowol to illustrate broader themes of resistance, resilience, and identity. While not comprehensive of all literary activity during this time, these writers represent the most prominent voices of the era”. (Seth 2006;

Haggard 1997: 867-881).

“What is the authenticity, autonomy, of a nation, national consciousness, when the Other is its unwanted, unacknowledged, origin and the continuing target of appeal?” (Lac 2020: 3).

Several guiding questions frame the study:

1. Why were these particular five writers chosen for analysis?
2. How do the literary “voices” of these writers embody resistance?

3. How does aesthetic resistance – that is, the pursuit of artistic autonomy – relate to political or nationalist resistance, and how do these dimensions converge under the shared concept of “resistance”?

The five writers, who were active during the Japanese occupation contributed to dissemination of literature, which expressed resistance and highlighted national identity. Because literary activity was under strict control by the occupying forces, all these writers lived in danger and risked their lives. Unfortunately, none of them survived to see Korea’s independence, often dying under unexplained circumstances. That is the reason why the author of this paper chose to focus on these literary figures. Their courage, strength, and sacrifice for national resistance must be remembered and continually highlighted.

“Aesthetics becomes a tool for reflection, intuition, and practices of power and resistance because aesthetics allows us to deal with the possible, the counter-factual, the ideal, the implausible, and it allows through accentuation, exaggeration, but also through idealized representation, to understand the essence and accidents of a problem as they are experienced in human subjectivity”(Teo 2015: 303-310).

Aesthetic resistance in the humanistic fields of art, literature, and film consists of influencing people’s thinking without the use of physical force. It provides mental support and encouragement, particularly in times of oppression. In the context of colonial Korea, aesthetic resistance is reflected in literature. This study addresses the questions: How do the literary “voices” of these writers embody resistance? What subjects did they explore using metaphors and allegories?

2. The voices of resistance

To better understand resistance literature, it is advantageous to examine the biographies of selected authors and analyze some of their works. The first one, who did not live to see the country's independence was Yi Sang (이상, 1910–1937), born Kim Hae-Gyeong. He produced a body of work during the Japanese occupation of Korea that included poetry, short stories, and essays. His education was conducted exclusively in Japanese, which influenced his early writing; many of his poems from the early 1930s were written in that language. In 1931, he was diagnosed with tuberculosis, and references to illness appear throughout his texts from this period. His works also address contemporary political events, including the Mukden Incident of 1931 and subsequent Japanese expansion into Manchuria.

The findings show that literature produced during the Japanese occupation served multiple roles: preserving national identity, expressing despair and resistance, and offering hope for eventual liberation. Yi Sang experimented with modernist aesthetics, blending illness and surrealism as metaphors for colonial oppression (Lee, Peter H., 2009). After training as an architect, Yi Sang briefly practiced in that field before poor health forced his resignation. He later managed a coffee shop where the Korean writers' group Guinhoe (구인회) convened. His involvement with the group led to the publication of his first works in Korean. Toward the end of his life, Yi Sang was employed at a printing house that produced the sole issue of Guinhoe: Poetry and Fiction, the group's journal. In his final years, Yi Sang continued to publish poems in Korean, along with short stories and essays. Both his early and later writings reflect influences from avant-garde movements of the early twentieth century, particularly surrealism and Dada. At the end of his life, he was arrested by the imperial police in Tokyo, who had power to detain any Korean they deemed suspicious without evidence. His respiratory illness, incurable at the time, worsened in jail, and he died soon after being released (Lee peter H. 1974; Ogarek-Czój 2007). He was a prominent writer of colonized Korea and was using surrealism both as a means to escape a world full of pain and to portray the darker realities of life during Korea's occupation. One of his most known works is the novel *Wings* (날개), written in 1936, which employs an allegory of colonial persecution, describing the inner world of a first-person narrator, an isolated individual who lives in a world full of frustration in a dimly lit room, symbolizing the experience of living

under colonial rule. The protagonist is portrayed as a hermit who seems to abandon all hope for a better existence. Themes of isolation, loneliness, and sadness are also evident in his poem Flowering Tree (꽃나무).

Flowering Tree

“Dead center of an open field there is a flowering tree. In the neighborhood

not even one That flowering tree with as much ardor as it thought about its

thought-about tree opened ardently its blossoms and stood It cannot go to

the tree it thinks about Wildly I fled For the sake of one flowering tree I

really went that far to make such uncommon mimicry.” (Korean Literature Today).

The flowering tree in the title feels isolated, unable to reach other trees, yet dreams of a better life in their company. This can symbolize an abandoned country- bereft of hope and assistance – yet still holding onto a fragile dream of freedom. The interpretation suggests that one day this flowering tree may finally attain its dream.

Joyelle McSweeney and Jack Jung offer an illuminating perspective:

“The immobility of the tree is radiant; the tree is as much flaring as flowering and it drives the speaker to Art, the ‘weird mimicry,’ rare replications, the ultimate place, the mise en abyme, one guesses that he, too, is radiantly immobilized in fire like the tree. (...) Korea in 1930s was a colonized nation suffering under the Japanese imperial regime. Its poets and writers were constantly censored, jailed, tortured, and disappeared. Yi Sang came barreling into this scene with his surreal, confessional, experimental, and secretly political poems. The conditions of Yi Sang’s time are particular but not so long gone, and his language echoes with a ring of truth in our present moment, in both private and public spheres.” (McSweeney and Jung, 2020: 224)

As they notice, Yi Sang tried to show the alienation and hopelessness that permeated the colonial condition of his country. It is needed to highlight that he spent all his life in colonial country in a time

of Japanese censorship and political turmoil. His surrealistic approach was a tool to speak to an audience living under national trauma.

The next prominent author of that time was Yi Sang-hwa (이상화, 1901–1943), also known as Lee Sang-hwa. A nationalist poet active during the Japanese colonial era, Yi published under several pen names, including Muryang, Sanghwa, and Baega. He participated in the March 1st Movement of 1919, which sought to restore Korean sovereignty. In 1921 he traveled to Japan to study French literature but returned to Korea in 1923 after the Great Kantō earthquake. In the early 1920s, he joined the White Tide (Baekjo) circle along with Hong Sayong, Park Jonghwa, Park Yeonghui, Kim Gijin, and others, and began his career in poetry with the publication of the poems *Joy of the Corrupt Age* (말세의 희탄) *Double Death* (이중의 사망), and *To my bedroom* (나의 침실로) in the journal “Torch” (거화). His early work, highly romantic and prose-like, explored themes of decadence and narcissism. However, beginning in 1925, Yi shifted from romanticism to overt nationalist poetry. His later poems employed natural imagery and individual suffering as indirect expressions of opposition to Japanese rule (Lee, 1974; Digital Library of Korean Literature).

His most famous poem is *Does Spring Come to These Stolen Fields?* (1926):

Does spring come to these stolen fields?

“Does spring come to this land no more our own,

to these forfeited fields?

Bathed in the sun I go as if in a dream along a lane

that cuts across paddy-fields like parted hair

to where the blue sky and the green field meet.

You mute heaven and silent fields,

I do not feel I have come here on my own;

tell me if I am driven by you or by some hidden force.

...What am I looking for? Soul,

my blind soul, endlessly darting

like children at play by the river,

answer me: where am I going?

Filled with the odor of grass, compounded

of green laughter and green sorrow,

limping along, I walk all day, as if possessed

by the spring devil:

for these are stolen fields, and our spring is stolen (...)." (McCann 2004: 47-50)

The imagery of “stolen fields” clearly symbolizes Korea under occupation. The rhetorical question in the title – Does spring come to these stolen fields? – asks whether independence will ever return. There is a beautiful dream of freedom, what means beautiful country, where there is cloudless, blue sky, silent fields, children play by the river, everything could be so beautiful, the hero seems to be possessed by lust of feeling spring. Spring comes after dark, long winter with heavy snow, and winter is always hard for people to survive. Spring is something that people wait for, like fresh air in stuffy place. But, the hero of the poem loses his hope, because his fields are stolen, as his spring is. “He delivered his liberation message through his poems.” (Deshan 2022). Spring becomes a metaphor for freedom after a long, harsh winter of colonial suffering. The speaker longs for renewal, but his hope falters because both his land and his spring are stolen. As Deshan (2022) notes, Yi Sang-hwa delivered his liberation message through poetic symbolism.

The dream of freedom also appears in poems written by Yi Yuksa (이육사; real name 이원록: Yi Won-rok; 1904–1944), one of Korea’s most celebrated resistance poets. Born Yi Won-rok, he joined the clandestine independence organization Uiyeoldan (의열단) in 1925 and later engaged with independence groups in Beijing, including the Korean Provisional Government (Encyclopedia of Korean Culture). As one of his country's most famous poets, he and his works symbolize the spirit of the anti-Japanese resistance of the 1930s and 1940s. In 1930 he published his first poem, *Horse* (말), in the Joseon Ilbo under the name Yi Hwal. Later that year he signed an essay with the pseudonym “Yi Hwal, Daegu 264” (the figures being pronounced in Korean ‘이 육 사-yi yuk sa’) derived from his prisoner identification number. From this,

he developed the pen name Yi Yuksa, combining the standard character for his family name with characters meaning “land” (육지) and “history” (역사) (Encyclopedia of Korea Culture). Between 1931 and 1933 Yi continued his studies in China while strengthening his connections with resistance organizations. He returned to Korea in 1935, when he began to publish poems and critical essays in journals such as *New Joseon* and *Poetics*. Over the following years he wrote actively while maintaining covert involvement in nationalist activities. He was reportedly arrested multiple times, though without long-term imprisonment. Yi’s most widely known poem, *Green Grapes* (청포도) was published in 1939. By 1941 he exhibited symptoms of lung disease and spent several months hospitalized. In April 1943 he traveled to Beijing, where he engaged in activities connected to resistance, including efforts to arrange weapons transport into Korea. Later that year he was arrested and transferred to the Japanese Consulate General’s military police prison in Beijing. He died there on January 16, 1944. After his death, efforts to preserve his literary legacy began with the publication of a collection of approximately twenty poems by his brother in October 1946. A second edition followed in 1956, and an authoritative edition was issued in 1974 (Lee Peter H. 1974; Korean Literature House Association). One of the most known poems of Yi Yuksa is *Green Grapes* (청포도).

Green Grapes:

“The July of my hometown,

The season of ripening green grapes

Whisperings of an approaching village epoch

The far-off sky dreams and little by little sets in

The blue sea beneath the sky bares her bosom

And the ship in white sail is gently pushed in

The guest whom I await, with body so weary

Draped in grape-green topcoat, said he would call on me

If I could but meet him to pick and partake of these grapes

Getting my two hands dripping wet would be such a pleasure

On our table, my child, place the whitest ramie serviette

Upon a silver tray.” (McCann 2004: 60-64)

Like *Does Spring Come to These Stolen Fields?* by Yi Sang-hwa, the description of July in his hometown is so beautiful, that the reader is transported to a vivid world, sees wonderful images, and feels a sense of delight. The poem is full of utopian description like: “blue sea beneath the sky, ship in white sail, place the whitest ramie serviette Upon a silver”. The mysterious “guest... draped in grape-green topcoat” may symbolize freedom itself. When freedom comes, everything will be beautiful. Yi Sang-hwa uses metaphors to cheer up his audience, to transfer them into a better world, to give hope for a better tomorrow. Tragically, the author died a year before Korea regained the independence. Both his early and later writings reflect influences from avant-garde movements of the early twentieth century, particularly surrealism and Dada.

Yi Sanghwa and Yi Yuksa developed nationalist poetic voices that used natural imagery to mask political resistance. Yoon Dongju’s lyric poetry captured personal anguish and collective struggle, while Kim Sowol revitalized traditional folk-song forms to convey loss and longing (Lee Peter H. 1974).

Yun Dong-ju or Yoon Dong-ju, (윤동주, 1917 –1945) was a Korean poet during the final years of Japanese colonial rule. He began writing poetry in the 1930s and selected nineteen poems for a collection he intended to publish under the title *Sky, Wind, Star, and Poem* (하늘과 바람과 별과 시). The collection was not published during his lifetime. In 1942 Yun enrolled at Doshisha University in Kyoto, Japan. Arrested in 1943 in connection with independence activities, he died in Fukuoka Prison in 1945, likely due to medical experimentation about six months before Korea’s liberation on August 15, 1945 (Ogarek-Czój, 2007). His book, *The Sky, the Wind, the Stars, and the Poem* (하늘과 바람과 별과 시), was published after death. He was recognized as one of the conscientious intellectuals in the latter half of the Japanese colonial period, and his poems were based on criticism and self-reflection of the Japanese colonial government and the Joseon Governor-General. Yun’s poetry is notable for the childlike persona of his narrators, sensitive awareness of a lost hometown, and an unusual scapegoat mentality deriving from a sense of shame at not being able to lead a conscientious life in a period of gloomy social realities. Among

his early works is *Life and Death* (삶과 죽음) written between 1934 and 1936, his period of literary apprenticeship. It describes the conflict between life and death, or light and darkness, but its poetic framework is more or less crude. From 1937 onwards, however, his poems reveal ruthless introspection and anxiety about the dark realities of the times. The poems of this later period reach clear literary fruition in terms of their reflection on the inner self and their recognition of nationalist realities, as embodied in the poet's own experiences. In particular, they evince a steely spirit that attempts to overcome anxiety, loneliness, and despair and to surmount contemporary realities through hope and courage (Ogarek-Czój 2007).

No tomorrow:

“They repeatedly say, «Tomorrow, tomorrow».

I ask them, «When does it come?»

And they reply, «When it dawns, tomorrow comes.»

I search for the new day myself.

When I awake and look around

I find no tomorrow.

Rather I find the today

that has already come.

My folks!

There is no tomorrow.” (Lee Tae-don 1999)

His poem *No tomorrow* (내일은 없다) reflects profound despair and gives a rhetorical question «When does it come?» when waiting for freedom. The poem is steeped in hopelessness and portrays the grim reality of colonial rule, along with Yun’s deep sense of guilt and powerlessness. The poem is sad, does not give any hope, it highlights the difficult situation of his country. He shows a gloomy reality and is a self-reflection of the Japanese colonialism in Korea and lost hometown. As Lac (2020) observes, Yun’s lyrical introspection

seems to foreshadow his own tragic death at the hands of colonial violence:

“Just months before Japan’s unconditional surrender to the Allies and relinquishment of control over Korea and other colonies, Yoon died in Fukoka, a political prisoner wrongly accused of underground political activities against Japanese rule. Yoon’s poetry, emphatically situated within the historical context and delicately modulated by youthful pathos, almost seems to have augured his death, whose tragic appeal lies precisely in the absurdity of the portrait of a young, and by all accounts extremely sensitive, man of literature hounded by colonial violence.”

Kim Sowol (김소월, 1902–1934), born Kim Jeong-sik, is a foundational figure in early modern Korean poetry. His only collection, *Azaleas* (진달래꽃), published in 1925, became a classic of Korean literature (Lee Kyung-ho, 1996). After graduating from High School, he taught for a while in Gwaksan (곽산) Province on the north and then moved to Japan to study at a college of commerce. During this period, he published poems in literary journals such as “*Gaebyok*”. He returned to Korea before completing his studies due to family financial difficulties (Lee Kyung-ho 1996: 265). Kim later managed a branch office of the “*Dong-a Ilbo*” (동아일보) newspaper in Gusong (구성) but left the position after a short time. He continued to publish poems in journals including *Yongdae* (영대). He died in 1934; the cause of death was uncertain but was regarded as suicide at the time. In 1935 his teacher, Anso, published a posthumous volume of Kim’s selected poems accompanied by a memoir and critical essay (Lee Kyung-ho 1996: 265, McCann 2004).

According to Jeong Meyong Kyo “The titular poem “Azaleas” has long been recited as a classic example of Korean poetry, achieving a maximum level of emotional density.”(Jeong 2019: 9).

The title poem, *Azaleas*, is renowned for its emotional density (Jeong, 2019):

“When you leave,
weary of me,
without a word I shall gently let you go.

From Mount Yak

in Yongbyon,

Marlena OLEKSIUK: A Study on the Voices of Resistance...

I shall gather armfuls of azaleas and scatter them on your way.

Step by step

on the flowers placed before you

tread lightly, softly as you go.

When you leave,

weary of me,

though I die, I'll not let one tear fall."(Lee Peter H. 1990: 29).

Azaleas in Korean culture symbolize resilience and the arrival of spring – renewal after hardship. Thus, the speaker's act of spreading azaleas before a departing lover may symbolize the Korean nation's endurance in the face of separation from its homeland.

Another notable poem, *Gasiri*, echoes themes of loss:

Gasiri

"Are you going away, going away? Are you leaving me and going away?

How shall I live? Are you leaving me and going away?

I would like to hold you back, but I fear you might not return

I sadly let you go, so please return just as you go." (Jeong 2019: 9).

In the poem *Gasiri* (가사리), the speaker is in 1st person "I", who is acquiescent to destiny, fear that "you" will not return. It is interpreted as "I" being the nation, and "you" as the independent country. Jeong notices that "Kim Sowol's poems were being posited and analyzed as the most exemplary cases amid a wave of 'nationalistic perspective'"(Jeong 2019: 9). Jeong's paper also highlights that "the methodological mechanism of the parting is rooted in the belief that the lover will never return. In other words, the poem is unaware of a 'separation' – and that aspect signifies that the poem lies on the far side of modernity, for modernity starts from such a separation"(Jeong 2019: 9). The separation is also noticeable among the Korean nation, because they become separated from their land, and it's no longer their own.

„Kim So-wol effectively portrays Han in his poem *Azaleas* as the poem provokes an image of a woman, who is in absolute despair due to her separation from a lover, but who conceals such feelings by spreading azaleas on his way. Spreading flowers is an act of blessing, an act contrary to the despondent situation that the narrator and her lover are facing. However, the azalea flower is not like any other flower. A wildflower found only in the deepest areas of secondary forests that were previously destroyed due to wildfires or deforestation, azaleas are known for their endurance and long lifespan, as described in *The Plant Book of Korea*. These characteristics of azaleas suggest that Kim envisioned the female voice used in his poems to be that of a resilient figure faced with tragedy; determined not to outwardly show her weaknesses and perhaps even indicating that her love will survive its present misfortune and prove to be eternal”(Lee Chae-wan 2018).

It is obvious that Kim Sowol chose the azalea to show determination and endurance of Korean nation, this metaphor is used to boost the morale of an oppressed nation. Kim Sowol’s use of Han – the deep sorrow and perseverance characteristic of Korean emotional experience – strengthens this interpretation (Lee Chae-wan, 2018). His poems evoke the longing of a people “who had their land” but lost it to colonial occupation.

“Only think, if we had our land, our own to plow!

Instead we wander at evening, and in the morning

Earn newer sighs, new lamentations.

- Only Think, If We Had Our Land, Our Own to Plow.” (Lee Chae-wan 2018)

Literal loss of home is visible in this poem, the speaker wrote “we had our land” what is hidden intention to show the disastrous political situation in his country, colonized by Japan. Reading this poem leads to the thought that it is about Koreans, who lost their national sovereignty. Kim’s work ultimately reinforced national identity and offered hope to an oppressed people, reminding them that even in suffering, unity and resilience endure.

3. Conclusion

The analysis of the poetry discussed in this paper demonstrates that resistance does not need to be expressed through force or bloodshed; rather, it can be even more powerful when it appeals to people's hearts and minds. The five writers examined here fought not with the sword but with the word. Although they did not live to witness their country's liberation, they offered hope to their fellow Koreans. Each of these writers endured difficult and often tragic lives. Living in a colonized country is akin to living in a prison, and all of them spent their entire lives under such constraints, never experiencing independence. This is the primary reason why they and their works were selected for analysis. Their literature expresses profound sorrow, longing for their homeland, and a deep desire for freedom. Their poetic voices embody resistance and a refusal to accept subjugation within their own country. Open political resistance, expressed explicitly, could result in imprisonment or execution. Therefore, aesthetic resistance required careful self-awareness, strategic subtlety, and exceptional resilience. These writers turned to literary devices that allowed them to criticize colonial oppression indirectly – through metaphor, symbolism, and allegory. Examples include “stolen fields” symbolizing the colonized nation, the “flowering tree” representing hope for the future, and the utopian world in *Green Grapes*, suggesting that all is not yet lost. Yun Dong-ju's poem *No Tomorrow* employs the rhetorical question “When does it come?” as a symbolic invocation of freedom. An illuminating perspective on the poetics of Yun Dong-ju and Yi Yuksa (Yi Won-rok) is provided by Deshan (2022), who argues that:

“Yi Won-Rok and Yon Dong-Ju are the best poets of this period who should be studied, and some other famous poets were named national heroes because their poems strongly expressed the liberation of their motherland from Japan” (Deshan 2022).

Symbolism is also central to Kim Sowol's work, with the azaleas representing resilience. The Japanese occupation of Korea was marked by severe repression; yet it also gave rise to some of the most powerful voices of resistance in Korean literature. Some writers participated in uprisings or organized ambushes, while others resisted through their writings. This literary form of resistance strengthened morale and sustained the people's spirit. Resistance literature became both a means of survival and a form of battle – one that proved

indestructible because of the Koreans' unbreakable will. Despite the 35-year occupation, Koreans maintained a persistent hope for independence. Tragically, many of these writers died before independence was regained. Several died under unexplained circumstances; some perished in prison, such as Yun Dong-ju and Yi Yuksa; others died from illness, such as Yi Sang and Yi Sang-hwa. In the case of Kim Sowol, the cause of death remains uncertain, though suicide was suspected at the time. Despite their premature and often violent deaths, the authors examined here left behind works that continue to testify to the resilience of the Korean people. Their literature offered not only consolation but also defiance, shaping a cultural memory rooted in endurance and the quest for independence. Their legacy endures and remains a cornerstone of modern Korean identity.

4. Outlook

Further research should expand on comparative studies between Korean colonial literature and other colonized nations' literary movements, such as those in Africa, India, or Eastern Europe. Additionally, more interdisciplinary approaches integrating history, translation studies, and cultural memory could deepen understanding of how literature sustained resistance across generations.

Conflict of interest statement: The author declares no known competing interests.

Bibliography

- Cune, George McAfee. 1947. Korea: The First Year of Liberation. In *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 20/1: 3–17.
- Deshan, Ranathungage Saminda. 2022. Poems in resistance in the early colonial period in Korea, through Yi Won-Rok and Yun Dong-Ju poets. <http://repository.kln.ac.lk/server/api/core/bitstreams/9fe7f441-fbab-4204-93ba-f84b0df7f0b5/content> (accessed November 11, 2025).

- Encyclopedia of Korea Culture
<https://encykorea.aks.ac.kr/Article/E0045444> (accessed November 10, 2025).
- Haggard, Stephan, David Kang, and Chung-in Moon. 1997. Japanese Colonialism and Korean Development: A Critique. In *World Development*, Vol. 25/6, 867–881.
- Jeong, Myeong Kyo (정명교). 2019. An event at the dawn of Modern Korean Poetry: Kim Sowol’s “Azaleas”. In *International Journal of Korean Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol. 5, 7–20.
- Kim, Jeong-Young (김정영). 2018. The Written Voice of Korea. In *Kieli, koulutus ja yhteiskunta. The written voice of Korea — Suomi* (accessed October 28, 2025).
- Kim, Ok (김옥). 1935. *The Unfortunate Poet Who Died Young*. Korean Literature House Association
<http://www.munhakwan.com/introduce.html?html=greeting.html> (accessed October 31, 2025).
- Korean Literature House Association
http://www.munhakwan.com/file_view.html?uid=521 (accessed September 8, 2025).
- Korean Literature Today. YI SANG. 1999 Vol. 4, No.2. <https://anthony.sogang.ac.kr/klt/99summer/yisang.htm> (accessed November 4, 2025).
- Lac, Astrid. 2020. From National History to Subject in Writing: Reading the Colonial Korean Poet Yoon Dong-ju with the Zainichi Korean Writer Yi Yang-ji. In *Postcolonial Text*. Yonsei University. Vol 15/2, 1–18.
- Lee Tae-dong (이태동). 1999. “There is no tomorrow.” *Korean Literature Today*. No. 4/1. <https://anthony.sogang.ac.kr/klt/99spring/index.htm> (accessed September 20, 2025).
- Lee, Chae-wan (이채완). 2018. The Most Beloved Poet of Korea, Kim So-wol. In *Yonsei Annals. The Most Beloved Poet of Korea, Kim So-wol < Cover Story < Cover Story < 기사본문 - The Yonsei Annals*, <https://annals.yonsei.ac.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=1896> (accessed September 15, 2025).
- Lee, Ki-baik (이기백). 1984. *A New History of Korea*. Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center.
- Lee, Kyung-ho (이경호), Kim, So-Wol (김소월). 1996. *Who's Who in Korean Literature*. Seoul: Hollym.
- Lee, Peter H. (ed). 1990. *Modern Korean Literature*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Lee, Peter H. 1974. *Poems from Korea: From the Earliest Era to the Present*. London: Routledge.
- Lee, Peter H. 2009. *A History of Korean Literature*. Cambridge:

- Cambridge University Press.
- McCann, David R. 2004. *The Columbia Anthology of Modern Korean Poetry*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- McSweeney Joyelle, Jung Jack, Nakayasu Sawako. 2020. *Yi Sang: Selected works*. Wave Books.
- Myers, Ramon H., and Mark R. Peattie. 1984. *The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895–1945*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Ogarek-Czój, Halina. 2007. *Literatura Koreańska XX Wieku [Korean Literature of 20th century]*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Akademickie Dialog.
- Park, Yuha (박유하). 2008. Victims of Japanese Imperial Discourse: Korean Literature Under Colonial Rule. In *Asia-Pacific Journal*. Transl. Gavin Walker. Vol. 6/10, 1–20.
- Rhee, Moon-Jhong (이문중). 1992. Language Planning in Korea Under the Japanese Colonial Administration 1910–1945. In *Language Culture and Curriculum*. Vol. 5, 87-97.
- Rurarz, Joanna. 2005. *Historia Korei [A History of Korea]*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Akademickie Dialog.
- Seth, Michael J. 2006. *A Concise History of Korea: From the Neolithic Period through the Nineteenth Century*. Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Seth, Michael J. 2016. *A Concise History of Premodern Korea*. 2nd ed. Vol. 1. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Teo Thomas. 2015. Essay on an Aesthetics of Resistance. In: James Cresswell, Andres Haye, Antonia Larrain, Mandy Morgan and Gavin Sullivan (Eds.). *Dialogue and debate in the making of theoretical psychology*, Concord, ON: Captus Press, 303–310.
- Viala, Alain. 2006. The Theory of the Literary Field and the Situation of the First Modernity. In *Theory and the Early Modern*. Edinburgh University Press. Vol. 29/1, 80–93.
- Yi Sang-hwa (이상화). *Digital Library of Korean Literature*. Writers ABC List. 2025. <https://library.ltikorea.or.kr/writer/201112.6> (accessed April 1, 2025).

**A COLONIAL INTELLECTUAL'S
PROJECT AND ITS LIMITATIONS IN
TRANSCENDING 'NATION'- FOCUSING
ON JANG HYUK-JU'S NOVELS THE MAN
WHO WAS DIVIDED (1933) AND
PILGRIMAGE (1943)**

SEOK-YEOL CHOI, PhD student

Department of Korean Language and Literature
Yonsei University, Republic of Korea
205 Chungsong-gwan, 1 Yonseidae-gil,
Heungeop-myeonm Wonju-si, Gangwondo,
chltjrdufl1@naver.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-4571-568X>

Abstract: This article is to illuminate the compositional principle and meaning of his novel, which could not be revealed due to the recognition of being a 'pro-Japanese' writer, through re-reading of Jang Hyuk-ju's novel published during the colonial period. In other words, it is to try to find out what topics he consistently pursued through writing novels and how he chose to create texts for this purpose. In a situation where even individual desires were suppressed and controlled, colonial intellectuals participated in the production of the discourse while expanding the universalist or inclusive dimension of Japanese nationalism as much as possible to secure their own stable position. The same is true of Jang Hyuk-ju, who had creative activities in the imperial-colonial system. Therefore, if the literary artists' actions were born out of an active and independent attitude in the antagonism against the imperial Japanese system, what should be noted is their internal logic formed to cope with this situation.

In other words, the important thing in interpreting those who are interpreted and judged by the standards of pro-Japanese/anti-Japanese, cooperation/resistance at the end of the colonial period is not to pay attention to the result of the action, but to the 'process' of how to deal with the period. This is to carefully examine the question of why 'pro-Japanese literature' committed such 'blindness' if it was 'historical blindness', or whether they (authors with pro-Japanese literature) thought that 'pro-Japanese' was not 'historical blindness', or if not, what 'historical purpose' is at work there.

Keywords: Koreans in Japan, Jang Hyuk-ju, liberation, defeat war, colony, Imperial Japan

**‘민족’을 초월하기 위한 한 식민지 지식인의 기획과 한계:
장혁주 소설 <분기한 자>(1933)와 <순례>(1943)를 중심으로**

초록: 이 글은 식민지 시기에 발표된 장혁주 소설의 재독을 통해 ‘친일’ 작가라는 인식으로 인해 밝혀지지 못했던 그의 소설의 구성 원리와 그 의미를 조명하는 데 있다. 다시 말해, 그가 소설 쓰기를 통해 일관되게 추구했던 주제는 무엇이며, 이를 위해서 어떠한 방식의 텍스트 창작을 택했는가 하는 것을 궁구해보고자 하는 것이다. 개인의 욕망마저도 억압·제어 당하는 상황 속에서 식민지 지식인들은 스스로의 안정적인 위치를 확보하기 위해 일본 내셔널리즘의 보편주의적이거나 포용적인 차원을 최대한 확장시키면서 그 담론 생산에 참여했다. 제국-식민지 체제에서 창작 활동을 했던 장혁주 역시 이와 마찬가지로이다. 그렇기 때문에, 문학가들의 행위가 제국 일본의 체제와의 길항 속에서 능동적이고 주체적인 태도에서 탄생한 것이라면, 주목해야 할 것은 이러한 상황을 대처하기 위해 형성된 그들의 내적 논리이다. 즉, 식민 말기의 친일/반일, 협력/저항의 잣대에서 해석되고 판단되는 이들을 해석하는 데 있어 중요한 것은, 행위의 결과가 아니라 그 시기를 어떠한 방식으로 대처해 나가는지 그 ‘과정’에 주목하는 것이다. 이는 “만약 ‘친일 문학’이 ‘역사적 맹목’이라면 왜 그러한 ‘맹목’을 저지르게 되었는지, 혹은 그들(친일 문학을 한 작가들)은 우리가 생각하는 것처럼 ‘친일’이 ‘역사적 맹목’이 아니라고 생각했던 것은 아닌지, 만약 아니라면 거기에 어떤 ‘역사적 합목적’이 작용하고 있는 것인지”에 관한 문제를 신중하게 고찰하는 것이다.

키워드: 제일 조선인, 장혁주, 해방, 패전, 식민지, 제국 일본

1. The Need for Reinterpretation of Jang Hyuk-ju's Novels

The purpose of this paper is to re-examine the works published by Jang Hyuk-ju (장혁주, 1905–1997) during the colonial period. In doing so, it seeks to illuminate the compositional principles and meanings of his novels that have long remained unexplored due to his entrenched reputation as a “pro-Japanese” writer. More specifically, it examines the themes Jang consistently pursued in his colonial-era fiction. It also considers the textual strategies he adopted to realize them.

Since Lim Jong-guk (임종국) published *Pro-Japanese Literature*, Jang Hyuk-ju has been regarded in Korean literary history as a humiliating “pro-Japanese” writer. This perception of him as a cowardly defector has left little room for discussion of his literary merits, even though he was the first “Zainichi” (resident in Japan) writer to flee to Japan and pursue literary activities. Most studies have instead focused on ethical judgments of his pro-Japanese stance. Lim Jeon-hye (임전혜), for example, identifies Jang Hyuk-ju and Kim Sa-ryang as the most representative cases of “humiliation and resistance” during the colonial period, characterizing Jang as a writer who abandoned national pride and embodied shameful corruption. (Lim jeon-hye, 임전혜 1965) Building on this argument, Ahn Woo-sik (안우식) further contends that, whereas Kim Sa-ryang was a nationalist writer from the outset, Jang Hyuk-ju was one who ultimately succumbed to Japanese imperialism. (Ahn woo-sik, 안우식 2005)

Decades after the publication of *Pro-Japanese Literature* as the debate on “pro-Japanese literature” entered a new phase, Kim Jae-yong (김재용), through “Collaboration and Resistance,” sought to narrow the scope of pro-Japanese literature by dividing colonial-period literature into various layers and reconstructing the voluntary internal logic of pro-Japanese literature. (Kim jae-yong, 김재용 2004) Accordingly, Kim Jae-yong also revealed that Jang Hyuk-ju's literature stemmed from issues of ethnic discrimination. However, perhaps because the result-oriented framework of ‘collaboration/resistance’ was already established, he defined Jang Hyuk-ju similarly to previous studies as a writer who collaborated with the Japanese regime by advocating for assimilation based on bloodline.

Meanwhile, Shirakawa Yutaka (시라카와 유타카) points out

that Jang Hyuk-ju studies have proceeded by presenting materials to verify a preconceived notion of him as a 'pro-Japanese writer'. He argues that the primary consideration in studying Jang Hyuk-ju's literature must be recognizing that Jang was an individual situated within the unique environment of a colony, and examining the internal logic through which Jang navigated the imperial-colonial system within that context. (Yutaka Shirakawa, 시라카와 유타카 2009) Although not particularly active recently, empirical research on Jang Hyuk-ju's literature, which had been minimal until now, is being conducted. (Kim joo-hyun, 김주현 2023) Discussions are also underway to illuminate the unique characteristics of Jang Hyuk-ju's literature, which cannot be captured through a nationalist perspective or the dichotomy of cooperation and resistance.

These attempts can be understood as an extension of ongoing reflection on the compulsive tendency to frame and evaluate colonial-period literature within the binary structure of collaboration versus resistance, or pro-Japanese versus anti-Japanese. Yet, despite the accumulation of research seeking to move beyond this cyclical and inertial discourse, the view that Jang Hyuk-ju's literature embodies only unequivocal "pro-Japanese" acts continues to prevail.

It is certainly true that in the late colonial period Jang assimilated Japanese ideology and adopted a cooperative stance toward the regime. Since this position effectively rationalized the inhumane acts of imperialism, ethical critiques of Jang's actions are both significant and valid. However, discussions that focus exclusively on the outcomes of such actions – labeling colonial-era writers as "pro-Japanese" as if they were criminals – risk collapsing the distinction between texts that cooperated with the regime and those that did not. Interpretations that erase the "ambiguous political distance" between texts by the same author carry the danger of reconstructing an entire body of work solely in terms of collaboration or resistance.

Imperial Japan devised various mechanisms to realize the ideal of the "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere," and within these mechanisms it sought to subsume all entities. Korean literature was likewise captured and objectified as regional literature by the empire's legal, political, and military power. Through this technology of capture and subjugation, it was ultimately absorbed into category of imperial literature. What must not be overlooked, however, is that even under conditions where individual desires were suppressed and tightly

controlled, colonial intellectuals actively engaged with the imperial-colonial system in their own distinct ways. They were not merely passive recipients of Japan's colonial discourse. Rather, they participated in its production, seeking to secure their own positions by maximizing the universalistic and inclusive dimensions of Japanese nationalism.

If the actions of these literary figures were grounded in active, autonomous efforts to navigate or even resist the imperial system, then what deserves greater attention is the internal logic they developed in the process. In other words, when evaluating these writers – who are so often judged through the late-colonial framework of pro-Japanese versus anti-Japanese, or collaboration versus resistance – the focus should not be placed solely on the outcome of their actions. Instead, it should rest on the process by which they navigated that historical moment. This calls for a more careful interrogation: If “pro-Japanese literature” represents “historical blindness,” why did such blindness occur? Did these writers truly regard their actions as a form of blindness, as we understand it today? If not, what “historical purpose” did they perceive in those choices?

Korean writers residing in Japan, who traversed imperial-colonial spaces in their creative activities, voiced demands for the abolition of discrimination against Koreans. At the same time, however, they also employed the subject of discriminated Koreans as a tool to gain recognition within the Japanese literary world.

Kim Sa-ryang (김사량), often celebrated as a resistance writer or nationalist fighter, exemplifies this contradiction. While criticizing imperial Japanese ideology, he nonetheless produced works centered on “Koreans” – a theme that resonated with Japanese readers and provided the quickest and most effective path to recognition in the metropolitan literary world.

Jang Hyuk-ju, the central figure of this study, displayed a similar complexity. Influenced by Kurahara Korehito, the theoretical leader of the NAPF, he published *Realm of the Hungry Ghosts* (아귀도) in 1932, a novel that denounced colonial realities and criticized imperial policies. Furthermore, as will be discussed in detail below, even during the wartime regime – when his pro-Japanese activities appear most prominent – Jang simultaneously endorsed the policy of "Unity of Japan and Korea" while sharply criticizing the politicization of the domestic literary world and its alignment with imperial policies.

This raises a crucial question: can we fully capture the image of this Zainichi Korean writer – fractured, contradictory, and thus multilayered and complex – through the simple binary of collaboration and resistance? If his texts both criticized Japan's discriminatory, exclusionary ideology toward Koreans while at the same time aligning with the imperial ideology that produced them and endorsing “Unity of Japan and Korea”, then these acts must be read as part of his internal logic as a literary figure. They constituted his strategy for coping with the imperial-colonial system. What, then, was the “historical purpose” that operated within this series of contradictory actions? This essay seeks to trace precisely that question.

This essay seeks to re-read, on a continuum, both the novels Jang Hyuk-ju published relatively early in his career and the state-policy collaborative writings produced in the late colonial period. The underlying assumption is that Jang himself possessed a unique historical orientation that shaped both his actions and his literary creations.

In 1932, Jang won second prize in the Kai jo (개조) literary contest with *Realm of the Hungry Ghosts* (아귀도), which brought him recognition in the metropolitan literary world and marked the beginning of his career there. During this period, he published several novels exposing the harsh realities faced by Koreans and criticizing the discriminatory attitudes of mainlanders. Among his early works, *The Man Who Was Divided* (분기한 자) most vividly reveals the national reality. This novel is especially significant because it not only continues the nationalistic perspective on discrimination that emerged in *Realm of the Hungry Ghosts* (아귀도), but also explicitly exposes the contradictions within Japan's colonial education policies of the 1930s.

The publication of *The Man Who Was Divided* (분기한 자) marked another turning point. Through this work, Jang came to recognize the hierarchical, discriminatory structure of the imperial-colonial system. As will be discussed later, he often depicted the suffering of Koreans in a self-flagellating mode of representation. Yet, he also underscored the fact that this miserable reality was shaped by Imperial Japan and by those who sustained its logic. Even when colonial intellectuals like Jang reflected the literary and publishing trend known as the “Joseon trend” (조선붐) what Japan desired were not critical interventions but vivid depictions from the periphery that could invigorate its stagnant domestic literary scene. As a result, Jang

frequently faced censorship, and in some cases, entire media outlets carrying his works were banned from publication.

Through this experience, he came to realize that his literary value was reduced to mere entertainment for the metropolitan audience. As a “colonial subject,” he also recognized that the possibility of gaining acknowledgment for the originality of Joseon literature – or for his own literary talent – was blocked from the outset by a hierarchical and discriminatory structure. Confronted with this impossibility, he concluded that to exist as a writer in his own right, he had to seek something beyond the framework of the “nation” that had produced such discrimination. This became the central mission of his life.

Despite this mission, Jang shifted his stance as the Sino-Japanese War intensified. He produced works such as *Pilgrimage* (순례), which endorsed the assimilation of Korea into Japan and urged Koreans to follow suit. His reputation as a writer who abandoned his ethnicity and chose pro-Japanese collaboration in pursuit of literary recognition stems largely from this phase. Yet, his actions should not be dismissed as a simple or abrupt descent into blind collaboration. Beneath his advocacy of the “inner and outer as one” policy lay profound fissures and conflicts in his relationship with the imperial-colonial system. While there were points of ideological alignment with Imperial Japan that led him to publish collaborative works, it is crucial to note that he subjectively “appropriated” imperial discourse within the bounds of his own understanding.

Seen in this light, Jang’s collaborative acts cannot be reduced to isolated incidents or explained solely as pro-Japanese objectives. Instead, they must be traced as part of a continuous effort to realize his own aspirations or historical orientation through the medium of colonial discourse. The historical orientation of colonial intellectuals, in fact, long preceded the emergence of grand colonial discourse. It served as both the driving force of their creative work and the philosophical foundation of their thought. Moreover, this orientation, regardless of the fall of Japanese imperialism, was often carried forward into subsequent history as an unresolved task and unfinished project.

Therefore, to reveal the true value and significance of Jang Hyuk-ju’s texts from this period, it is essential to examine how he understood and reinterpreted colonial discourse in his own way. To this end, this paper first considers how Jang perceived ethnic discrimination within the imperial-colonial system, tracing the origins of his project to

abolish such discrimination through *The Man Who Was Divided* (분기한 자) and the events surrounding it. It then turns to the short story *Pilgrimage* (순례) and the critical essay *An Appeal to the Intellectuals of Joseon* (조선 지식인에게 호소함), exploring how Jang understood and accepted the “Unity of Japan and Korea” movement, part of the empire’s assimilation policy, and at what points his internal logic aligned with imperial ideology. Finally, it examines why he adopted this ideology as a means to advance his project of abolishing ethnic discrimination, despite harsh criticism from Korea.

This effort is not intended to argue that Jang’s pro-Japanese activities were undertaken solely for the benefit of the Korean people or to justify his actions. Rather, it seeks to recover the inherent value and meaning of his literature, born of a complex and multilayered historical moment, and to illuminate the contradictions of the imperial-colonial system in order to better understand the essence of imperialist domination.

2. The Ban on the Release of Bungei Shuto (문예수도) and An Expression of Twisted Desire

To examine the true intent of Jang Hyuk-ju's literature, it is necessary to review the historical context at the time he published his novels. Furthermore, one must consider what readership his literature target-ed, and if Jang Hyuk-ju deliberately selected a readership, what he sought to convey to them. As Kim Ji-young (김지영) pointed out, “For a colonial writer to publish works containing ‘colonial elements’ in the dominant language was, first and foremost, an intentional act that took into account not only colonial readers who could read and understand the empire's language, but also readers within the empire itself.” (Kim ji-young, 김지영 2013: 80) This essay seeks to interpret the novel *The Man Who Was Divided* (분기한 자), published in 1933, and the series of events surrounding it with this in mind. Through this, it aims to trace the process by which Jang Hyuk-ju, who had been writing in Japanese as a means to convey the reality of Joseon, came to recognize the framework of ethnic discrimination within the imperial-colonial system.

After graduating from Daegu High School in the spring of 1926, Jang Hyuk-ju became active with anarchists in the ‘True Friends League’. Due to this involvement, Jang Hyuk-ju in his early creative period was greatly influenced by proletarian literature, employing it as a methodology for his own writing. Subsequently, from 1927 until the spring of 1929, he worked as a teacher in the rural areas of Cheongsong County and Yecheon County, Gyeongsangbuk-do. Earlier, Jang Hyuk-ju had stated, ‘I want to make the miserable lives of those people known to the world. I want to appeal. My literature exists for that purpose, and I want to do something worthwhile.’ This reveals that his experiences – reading proletarian literature while active in the League and witnessing the dire reality of colonial Joseon farmers firsthand during his time as a rural teacher – became the literary origins of Jang Hyuk-ju.

To achieve this goal, he wrote novels in Japanese rather than in the Korean literary world and published them in the Japanese literary world. The reason he targeted Japanese readers and published his works in ‘Japanese’ rather than Korean was because “he believed publishing in the Japanese literary world, where censorship was less severe than in the Korean literary world, would allow him greater freedom in his creative activities.”

As the author himself stated, he considered exposing the miserable reality faced by the Korean people and revealing the contradictions in the colonial power’s policies to be his literary mission. To effectively convey this thematic consciousness, he strategically chose Japanese as the language for his novels. In other words, Jang Hyuk-ju used Japanese as a means to inform the world about the reality of Korea. Following the publication of *Realm of the Hungry Ghosts* (아귀도), Jang Hyuk-ju received high praise from mainland Japanese readers for creating a work that vividly expressed anguish over his nation. Judging by the domestic reception of *Realm of the Hungry Ghosts*, Jang Hyuk-ju's strategy of exposing Joseon's realities through Japanese writing can be considered relatively successful.

However, contrary to his initial plans, a significant portion of his subsequent works, including *The Farm* (박전농장) were censored by the Japanese authorities, with certain words blacked out. His work *The Hunted* (쫓기는 사람들) was even banned from release. Facing intensifying censorship of his works, Jang Hyuk-ju sensed a crisis and recognized the need to change the creative methodology he had adhered to until then. He endeavored to devise a solution to this problem.

Seok-Yeol CHOI: A Colonial Intellectual's Project...

I believe that correct understanding can be attained only through the dialectical materialist method, both in politics and in art. Yet I neither regard existing Japanese proletarian literary theory as infallible, nor do I force my own literature to conform to it. (omission) Here too, I hold a particular position.¹ (Jang Hyuk-ju, 장혁주 1933: 67)

The above quotation is from a text published prior to the release of *The Man Who Was Divided* (분기한 자). This piece candidly reveals Jang Hyuk-ju's sentiments as a writer. While fundamentally acknowledging the dialectical materialist method, he states that due to his 'special position,' he neither took proletarian literary theory for granted nor attempted to forcefully impose it on his own writing. Here, 'special position' refers to the fact that, while conscious of the censorship authorities, his works adopted the creative methodology of proletarian literature, yet this did not serve as his literary foundation. It is also akin to a declaration that he would no longer impose proletarian literary theory onto his works. Viewing this declaration within its preceding context, Jang Hyuk-ju's decision to break with proletarian literary theory can be understood as stemming from his realization that continuing to publish works in the existing manner would prevent him from releasing pieces containing the literary themes he sought to express, due to Japanese colonial authorities' censorship.

Having broken with proletarian literature amidst the atmosphere of the 'Literary Renaissance,' Jang Hyuk-ju published *The Man Who Was Divided* (분기한 자). in the September 1933 issue of *Bungei Shuto*(문예수도), Compared to Jang Hyuk-ju's earlier novels published in the early 1930s, this work places relatively less emphasis on class struggle. Instead, it focuses on exposing the contradictions of Imperial Japan's policies and the resulting reality faced by the Korean people. This short story centers on Kim Cheo, a character who, while a dedicated fighter for his homeland during his participation in the 'Reading Club' at teachers' college, becomes apathetic after witnessing fellow members arrested and imprisoned, losing his conviction in the

¹ 나는 정치와 예술 모두에서 변증법적 유물론의 방법을 통해서만 올바른 인식에 도달할 수 있다고 믿는다. 그러나 그렇다고 해서 기존의 일본 프롤레타리아 문학 이론을 무오류의 것으로 보지도 않으며, 나 자신의 문학을 그것에 억지로 맞추려 하지도 않는다. (중략) 이 점에서도 나는 분명한 나만의 입장을 가지고 있다. (Jang Hyuk-ju, 장혁주 1933: 67)

struggle. It also features Hayashi, the Japanese principal who discriminates against and oppresses Koreans.

Whereas previous works featured protagonists engaged in class struggle, this story uniquely presents a protagonist who appears somewhat passive, having lost his sharp class consciousness. As mentioned earlier, this shift can be attributed to a change in the author's approach, moving away from proletarian literature-based techniques. However, as a work that changed its creative methodology to further strengthen its critical tone toward Japanese colonial policies, the conflict structure between 'Japanese' and 'Koreans' is more clearly depicted here than in previous works. The conflict between the two ethnic groups arises not merely from differences in the social positions of individual characters, but explicitly from the hierarchy and discrimination imposed by the 'ethnicity' of 'Japanese' as members of the colonial power and 'Koreans' as subjects of the colony.

Kim Cheol, seeing the children's pensive faces and shabby appearance, felt like shouting XXXX. Hayashi's lectures all seemed to say, "Become XX." The morality, history, geography, and every other subject taught in the classroom, every textbook, taught that XXX had been Japan's X country since ancient times, and its present state was only natural, even inevitable. It was an infinite honor for the Korean people to have received the sacred grace of being exposed to the world's culture. Therefore, they taught us to accept all lessons sweetly, simply say thank you, and obey XXXXXX no matter how we are XXed or XXed.² (Jang Hyuk-ju, 장혁주 2002: 76.)

The above quotation is Kim Cheol's soliloquy describing the scene where Principal Hayashi of his school lines up students on a cold day to deliver a lecture. As seen in the monologue, Principal Hayashi, a

² 김철은 아이들의 침울한 얼굴과 초라한 차림을 보고 XXXX라고 외치고 싶은 심정이 되었다. 하야시의 강의는 모두 "XX가 되어라"라고 말하는 것처럼 느껴졌다. 교실에서 가르치는 도덕, 역사, 지리, 그 밖의 모든 과목과 모든 교과서는 XXX가 예로부터 일본의 X 국가였으며, 현재의 상태 또한 지극히 자연스럽고 나아가 필연적인 것이라고 가르치고 있었다. 세계 문화의 성스러운 은총을 입게 된 것은 조선 민족에게 무한한 영광이라는 것이었다. 그러므로 우리가 어떤 식으로 XX되든, XX되든 모든 가르침을 달게 받아들이고, 그저 감사하다고 말하며 XXXXXX에 복종하라고 가르쳤다. (Jang Hyuk-ju, 장혁주 2002: 76)

member of the colonial power, lectures the Koreans that Korea becoming a colony was “thanks to Imperial Japan, which allowed you savages, ignorant of new culture, to live in today’s civilized society,” and that they should consider this an ‘infinite glory’. While delivering this imperial Japanese narrative, Principal Hayashi sees a Korean student shivering violently in the cold and humiliates him, saying, “This is why you are weak.” Although somewhat softened, the work clearly reveals the hierarchy and discrimination between ethnic groups within the imperial-colonial system, likely due to changes in creative methods.

Meanwhile, the contradictions within Imperial Japan’s education policy and the criticism directed at it also come to the forefront. In the work, the Japanese principal Hayashi orders the Korean teacher Kim Cheol to collect money from students who cannot pay their class fees or else expel them. The protagonist Kim Cheol, aware of the reality that “many preschool children suffer because of tuition fees and cannot enter school”, left “abandoned like wolves” due to poverty, feels a sorrowful emotion. He realizes that by informing the students, as ordered by the Japanese principal, that they would be expelled if tuition fees were overdue, he himself is no different from the Japanese.

The children who enrolled did not learn in Korean from the very first day. They were taught in Japanese (which was forcibly imposed as the national language in the colony). The children could not understand what the teacher was saying. Encountering an unknown language for the first time, they were extremely confused. Yet they memorized two or three words a day and went home. (Omitted) The children are very diligent. Day by day, they memorized many words. A strong desire to memorize, to understand quickly, was evident on their faces. Moreover, they developed a kind of pride in memorizing Japanese, leading them to despise their mother tongue. Ah, this is how colonial subjects, from their boyhood, make themselves servile.³ (Jang Hyuk-ju, 장혁주 2002: 69-70)

The above quote reveals Kim Cheol’s inner thoughts as he

³ 입학한 아이들은 첫날부터 한국어로 수업을 받지 않았다. 그들은 식민지에서 국어로 강제로 부과된 일본어로 교육을 받았다. 아이들은 교사가 무슨 말을 하는지 이해할 수 없었다. 난생처음 접하는 낯선 언어 앞에서 그들은 극도로 혼란스러워했다. 그럼에도 불구하고 하루에 두세 단어씩 외워 집으로 돌아갔다. (중략) 아이들은 매우 근면했다. 날마다 많은 단어를 외워 나갔다. 빨리 외우고

teaches Japanese to students. Kim Cheol states that while colonized people take pride in learning the national language (Japanese), taking pride in learning Japanese to the point of despising one's own mother tongue merely makes oneself servile. He also takes a critical stance toward Japan's colonial education policy, arguing that while teaching subjects like morality, geography, and natural sciences in Korean would allow "learning to proceed very easily," the use of Japanese for instruction means "the original purpose is not even half achieved," leading to a "keenly felt sense of national oppression." In other words, Jang Hyuk-ju's *The Man Who Was Divided* (분기한 자) is a work where the contradictions of Imperial Japan's colonial education in the 1930s are grasped with a quite explicit national consciousness.

As briefly examined, "The Resentful" clearly reveals the discriminatory hierarchical structure between nations while simultaneously reproducing Jang Hyuk-ju's critical consciousness toward the contradictions of imperialist policy in the most acute manner. Thus, Jang Hyuk-ju did not merely list the destitution, misery, or disaster-induced suffering of Joseon peasants in his work. Instead, grounded in the understanding that the various problems confronting the Joseon people arose within the imperial-colonial relationship, he sought to reconstruct the reality of Joseon through diverse means: the conflict between Joseon people collaborating with imperialist power and Joseon peasants, the oppression and violence of the Japanese against the Joseon people, and so forth.

While writing *The Man Who Was Divided* (분기한 자), Jang Hyuk-ju believed that "unfettered by any partisan theory," he could conceive "the most correct literature" embodying his intended thematic consciousness. As mentioned earlier, perhaps because the author consciously crafted his writing, *The Man Who Was Divided* (분기한 자) actually passed censorship relatively unscathed. Only sections evoking class struggle received minor redactions. For this reason, unlike his previous works, Jang Hyuk-ju's critical perspective was

이해하고자 하는 강한 욕망이 그들의 얼굴에 그대로 드러나 있었다. 더 나아가 일본어를 암기하는 것 자체에 일종의 자부심을 느끼게 되었고, 그 결과 자기들의 모어를 경멸하기에 이르렀다. 아, 바로 이렇게 해서 식민지의 신민들은 유년기부터 스스로를 복종적인 존재로 만들어 가는 것이다. (Jang Hyuk-ju, 장혁주 2002: 69-70)

clearly discernible in *The Man Who Was Divided* (분기한 자) However, immediately after its publication, not the work itself but the issue of Bungei Shuto (문예수도) Vol. 1, No. 9 containing *The Man Who Was Divided* (분기한 자) became the target of censorship and was banned from sale. Given Jang Hyuk-ju's own statement that "in just two years since entering the literary world, I've faced publication bans twice" and that "I apologize to Brother Yastaka for the losses he suffered on my behalf," it appears that Bungei Shuto (문예수도) was banned specifically because of Jang Hyuk-ju's work. In other words, while the work itself could have avoided censorship – like the numerous instances of censorship marks – and been published, precisely because his work was published, the 'medium' itself that the Kai jo (개조) members had moved to in order to publish their work was banned.

The news that his work had led to the banning of the publication of Bungei Shuto (문예수도) was a significant and shocking 'incident' for Jang Hyuk-ju, who was active in the mainland literary world while maintaining his identity as a colonial intellectual. This incident brought about a major shift in Jang Hyuk-ju's expectations for the mainland literary world and his literary philosophy. In his essay On Translation Issues, etc. 2: Reject Sentimental Novels Jang Hyuk-ju remarked on the ban of Bungei Shuto (문예수도): "Had it been published under a Japanese name, it would never have been banned." The crucial point to note here is the shift in Jang Hyuk-ju's internal consciousness regarding the issue of censorship.

As previously noted, Jang Hyuk-ju had hitherto perceived censorship as stemming from his works wearing the guise of professional literature, and sought to escape this by altering his creative methodology. That is, Jang Hyuk-ju recognized that the censorship of his works prior to *The Man Who Was Divided* (분기한 자) originated from his 'creative methodology'. However, despite changing his creative methodology, when the media carrying his work was banned by the censorship authorities, Jang Hyuk-ju realized that the problem of censorship was not solely due to his dialectical materialism-based creative method. Interestingly, he stated that the reason was not the content of the work, which dealt with criticism of Imperial Japan's policies, but rather that it was not published under a "Japanese name." This suggests that Jang Hyuk-ju believed that if he had been an 'indigenous person' rather than a colonial intellectual, his work would have been released normally.

As mentioned earlier, Jang Hyuk-ju chose the mainland literary scene rather than Joseon as the arena for his creative work because he expected to be able to publish literature expressing his own thoughts relatively freely there. However, such activity was fundamentally blocked due to his identity as a writer from a colony. Jang Hyuk-ju came to recognize that the situation where he was stripped of his subjectivity and could only exist as an object was not due to a lack of originality as a writer or because Joseon was culturally or artistically inferior to Japan. Rather, it stemmed from the sharply defined, hierarchical, discriminatory structure between ‘nations’ forged and controlled by the imperial-colonial system.

Sensing the ‘impossibility’ stemming from the rigid hierarchy of the imperial-colonial system, Jang Hyuk-ju realized that novels set in ‘foreign lands’ like Joseon – works by non-native ethnic groups – could never escape their position as peripheral literature serving the development of Japanese (core) literature and national policy. What mainlanders desired from colonial intellectual writers could not align with Jang Hyuk-ju’s aspirations. What writers from the colonial power sought to see were aspects of Joseon’s landscape or culture that mainlanders could not easily observe or reproduce, or the ethnic anguish generated within the colony itself – not appeals from colonized subjects regarding imperialist policies. After this incident, Jang Hyuk-ju declared he was not “the kind of figure (like what the mainlanders hoped for) possessing the spirit of an oppressed Korean national,” and vowed to create works henceforth solely “to become a writer as Jang Hyuk-ju, an individual.” This declaration can be seen as the desire of a colonial intellectual to restore his subjectivity by representing not the ‘Joseon’ demanded by others, but the ‘Joseon’ he himself had captured.

Amidst a climate where novels critical of Imperial Japan were casually banned, and where Joseon literature was valued solely as a means and tool for the growth of Japanese literature, Jang Hyuk-ju finally realized that ‘the problem of discrimination between nations ultimately extended to the very mode of existence as a literary figure and the conditions of literary production.’ This demonstrates that the hierarchy and discrimination between nations, as sensed by Jang Hyuk-ju within the imperial-colonial system, was not confined to the geographical dimension of colonial master-colony. It extended into the cultural dimension, including literature. In other words, the literary activities of colonial Korean writers at that time could not possess

intrinsic value; they could only find meaning when fulfilling a role within national literature, including Japanese literature.

Novels critical of Imperial Japan were casually banned, and in a situation where Korean literature could only be recognized as having value as a means and tool for the growth of Japanese literature, Jang Hyuk-ju finally realized that ‘the issue of discrimination between nations ultimately extended to the very mode of existence as a literary figure and the conditions of literary production.’ This demonstrates that the hierarchy and discrimination between nations Jang Hyuk-ju sensed within the imperial-colonial system was not confined to the geographical dimension of colonial master-colony, but extended to the cultural dimension, including literature. In other words, the literary activities of colonial Korean writers at that time could not possess intrinsic value; they could only find meaning when fulfilling a role within national literature, including Japanese literature.

Jang Hyuk-ju completely relocated to Japan in 1936 and continued various activities through his writing aimed at abolishing ethnic discrimination. In Japan, Jang Hyuk-ju turned his attention to the harsh realities of Zainichi Koreans (Koreans residing in Japan) that he could observe within his own sphere of life. He wrote reportage articles like *Visiting a Korean Settlement* to inform mainland Japanese readers about the exploitation faced by Koreans in Japan – discrimination by mainlanders and the seizure of their tenant farms. However, despite fighting “to the point of being bloodied in 1934” to avoid hearing “that truly tiresome talk about being a Korean writer, or having a handicap, or being soft,” and despite completely revising his creative methodology, the mainland literary world persistently demanded that Jang Hyuk-ju write “the typical type of colonial subject.” In this process, the “sense of exposure to danger felt by the subject when the possibility of speech is preemptively excluded” became deeply ingrained in Jang Hyuk-ju. This situation, where ‘even while speaking, one is regarded as not speaking’, gradually distorted Jang Hyuk-ju’s conviction that his literary value and significance lay in ‘broadly informing and appealing to the world about the miserable lives of the people’. This situation gradually distorts Jang Hyuk-ju’s conviction that his literary value and significance lay in ‘broadly informing the world about the miserable lives of the people and appealing to them’.

Not only in daily life but also within the literary world, the overwhelming discrimination and powerlessness stemming from the

hierarchy imposed by ‘ethnicity’ caused Jang Hyuk-ju to experience “a sensation of his own self shattering into pieces”, leading him to doubt his own viability. In this passive situation where all agency is castrated, Jang Hyuk-ju's mission takes the form of yearning solely for the existence of the writer as an ‘individual’. That is, his project to abolish the discrimination inflicted upon the Korean people begins to be permeated by a ‘desire to overcome a limited and closed status and construct a new self’ as the colonial period draws to a close. This ultimately represents a “new movement” emerging among the colonized, occurring “amidst the suspension of ‘individuality,’ where words are not recognized as words, and the violence one sought to evade is sensed as one's own problem.”

3. True “Unity of Japan and Korea” Policy as a Method for Transcending Ethnic Boundaries

It is a well-known fact that after his departure to Japan, Jang Hyuk-ju abruptly changed his stance following the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in July 1937. He published novels urging Koreans to voluntarily participate in the war and wrote articles cooperating with Imperial Japan's Greater East Asia ideology. Moreover, he not only encouraged the Korean people to participate in the war but also published fiercely critical writings targeting the entire Korean community, including the Korean literary world. While this led to Jang Hyuk-ju being labeled a pro-Japanese writer who surrendered to Japanese imperialism, this chapter aims to examine the internal logic behind this series of actions.

One thing to consider is that if we were to fully assimilate, then naturally becoming an undistorted people would be possible – according to the argument presented earlier. This assimilation must be considered in connection with the current Japanese Governor-General of Korea's Naisen-Ittai movement. “Inseon Ilche” literally means binding Japanese and Koreans completely as one, implying that no distinction should exist between the two. (Omitted) After the military government (I believe this term is forgivable) took over what had been treated as a colony, a kind of conscience began to sprout. That is, idealistic politics commenced. I will discuss this in detail later, but regarding the governance of Korea, I do not hesitate to acknowledge the progressive nature of military government, fearing the revival of party politics. Do

Seok-Yeol CHOI: A Colonial Intellectual's Project...

not call me a fascist for saying this. Rather, I am appealing to Governor-General Minami for true internal unity. I merely wish to ask questions – such as how fervently he is pursuing this, or whether he is using it merely as a transitional measure for a certain period – and to confront the Governor-General with everything that is not yet internally unified.⁴ (Jang Hyuk-ju, 장혁주 1939: 297.)

The above quotation is part of the critique *An Appeal to Korean Intellectuals* (조선 지식인에게 호소함) widely regarded as best illustrating Jang Hyuk-ju's pro-Japanese stance. In this essay, Jang Hyuk-ju argues that the “Unity of Japan and Korea” (내선일체) movement promoted by Imperial Japan at the time represented an ‘ideal politics’ where ‘a kind of conscience began to sprout,’ aiming to move beyond treating Joseon solely as a ‘colony.’ He also expresses hope that this movement could finally lead to the realization of ‘true’ “Unity of Japan and Korea” (내선일체). While mindful that following Imperial Japan's military politics could risk making him appear fascist, Jang Hyuk-ju appeals to Joseon intellectuals that it could become a progressive policy. This attitude reveals a shift in his consciousness regarding the nation and Imperial Japan between the pre-war Jang

⁴ 한 가지 고려해야 할 점은, 만약 우리가 완전히 동화된다면 앞서 제시된 논리에 따르면 왜곡되지 않은 민족으로 자연스럽게 거듭나는 것이 가능하다는 점이다. 이러한 동화는 현 조선 총독부가 추진하고 있는 내선일체 운동과 연관 지어 생각하지 않을 수 없다. ‘내선일체 (內鮮一體)’란 문자 그대로 일본인과 조선인을 완전히 하나로 묶는다는 뜻으로, 양자 사이에 어떠한 구별도 존재해서는 안 된다는 의미를 내포하고 있다. (중략) 식민지로 취급되어 왔던 지역을 군부 정치 (이 표현은 용서될 수 있으리라 생각한다) 가 장악한 이후, 일종의 양심이 싹트기 시작했다. 즉, 이상주의적 정치가 개시된 것이다. 이에 대해서는 뒤에서 자세히 논하겠지만, 조선 통치에 관해서만큼은 정당 정치의 부활을 경계하는 의미에서 군부 정치의 진보성을 인정하는 데 주저하지 않는다. 이 말로 나를 파시스트라 부르지는 말아 달라. 오히려 나는 총독 미나미에게 진정한 내적 통일을 요구하고자 하는 것이다. 내가 바라는 것은 단지 질문을 던지는 일이다. 그가 이 정책을 얼마나 진지하게 추진하고 있는지, 혹은 일정 기간을 위한 과도적 조치로만 활용하고 있는 것은 아닌지, 그리고 아직도 내적으로 통합되지 못한 모든 문제를 총독 앞에 직시하게 하고 싶은 것이다. (Jang Hyuk-ju, 장혁주 1939: 297)

Hyuk-ju, who questioned and sought to transcend the empire's totalitarian ideology, and the post-war Jang Hyuk-ju. So what does this seemingly contradictory and even fractured shift in Jang Hyuk-ju signify? What does this gap, this fissure, revealed by a late colonial-era Korean writer in Japan, truly mean? And where does this behavior originate? Might Jang Hyuk-ju's own anguish about the times and his internal tensions be concealed within the amplitude of this change?

To examine this, the key points to note in the above text are his assertion that the 'inner and outer as one' policy implemented simultaneously with the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War was an ideal policy, despite his own concern about being perceived as a fascist, and the passage revealing what he means by the 'true inner and outer as one' that he appropriates. First, his remarks reveal that Jang Hyuk-ju had previously acknowledged the ideology of Imperial Japan stemmed from fascism and agreed with its inherent contradictions and violence. For Jang Hyuk-ju, who had directly experienced colonial intellectuals being co-opted as tools solely for the development of mainstream literature, this reality likely struck him on an even more tangible level. However, Jang Hyuk-ju suddenly intuited that some 'conscience' was sprouting within Japan, and that this could ultimately lead to the 'ideal politics' he yearned for. The reason he defended "Unity of Japan and Korea" and expected it to become an ideal policy, even at the cost of enduring criticism and condemnation from Koreans, was precisely because of the slogan that it meant placing no 'discrimination' between Korea and Japan.

As the Sino-Japanese War intensified, Imperial Japan established a wartime total mobilization system. Consequently, the 'colony' of Korea underwent a shift in its geographical status, becoming a forward logistics base for the continental campaign. As is well known, the purpose of the total mobilization system was to mobilize Korea's material and human resources as war supplies. Therefore, the restructuring of the system had to become a practical and realistic policy. Alongside this spatial reorganization emerged the question of how to voluntarily draw out the internal motivation of 'Koreans' to transform them into 'model individuals' who would submit to the empire.

This was because, above all else, complete mental control had to be the foundation for swiftly and efficiently mobilizing peacetime Koreans into wartime war materials. To successfully achieve this,

Imperial Japan devised the concept of “Unity of Japan and Korea”, grounded in the “fundamental principle of unifying and equalizing the people of the home islands and Korea,” and premised on the absolute elimination of “any discriminatory attitude based on trivial reasons” in addressing this issue. As the practical and material demands of total war promoted the necessity for colonial subjects' cooperation and participation, discourse and concrete policies could no longer simply discriminate against Koreans and other colonial subjects, excluding them from the national community.

As seen in the assimilation policy based on “Unity of Japan and Korea” within the total war system, Imperial Japan, at least superficially, erased the boundaries of hierarchy and discrimination between Koreans and Japanese to achieve unconditional victory in the war. As space was reorganized and Koreans and Japanese were positioned as equals, Korea, at least superficially, ceased to be merely a colony or periphery of the empire. Rather, Korea, as a logistical base, was assigned an indispensable role crucial to the development and victory of the imperial center, Japan. Jang Hyuk-ju found hope in the discourses and policies emerging from this rapid spatial reorganization. Particularly, the empire's “Unity of Japan and Korea” (내선일체) policy, which sought to resolve ethnic issues through writing, was understood by Jang Hyuk-ju – who realized this path was blocked by the imperial-colonial hierarchy – as the basis for finally collapsing that structure and abolishing ethnic discrimination. Therefore, for him, actions cooperative with the system were not sudden or abrupt occurrences in the late colonial period, but rather emerged at a specific point where his previously planned projects intersected with the particular logical mechanisms “Unity of Japan and Korea” (내선일체) policy’.

Since victory in war and the efficient conduct of war were the primary objectives, the assimilation policy was particularly forcefully implemented within the military. The more Korean troops were deployed in the Imperial Army, the more Japan fervently supported the Korean volunteer soldier system to prove the sincerity of its ‘elimination of discrimination’. To highlight the positive aspects of this system, the volunteers themselves were educated to think of themselves as ‘true guardians of freedom, equality, and anti-imperialism’. Furthermore, the Governor-General’s Office submitted reports demonstrating that while military training for Koreans did indeed begin

later than for Japanese nationals, once trained, Koreans could perform duties just as well as Japanese nationals without distinction. This served to strengthen the rationale for the volunteer soldier system. The fact that most of Jang Hyuk-ju's novels promoting collaboration with the regime in the late colonial period took the narrative of Korean volunteer soldiers as their basic framework can also be interpreted within this context. Within this context, we will examine his short story *Pilgrimage* (순례).

Therefore, special guidance becomes necessary – whether it be correcting one's view of loyalty and filial piety or becoming accustomed to life in the mainland. Carving each word of Instructor Kadagiri's speech into my heart, I contemplated the process by which someone raised with a different view of life and death and in a different environment could be transformed into an imperial subject. “Those raised in the mainland must have it easier in that regard, right?” he asked. “Of course it's different. They're like mainland soldiers. But those raised in Joseon share the same blood, so after just three months of training, they become like mainland soldiers. I'll show you this gradually...”⁵ (Jang Hyuk-ju, 장혁주 2003: 173.)

The quotation is a scene from Jang Hyuk-ju's short story *Pilgrimage* (순례), serialized in 1943. This work is a novel Jang Hyuk-ju wrote after concluding that ‘the only way for Koreans to become Japanese subjects is through military training,’ (based on his experience when he was specially admitted to the volunteer soldier training camp in Gyeong-seong in April 1943. The work centers on the story of Iwamoto, a Korean from the mainland who harbors doubts about the “inner and outer as one” policy, ultimately realizing that military training is the direct path to imperial subjectification. As previously mentioned, Imperial Japan deliberately sought to bridge the lingering

⁵ 그러므로 충효관을 바로잡는 것이든, 내지의 생활에 익숙해지는 것이든 특별한 지도가 필요해진다. 가다기리 교관의 말 한마디 한마디를 가슴에 새기며, 나는 삶과 죽음에 대한 관점이 다르고 전혀 다른 환경에서 자란 사람이 어떻게 황국 신민으로 변화해 가는지를 곰곰이 생각했다. “그런 점에서는 내지에서 자란 사람들은 더 수월하겠지요?” 하고 그가 물었다. “물론 다르지. 그들은 내지 병사들이니까. 하지만 조선에서 자란 이들도 같은 피를 나누고 있으니, 단 석 달의 훈련만 거치면 내지 병사들과 같아진다. 그 과정을 내가 차차 보여 주지...” (Jang Hyuk-ju, 장혁주 2003: 173.)

Seok-Yeol CHOI: A Colonial Intellectual's Project...

gap between Koreans and mainlanders to invigorate the Korean volunteer soldier system. They argued that military training for Koreans was not significantly behind that of mainlanders, even suggesting that enlisted Koreans would see substantial improvements in education, Japanese language proficiency, and mental fortitude. Similarly, the quoted text argues that while Koreans, who grew up slightly later or in different environments than mainlanders, may have flawed concepts of loyalty and filial piety or views on life and death, they are fundamentally ‘the same as mainland soldiers.’ Therefore, despite the short timeframe of ‘three months,’ they could become like mainland soldiers.

As if comforting Iwamoto, who seemed to be breathing a little easier,

I asked, “Didn’t you know about the volunteer soldier system back then?”

“I knew about it, but for us living in the interior, it was still difficult to volunteer at that time.”

“If you’d known you could volunteer, that feeling would have disappeared, wouldn’t it?”

“Yes, it did. I was truly happy. But there was still one thing I couldn’t bring myself to do.”

“What was that?”

“I always wondered if Korea and Japan had truly been one since ancient times.”

“Of course they were one. Don’t you know that history?”⁶

(Jang Hyuk-ju, 장혁주 2003: 219.)

The above quote depicts the moment when Iwamoto, who had

⁶ 조금 숨이 가벼워진 듯한 이와모토를 달래듯이 나는 물었다./ “그때는 지원병 제도에 대해 몰랐나?” / “알고 있었지만, 우리 같은 조선인들은 자원입대가 쉽지 않았습니다.” / “자원할 수 있다는 걸 알았으니 그런 감정은 사라졌겠지?” / “네 사라졌습니다. 정말로 기쁩니다. 하지만 그래도 차마 할 수 없는 게 하나

doubted the concept of “Unity of Japan and Korea” (내선일체) comes to understand the meaning of that following the implementation of the Korean volunteer soldier system. As seen in this scene, “Unity of Japan and Korea” (내선일체) as one was only possible after the total war system, when the Korean volunteer soldier system became feasible – that is, when discrimination between Japanese and Koreans vanished and they truly stood on equal footing. Furthermore, in the work, the drill instructor tells those who deny the “Unity of Japan and Korea” (내선일체) principle, “Just come to this training camp once,” and “Seeing the reality, everyone will be amazed.” He also asserts that “implementing conscription is absolutely necessary, also in terms of accelerating Korea's imperialization.”

One year before the serialization of *Pilgrimage* (순례) began in 1942, Governor-General Minami-Jiro (미나미 지로) declared, “Korea is not a colony.” Furthermore, in response to criticism from Furukawa Kanehide, Chief of the Security Division at the Governor-General's Police Bureau, who argued that military training and the volunteer soldier system were dangerous and should be discontinued, Minami retorted: “The relationship between Japan and Korea has been splendidly proven to be of the same origin and ancestry, both anthropologically and linguistically, as well as in the humanities.” (Minami Jiro, 미나미 지로 1942: 10)

He argued that Japan was a nation that had “transcended” the concept of a nation formed by merging numerous diverse ethnic groups into a single entity. For Jang Hyuk-ju, who sought to achieve ‘true internal unity’ linked to Minami's movement while hoping it did not involve using Korea as a transitional means, Minami Jiro's argument served as a crucial internal justification for completing his project of abolishing ethnic discrimination.

Through Minami Jiro's “Unity of Japan and Korea” (내선일체) movement, Jang Hyuk-ju received a kind of imperial ‘approval’ for his project. In *Pilgrimage* (순례), he recreates the ‘military government’—an ‘ideal politics’ formed by the internally constructed logic of “Unity of Japan and Korea” (내선일체) – and the Korean volunteer soldier system within his work. While Jang Hyuk-ju's

있습니다.”/ “그게 뭐가?”/ “나는 늘 한국과 일본이 정말 내선일체인지 의문을 가지고 있습니다.”/ “물론 한국과 일본은 같다. 그 역사를 모르고 있는가?” (Jang Hyuk-ju, 장혁주 2003: 219.)

true “Unity of Japan and Korea” grounded in a nationalistic perspective, did not directly align with the empire's “Unity of Japan and Korea.” (내선일체) it was nonetheless reinterpreted by him as a realistic and concrete alternative to the problem of ethnic discrimination. This mirrors how Lee Kwang-su based on his own convictions and political stance, perceived “Unity of Japan and Korea” (내선일체) as the ‘final abolition of discrimination.’

As we have seen, from the start of his literary career in 1932 until after the outbreak of the Asia-Pacific War, Jang Hyuk-ju pursued his writing while seeking new methods to resolve the issue of discrimination against the Korean people. This project, aiming to transcend the ethnicity of colonial Koreans, developed its own internal logic within the antagonistic relationship with Imperial Japan's policies, sometimes responding to them and sometimes clashing with them. However, whether driven by an obsession to be recognized for his individual creativity or by the delusion that he was a ‘messiah’ bearing the future of Korea, like ‘Hyeonryong’ in Kim Sa-ryang novel, Jang Hyuk-ju became ensnared by misguided desires.

As the wartime mobilization system was established, ‘Koreans were reborn as Japanese, forming anew, and certain individuals, particularly the Korean elite, were granted unprecedented opportunities’. Jang Hyuk-ju also began using the goal of ‘inner unification’ as an indispensable element for achieving his objectives, enabling him to once again operate as a recognized writer within the mainland literary circle. However, only a minority embraced the empire's ideology to seize these unprecedented opportunities. The ‘exception to the positive aspects of biopolitics’ – that is, the people sacrificed for the empire's fascist and totalitarian ideology – were the general populace.

As Fujitani (후지타니) pointed out, Imperial Japan's equality policies amounted to nothing more than “acting as if they truly believed it.” (Fujitani, Takashi, 후지타니 다카시 2019) Even amidst a proliferation of discourse and policies claiming Koreans and Japanese were equal, Koreans were never guaranteed rights truly equal to those of the Japanese. Even basic rights like health and welfare were not upheld for Koreans who volunteered for the military, and this phenomenon occurred not only within the military but throughout Korea as a whole. For instance, the Empire denied Koreans their basic rights by insisting that the Korean volunteer soldier system and the issue

of Korean suffrage were entirely separate matters. They justified this by claiming that Koreans would be granted rights only after they first became true ‘Japanese’ by pledging complete loyalty to Imperial Japan. This reveals that Koreans were perceived solely as ‘war resources’ at the time.

Ultimately, when intellectual elites like Lee Kwang-su and Jang Hyuk-ju championed the empire’s Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere ideology to complete their own projects, the residual individuals – those “simultaneously separated within the expanding image of ‘Japan’ – poor men mobilized as forced laborers or poor women coerced into sexual slavery – were once again marginalized.” Even if they lacked the intellectual capacity to deeply reflect on the empire’s “Unity of Japan and Korea” movement or its racist discourses and policies, or if the rapidly changing currents of the era left them no such leisure, Jang Hyuk-ju’s project to abolish ethnic discrimination instead pushed Koreans into the structures of discrimination and oppression that the empire and colony jointly reproduced in an even more dramatic manner.

4. Between ‘Liberation’ and ‘Defeat’: An Unfinished Project Carried Over

August 15, 1945. Japan’s sudden defeat and Korea’s liberation – Jang Hyuk-ju wrestles with how to perceive this moment. Driven by a desire to realize true “Unity of Japan and Korea” (내선일체) Jang Hyuk-ju aligned himself with the logic that pushed Koreans onto the battlefield and raised his voice in criticism against the entire Korean nation. Consequently, he received threatening letters from the Korean community in Japan and faced criticism from Koreans who had welcomed liberation. In this situation, Jang Hyuk-ju sensed that the conflict between himself and the Koreans could not be resolved and chose the path of naturalization as a “Japanese citizen.” Unlike Zainichi Korean writers like Kim Dal-su and Kim Seok-beom, who sought to maintain their ‘Korean’ identity while residing in Japan, Jang Hyuk-ju began internally carving out a new identity as a ‘Japanese person’ even before his naturalization was approved in 1952.

Much like many Japanese people plunged into a state of “kyodatsu-Post war Nihilism” (쿄다쓰) after the war, Jang Hyuk-ju,

who sought to overcome the grammar of discrimination through the medium of war victory and restore his personal identity, also experienced turmoil. The fact that Japan had lost the war brought him anxiety and disappointment, as it meant his own project – which he had hoped would be fulfilled through the empire's “Unity of Japan and Korea” (내선일체) policy – might end in failure. However, the thoroughly instilled militarist ideology and the totalitarian system built upon it collapsed more easily than anticipated, and the post war space of ‘ashes’ transformed rapidly from a space filled with ‘mere misery, disorientation, cynicism, and anger’ into one brimming with ‘hope, resistance, vision, and above all, dreams’. As John Dower argued, defeat plunged many Japanese into despair and nihilism, yet it was also a period of rapid emergence for ‘national identity and individual values’. (Dower, John, 존 다우어 2009)

As is well known, Japan, having become a ‘defeated nation’ in 1945, came under the rule of the victorious United States. The Americans occupied Japan with what was perceived as a ‘neo-colonialist attitude’. To efficiently and swiftly eradicate the militarism that had long taken root in Japan, they implemented an unprecedented experimental policy: introducing democracy to Japan. The occupying authority's ultimate goal was to transform Japan into a responsible government that posed no threat to world peace and security. To successfully achieve this, the United States endeavored to cultivate the ability among the Japanese people – who had been indoctrinated with militarism and totalitarian ideology until then – to ‘truly and freely express their own will,’ meaning the ‘unrestricted expression of the Japanese people's will.’ This democratization by the occupying authorities was hailed as a ‘gift from heaven’ and garnered significant sympathy among the Japanese people after defeat.

Interestingly, GHQ's policies served as a new internal foundation for Jang Hyuk-ju's project, which had been thwarted by defeat. As mentioned in the preface, Jang Hyuk-ju's historical orientation served as both the driving force and philosophical foundation for his creative work within the imperial-colonial system. Yet this demonstrates that it could be carried forward and inherited as an individual's unresolved task and unfinished project, irrespective of the fate of Japanese imperialism. Therefore, to grasp the compositional principles and meaning of Jang Hyuk-ju's novels, it is necessary to read his post-defeat works in continuity with those published during the

colonial period.

Subsequent research will therefore focus on the post-defeat novels *Ah, Joseon* (아, 조선) and *Mugunghwa* (무궁화), examining in detail how these works relate to Jang Hyuk-ju's colonial-period novels and what internal logic they share. Jang grappled with how to perceive Japan's sudden defeat on August 15, 1945, and Korea's liberation. Jang Hyuk-ju, captivated by the desire to realize true "Unity of Japan and Korea" (내선일체), aligned himself with the logic that drove Koreans onto the battlefield and raised his voice in criticism against the entire Korean nation. Consequently, he received threatening letters from the Korean community in Japan and faced criticism from Koreans who had welcomed liberation. In this situation, Jang Hyuk-ju sensed that the conflict between himself and Koreans could not be resolved and chose the path of naturalization as a 'Japanese citizen.'

Conflict of interest statement: The author has no conflict of interest to disclose.

Bibliography

- An, woo-sik (안우식). 2005. *A Biography of Kim Saryang*. tr by Sim Won-seop. Seoul: Munhagwa Jisungsa.
- Dower, John(존 다우어). 2009. *Embracing Defeat*, tr by Choi Eun-seok. Seoul: Minumsa.
- Fujitani, Takashi (후지타니 다카시). 2019. *Race for Empire: Racism in the Total War Empire*, tr by Lee Kyung-hoon. Seoul: Pureun Yoksas.
- Jang, Hyuk-ju (장혁주). 1939. An Appeal to the Intellectuals of Korea. In *Samchoenli*, 39-7: 294-302.
- Jang, Hyuk-ju (장혁주). 2002. *The Man Who Was Divided*. tr by hotei -toshihiro. Seoul: Taehaksa.
- Jang, Hyuk-ju (장혁주). 1933. A special Position. In *Bungei Shuto*, 1-9: 66-69.
- Jang, Hyuk-ju (장혁주). 2003. *Pilgrimage*, tr. by Kim jae-yong. Kim Mi-ran. Seoul: Yeoklak.
- Ko, Yeong-ran (고영란). 2009. The Reorganization of the Imperial Japanese Publishing Market and the Media Event 'Jang Hyuk-ju'. In *Sai* 蔚SAI, Vol. 6: 113-146.

Seok-Yeol CHOI: A Colonial Intellectual's Project...

- Kim, Ji-young (김지영). 2013. Variations of the 'Korean Element' and the Inner World of the Colonial Intellectual: Focusing on Jang Hyuk-ju's Japanese-language Novels. In *Korean Modern Literature Studies*, Vol. 39: 75-110.
- Kim, Ji-young (김지영). 2010. One Liberation, Two Perspectives. In *Korean Modern Literature Studies*, Vol. 30: 315-343.
- Kim, Jae-yong (김재용). 2016. *Weathering and Memory*, Seoul: Somyung Publishing.
- Kim, Jae-yong (김재용). 2004. *Collaboration and Resistance*, Seoul: Somyung Publishing.
- Lim, Jong-guk (임종국). 2013. *Pro-Japanese Literature Theory*, Seoul: Institute for Research in Collaborationist Activities.
- Lim, Jeon-hye (임전혜). 1965. *On Jang Hyuk-ju*, Tokyo: Literature, Tokyo.
- Shirakawa, Yutaka (시라카와 유타카). 2009. *A Study on Jang Hyuk-ju*, Seoul: Dongguk University Press.

CONFIGURATIONS OF VISION IN KOREAN POSTWAR POETRY: CASES OF JEON BONG-GEON AND KIM GU-YONG

SEONGHO JANG, PhD Candidate

Yonsei University

50, Yonsei-ro, Seodaemun-goo, Seoul, Republic of Korea

lookattheblank@naver.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-2029-9614>

Abstract: This article theorizes the configurations of vision that structure Korean postwar poetry of the 1950s, arguing that war reconfigures visibility itself rather than merely supplying new themes. Building on debates about scopic regimes and modernity's privileging of vision, I read the Korean War (한국전쟁) as a historical apparatus that reassigns who sees, how seeing is mediated, and what becomes visible or illegible. Through close readings of Jeon Bong-geon (전봉건) and Kim Gu-yong (김구용) – two poets who crystallize the field's "reality" and "fantastic" currents – I show that vision is neither neutral nor strictly mimetic; it is produced at the intersection of body, weapon, terrain, and trauma. The article contributes a vocabulary for analyzing vision as a historical form in Korean poetry, clarifying how war's technologies and affects configure what can be seen and said, and why postwar poetry often oscillates between documentary witness and the fantastic.

Keywords: Jeon Bong-geon; Kim Gu-yong; Postwar; Vision; Scopic Regime

한국 전후시에서의 시각의 양상: 전봉건과 김구용의 경우

초록: 본 논문은 1950년대 한국 전후시를 구조화하는 시각의 양상들을 살펴봄으로써, 전쟁이 단지 새로운 주제를 제공한 것이 아니라 시각성 자체를 재구성한다는 점을 논의한다. 나아가 시각 체제와 근대의 시각 특권화에 관한 논의를 바탕으로, 한국전쟁을 누가 보는가, 보기가 어떻게 매개되는가, 무엇이 가시적/비가시적이 되는가를 재배치하는 역사적 장치로 규정한다. 전봉건과 김구용 - 각각 시단의 '현실'과 '환상'의 흐름을 응결시키는 두 시인 - 에 대한 면밀한 독해를 통해, 시각이 중립적이거나 단순 묘사적인 것이 아니라 몸·무기·지형·트라우마의 교차점에서 생산된다는 사실을 보인다. 이러한 분석은 한국시에서 역사적 형식으로서 시각을 논의할 수 있는 개념적 어휘를 제시하고, 전쟁의 기술과 정동이 무엇이 보이고 말해질 수 있는지를 어떻게 구성하는지 그리고 왜 전후시가 현실과 환상 중 하나의 지점에만 머무르는 것이 아니라 그 사이에서 진동하는지를 밝힌다.

키워드: 전봉건; 김구용; 전후시; 시각; 시각적 체계

1. Introduction

In Korean history, the 1950s was a decade of upheaval – from the outbreak of the Korean War (한국전쟁) in 1950 to the April 19 Revolution (4·19 혁명) of 1960 – and literature was no exception. As Choi Dong-ho (최동호) has argued, “the poetry that dominates the first half of the 1950s is poetry of the battlefield,”¹ (Choi Dong-ho, 최동호 2014: 343) and accordingly this period was filled with works that took the experience of war and its tragic figuration as their central task. Corroborating this, scholarship on Korean poetry of the 1950s likewise unfolded under a close relation to the Korean War ; broadly speaking, it has consisted of studies on place and spatiality in the scene of war (Lee Soo-myung, 이수명 2014; Kim Cheong-woo, 김청우 2016; Sim Jae-whui, 심재휘 2022), on the consciousness of reality that appears in postwar poetry (Kang Ji-hye, 강지혜 2012; Lee Hye-kvung, 이혜경 2015; Kang Hee-an, 강희안 2016), and on the fantastic that appears in

¹ “1950년대 전반을 압도하는 시는 전쟁 현장의 시였다.” (Choi Dong-ho, 최동호 2014: 343) All translations from Korean are by the author.

postwar poetry (Kim Do-hee, 김도희 2010; Lee Joon-woo, 이준우 2011; Kim Yang-hee, 김양희 2014). However, approaches that, like studies of place/spatiality and of reality-consciousness, focus only on the representational aspects of war, or that, like studies of the fantastic, focus only on the mimetic aspects, leave something to be desired when it comes to illuminating the multilayered elements of an event as opaque as war. As is well known, war is an “experience of catastrophe” that, by bringing about the “collapse of every system of value and belief in reality,” “nullifies world and self alike”² (Kim Hyeon-ja, 김현자 2007: 246–247). Consequently, the individual subject who undergoes the event of war is placed in a condition in which they cannot hold the initiative over their cognition of the world they face; and for the subject, this condition also amounts to the effacement of the distinction between reality and fantasy. We can confirm this by looking at two prose passages included in the “Anthology of Korean Postwar Poetry” (한국전후문제시집), which vividly, and in many registers, documents poets’ contemporary perceptions of the Korean War.

However much the ends of a given war may differ, modern war proceeds only with superhuman organization, machines, and scale; within its strategy, individuality and personhood are of no use whatsoever. Therefore, in the case of modern war, not only the enemy but the war itself – organization, weaponry, and scale – becomes the enemy of individuality.

Human beings must fight to preserve their lives from the enemy’s gun barrels, but they must also fight to preserve themselves from organization, machines, and scale that crush individuality. That this constitutes a fated necessity one must undergo, no matter how sacred or just the aims of the war may be, is nothing other than the modern person’s still greater tragedy.³ (Shin Dong-mun, 신동문 1961: 389)

² “전쟁이란 현실의 모든 가치와 신념의 체계가 붕괴시킴으로써 세계와 자아를 동시에 무화시키는 재난의 체험이었다.” (Kim Hyeon-ja, 김현자 2007: 246–247)

³ “그러나 현대전은 그 전쟁의 목적은 여하튼, 초인간적인 조직과 기계와 규모로 진행될 뿐이며 그 전략 속에는 개성과 인격이 전연 필요 없는 것이었다. 따라서 현대전의 경우에는 각 개인으로서는 적만이 아니라 조직과 무기와 규모 등 전쟁 자체가 또한 개성의 적이 되는 것이다.

I am not someone who distrusts language. Language that is as simple and clear as a brick – if you just carry those bricks from the granary and stack them neatly, that should suffice. The problem is this: you set out to build a cottage for beating the heat or the cold, and yet, once it's built, it ends up – contrary to your intention – being like emergency housing for refugees.⁴ (Yu Jeong, 유정 1961: 393)

Shin Dong-mun (신동문) not only produced outstanding works that, as Cho Gang-sok has noted, “specify the processing site of the primal experience”⁵ (Cho Gan-sok, 조강석 2021: 349) of war; as seen above, he also offered a perspicacious view that relates the modalities of modern warfare to the problem of the subject. Before he calls for a confrontation with the event or concept of war, what he first attends to is that, in modern warfare conducted by “organization, machines, and scale,” the individual’s personality and personhood become useless – an experience of the self’s nullification. as Kim Hyeon-ia has observed (Kim Hyeon-ja 김현자 2007: 246–247; Shin Dong-mun 신동문 1961: 389). A war waged not by individuals but by “organization, machines, and scale” constrains the subject’s capacities by overwhelming the subject’s faculties of perception. In parallel, Yu Jeong (유정)’s prose pinpoints the gap that opens between the subject’s intention and the reality in which the subject is placed – the “cottage” becoming “emergency housing” – which means the subject is forcibly thrown into the event of war but cannot hold initiative over it (Yu Jeong, 유정 1961: 393). The subject as described – common to both passages – differs

인간들은 적의 총부리가 노리는 목숨을 지키기 위해서 싸워야 하지만, 개성을 압살하려고 하는 조직과 기계와 규모한테서도 자기를 지키기 위하여 싸워야만 했다. 그것은 그 전쟁의 목적이 어떻게 신성하고 정의로운 것이 되든 간에 겪어야 하는 필연적인 운명이라고 하는 점이 더욱 큰 현대인의 비극이 아닐 수 없다.” (Shin Dong-mun, 신동문 1961: 389)

⁴ “나는 언어에 대해서 불신을 하거나 하지는 않는 편입니다. 벽돌처럼 단순하고 명확한 언어, 그것들을 공간 속에서 날라다가 차곡 차곡 쌓아놓기만 하면 그만입니다. 문제는 그 벽돌을 갖고 피서나 피한 같은 걸 위한 별장을 지으려고 했는데 불구하고, 지어놓고 보면 그것은 애초의 의도와는 달리 피난민을 위한 구호 주택 같은 게 되고 말더란 말씀이지요.” (Yu Jeong, 유정 1961: 393)

⁵ “원초적 체험의 가공 현장을 적시하는” (Cho Gang-sok, 조강석 2021: 349)

from the traditional lyric subject who, through contemplative vision, harmonizes with the world; by contrast, the postwar subject's powers are curtailed, suspended in the gap between self and world, unable to possess a whole understanding of either.

Regarding this situation, Cho Gang-sok has written that “an experience too intense becomes, instead of an object of direct representation or mimesis, a continuum of affects lodged in the unconscious. This then varies in diverse ways and appears in poems.”⁶ (Cho Gang-sok, 조강석 2021: 349–350) If war constitutes such an intense experience that overwhelms the subject, then, rather than dividing that experience into representational aspects like consciousness of reality or mimetic aspects like the fantastic, what matters is the very configuration by which war is shaped for the subject. What we should attend to, therefore, is not a partition between reality and fantasy but the problem of the senses of the poetic subject immersed in the extreme experience of war and the configurations by which those senses are rendered. Among the senses that allow the poetic subject of 1950s postwar poetry to register the immediacy of the battlefield, hearing and sight are salient; however, the sense that most effectively lays bare the subject's condition in war is vision, which immediately presents, as images, the results of physical violence – ruins, corpses – compelling the poetic subject to speak of what has been seen in the mode of witnessing. Beyond this, there are further reasons for my focus on configurations of vision in postwar poetry.

According to Martin Jay, vision most aptly captures the sensory differences that distinguish modernity and the period around it. From Renaissance perspective to the scientific advance of the telescope and microscope, technology has developed in a way marked by ocularcentrism and a privileging of the visual⁷ (Jay 1992: 178). If vision serves as such a key differentiator between eras, it also functions to

⁶ “너무 강렬한 체험은 직접적인 재현이나 모방의 대상이 되는 대신 일종의 감정의 연속체를 형성하며 무의식의 기저에 자리잡게 되고 이는 다양한 방식으로 변주되어 시에 현상한다.” (Cho Gang-sok, 조강석 2021: 349–350)

⁷ “The modern era, it is often alleged, has been dominated by the sense of sight in a way that sets it apart from its pre-modern predecessors and possibly its postmodern successor. [...] Beginning with the Renaissance and the scientific revolution, modernity has been normally considered resolutely ocularcentric.” (Jay 1992: 178)

display the characteristics of an age. The problem of how a subject primarily configures its vision, or what it directs its vision toward, is inseparable from the historical period in which that subject lives. Vision – namely, the act of seeing is not merely the physiological registration of images upon the retina; it mediates the visual subject with “the cultural contents of the society to which he belongs,” such that “a particular era and a particular society determine the ‘ways of seeing’ by which people view the world in everyday life”⁸ (Ju Eun-woo, 주은우 2003: 19). In other words, Vision – namely, the act of seeing is a “social and historical” operation that is accomplished “in relation with others”⁹ (Ju Eun-woo, 주은우 2003: 20). Thus, even when the human eye takes in the same object or scene, the social or historical context that operates upon the visual subject may prompt different effects and different sensory apprehensions. This study seeks to examine how the specificities triggered by social and historical contexts manifest themselves in the visual subject, focusing on Korean postwar poetry.

To examine the configurations of the vision in Korean postwar poetry, this study focuses on Jeon Bong-geon (전봉건) and Kim Gu-yong (김구용). Jeon and Kim both reflect the twin currents in research on Korean postwar poetry – reality-consciousness and the fantastic – and, at the same time, in their poetic figuration of the Korean War, offer works that effectively instantiate the features of the vision to which this study calls attention. Meanwhile, the two poets have each articulated, in their respective prose writings, the ways in which the Korean War is connected to their own poetic worlds, as follows. Prior to undertaking a substantive analysis of the configurations of vision manifested in the poetry of the two poets, let us consider the influence of the Korean War on the formation of their poetic works through the following citations.

8 “말하자면 인간의 보는 행위는 신체 기관으로서의 눈이 수행하는 시지각 이상의 것으로서, 그가 속한 사회의 문화적 내용들에 의해 매개되는 것이고, 이에 따라 특정한 시대 특정한 사회는 사람들이 일상 생활 속에서 세계를 바라보는 일정한 ‘보는 방식 *way of seeing*’을 규정한다. (Ju Eun-woo, 주은우 2003: 19)

9 “시각적 경험은 직접적이고 보편적인 것이라기보다는 항상 우리의 지식과 믿음에 의해 매개되며 타자들과의 관계 속에서 이루어지는 사회적·역사적인 것이라고 할 수 있다.” (Ju Eun-woo, 주은우 2003: 20)

For those of my age in particular, ‘6·25’ is an assignment that can neither be forgotten nor evaded nor case off until the day we die¹⁰ (Jeon Bong-geon, 전봉건 2015: 260)

It was live-or-die. How it was that one died or somehow survived – before this question, intelligence, scholarship, and science were all powerless. For a human being of the latter half of the twentieth century, it was a truly unbelievable, gruesome myth; an unfathomable tragedy.¹¹ (Kim Gu-yong, 김구용 2000a: 55–56)

As evidenced by the fact that he continued to compose a series of poems related to the Korean War until shortly before his death in 1988, as well as by the citations above, the Korean War constituted a central theme in Jeon Bong-geon’s poetic oeuvre. For Kim Gu-yong as well, the Korean War can be understood as an enigmatic event, so inscrutable that even the causal relations determining his own survival or demise could not be ascertained. However, the poems of the two poets that center on the Korean War also exhibit notable differences. While Jeon Bong-geon’s war-related poems tend to depict the battlefield directly, Kim Gu-yong’s poems related to the Korean War primarily represent the affective states of anxiety arising within urban spaces in the rear. For these reasons, in addition to bringing into focus the poetry of Jeon Bong-geon and Kim Gu-yong – poets who have, relatively speaking, received less scholarly attention – this article aims to contribute to a broader understanding of Korean postwar poetry.

2. Tenuous subjectivity manifested within the battlefield through limited vision: The case of Jeon Bong-geon

¹⁰ “6·25는 특히 나와 같은 나이의 사람들에게는 죽는 날까지 잊을 수도 피할 수도 없는 내던질 수도 없는 숙제가 아닐 수 없다.” (Jeon Bong-geon, 전봉건 2015: 260) ‘6·25’ is also known as Korean War.

¹¹ “죽기 아니면 살기였다. 어쩌다 죽었는지 어쩌다 살아났는지 이 문제 앞엔 지성도, 학문도, 과학도 무능하였다. 20세기 후반기의 인간으로선 참으로 믿지 못할 처참한 신화이며 불가해한 비극이었다.” (Kim Gu-yong, 김구용 2000a: 55–56)

For poets of the 1950s, the tragic event of the Korean War left the pressing tasks of how to confront it literary and how, further, to overcome it. Jeon Bong-geon was no exception. As this study discussed in introduction, Korean War became a crucial theme structuring his oeuvre – so much so that it would not be an overstatement to say that his way of seeing the world was inextricably bound up with the war. So then, does the poetic subject’s vision appear in Jeon’s postwar poems that figure the scene of battle? In Jeon Bong-geon’s poetry, the modality of the limited vision appears in two forms: a restricted vision and a constrained vision. Restricted vision in his poetry is expressed as a miniaturization of the visual field. Constrained vision in his poetry is expressed as a subject’s fixation or inability to move. These two modalities of limited vision correspond to the dual states a subject may undergo within the battlefield of war. In either instance, the subject does not exist as an autonomous agent capable of intentional action, but rather persists as a tenuous, fragile locus of perception and experience.

I sight along a tree – / sight the leaves at the top – / and I sight a pebble
– / then, when I tire of it, I raise the muzzle – / rub my cheek on the
stock – / the sky enters the M1 peep sight – / the sky bursts open in the
M1 peep sight – / the sky is small in the M1 peep sight – / beneath that
sky, there I am – / I see the sky – / a small sky is bad for the eyes – / the
peep sight blurs – / I stop the play.¹² (Jeon Bong-geon, 전봉건 2008: 23,
“Play,” 장난)

As defined earlier, vision – namely, the act of seeing is not a purely physiological registering of images on the eye but an activity mediated by social, cultural, and historical contexts; the specific mode in which such contextual particularity manifests in the visual subject is what I call the vision. In “Play” (장난), the subject’s act of seeing occurs through the “M1 peep sight.” Though the subject merely sees through the sight aperture, this is sharply contrasted with the contemplative

¹² “나는 나무를 겨누어본다 / 꼭대기의 잎사귀를 겨누어본다 / 그리고 돌맹이를
겨누어본다 / 그러다 싫어지면 총구를 높여서 / 개머리판에 뺨을 비비면 / 하늘이
가늌쇠구멍 속에 들어온다 / M1 가늌쇠구멍 속에 하늘이 벌어진다 / M1
가늌쇠구멍 속에 하늘이 작다 / 그 하늘 밑에 내가 있다 / 나는 하늘을 본다 / 작은
하늘은 눈에 해롭다 / 가늌쇠구멍이 흐려진다 / 나는 장난을 그만둔다” (Jeon
Bong-geon, 전봉건 2008: 23, “Play,” 장난)

seeing of the traditional lyric subject who harmonizes with the world through nature; the act here is mediated by the social and historical context of war. Because the subject cannot confront nature directly with the naked eye, his seeing – channeled through a killing device – shrinks to the leaves at the top of a tree rather than the whole tree, or a small pebble rather than the earth beneath him. The same applies to the sky: the “small sky” in the sight is a sky reduced by the gun. Statements such as “the sky is small in the M1 peep sight – / beneath that sky, there I am” and “a small sky is bad for the eyes” betray his negative appraisal of his condition; like the shrinking sky, the subject’s own subjectivity thins out. The title *Play* likewise underscores a tragic habituation in which the survival act of aiming at an unseen enemy becomes “play,” attesting that the subject, absorbed as a component of war, has lost initiative over his circumstances. A restricted vision in this poem is miniaturization by the sight, where apparatus-regulated perception reduces poetic subjectivity.

One hundred yards, I belly-crawled. / Ninety yards. / I compressed / the range / to eighty yards. / Sixty-five yards. / I compressed it / to sixty yards. / I lay under the sniper’s dead-aim. / I threw my last grenade. / [...] / Fortv-five vards. where the burst of the Maxim automatic scythed past at heart-level. / I lifted my head. / Compression. / [...] / I am within effective range. / I am 0157584.¹³ (Jeon Bong-geon, *전봉건* 2008: 28, “0157584”)

The problem of subjectivity that accompanies visual diminution appears still more starkly in the poem “0157584.” Unlike “Play”, no element of the surrounding world features here to compose a landscape. In this poem, the miniaturization of the visual field is expressed in an even more extreme manner. The world is apprehended, not as a scene with trees and stones, but solely in terms of the effective range of weapons – “a hundred yards,” “ninety yards.” This indicates not only a vanishing of the visual faculty that apprehends landscape but also, in

¹³ “100야드 나는 포복하였다 / 90야드. / 나는 사정(射程)을 / 80야드로 / 압축시켰다. / 65야드. / 나는 60야드로 / 압축시켰다. / 나는 저격병의 정조준 위에 놓였다. / 나는 마지막 수류탄을 / 던졌다. / [...] / 따발 맥심 자동소총의 일제 사격이 내 심장 높이를 / 통과하는 / 45야드. / 나는 머리를 들었다. / 압축. / [...] / 나는 유효사거리권 내에 있다. / 나는 0157584다.” (Jeon Bong-geon, *전봉건* 2008: 28, “0157584”)

the sense that the world is grasped according to the units of war, a mechanized, anonymous subjectivity – no longer an individual but a component in the machinery of war. The poem's close – “I am within effective range. / I am 0157584.” – makes plain the extreme restriction and loss of vision and the self-recognition as a mechanized, anonymous unit. In the condition of war, the world is registered in yards and effective ranges, and this conditions the subject's self-understanding: “I” is no longer a subject with singular properties but one soldier among countless others; “I” exists as “0157584,” the service number, as it were. What is compressed is not only the enemy's “Maxim automatic” range; what is compressed is poetic “I”'s subjectivity as an individual.

The reduction of sight in “Play” and “0157584” may be redescribed as a restricted vision, one regulated by the apparatuses of war – the rifle's sight, yardage and ballistic range. The subject cannot hold initiative over his situation; his vision, delimited by apertures and measurements, gives expression to his understanding of the world he perceives. From here, I consider instances of the constrained vision, the alternate form of the limited vision in Jeon Bong-geon's poetry.

At five o'clock I am in the trench. Canteen, grenade, helmet, bandage, pressurized bandage, bayonet, and the M1 – I try once more to think that I am surely satisfied with the fact that I am in the trench. I chew BISCUITS. Strangely today there's a whistle again at five-thirty – from nine o'clock, from one o'clock. I finish my BISCUITS. At six o'clock, toward the brightening enemy ridge, a JET dives easily. I regret not having slept and not having saved any BISCUITS. At six-twenty a runner arrives from the battalion OP. In his pocket there is an unopened bag of BISCUITS. At six-twenty-three the sun rises. With an entrenching tool I pile more sand on the lip of the trench. I sink one handspan deeper into the floor of the trench. The sand heaped on the shovel looks like an unopened bag of BISCUITS.¹⁴ (Jeon Bong-geon,

¹⁴“5시나 호속에 있다 수통 수류탄 철모 붕대 압박 붕대 대검 그리고 M1 나는 내가 호속에서 틀림없이 만족하고 있다는 사실을 다시 한번 생각해 보려고 한다 BISCUITS을 씹는 다 오늘이 이상하게 5시 30분에 또 피리소리다 9시 방향 13시 방향 나는 BISCUITS을 다 먹어버린다 6시 밝아지는 적능선으로 JET기가 쉽게 공격한다 나는 잠자지 않은 것과 BISCUITS를 남겨 두지 않은 것을 후회한다 6시 20분 대대 OP에서 연락병이 왔다 포켓속에 뜬 지 않은 BISCUITS봉지가 들어 있다 6시 23분 해가 떠오른다 나는 야전삽으로 호가장 자리에 흙을 더 쌓아 올린다 나는 한 뼘만 큼 더 깊이 호 밑으로 가라 앉

전봉건 2008: 24, “BISCUITS”)

Here the subject remains fixed in the trench; as time passes, he records what he senses. The constrained vision originates in his very condition of being obliged to remain in place. Pinned in the trench, scanning for the enemy’s movement, the subject’s role as a soldier supersedes his minimum physiological needs, let alone his subjectivity. He can only list his supplies, attempt the self-hypnosis of being “surely satisfied,” keep watch while eating “BISCUITS,” or imagine the earth on his shovel as “an unopened bag of BISCUITS.” Consider how events arrive for him as time passes. The whistle, the diving jet, the rising sun: these are events that occur independently of the subject’s will. All he can do is look “from nine o’clock, from one o’clock,” meeting these events passively. This reflects the way in which the event of war exerts violence upon the individual. As in Shin Dong-mun’s prose, modern war overwhelms the subject and causes the regression or erasure of the individual’s subjectivity. The repeated references to “BISCUITS” attest to this: regretting that he did not save any; fixing on the unopened bag in the runner’s pocket; perceiving the dirt itself as a bag of biscuits – his hunger is registered more distinctly than his subjectivity, revealing a condition in which even physiological needs go unmet. What emerges is the tragic human condition in which subjectivity is steadily diminished under war. Constrained vision in this poem arises from bodily immobilization (trench) and wartime logistics – revealing impaired reality-testing and a tenuous subjectivity.

Warm liquid twisting my soaked lower belly, I slowly toppled over.
And now a helicopter is carrying me. The helicopter is descending. I
too am descending. Riding the light chopped into strips, I am
descending. / How far have I gone down? And when did my descent
end? From that point there was smell, there was sound, and there was
uninjured light. At the tips of my outstretched feet, a woman in a white
slim dress was smiling. [...] “Where is this?” “That needn’t concern
you. You must rest. You have at last come to rest; you must rest. Truly.”
“Your name?” “Flower.” / I reached out my hand. Then, too, I stretched
my hand forward. There was a flower. I was a boy. Wind and light and
brook-water were flowing. Where there was sound and fragrance, there
was a flower. I reached out my hand. [...] Parting the deepest, most

는다야전삼에가득히담겨지는 흙은 뜯지 않은 BISCUITS 봉지 같다” (Jeon Bong-geon, 전봉건 2008: 24, “BISCUITS”)

delicate petals, I thrust in both hands. Oh – within the flower I, too, was the flower’s scent, the flower’s sound, the flower’s light. [...] Then it happened. Suddenly the flower’s back arched like a bow; the dazzling hair scattered wildly; and in my back there struck and lodged an impact. In the crotch, that soaking liquid. The soaking descent. The clinging descent. / Oh, descent. Yes. I am descending. The helicopter is descending.¹⁵ (Jeon Bong-geon, 전봉건 2008: 89, “Flower and Descent,” 꽃과 하강)

At the opening of “Flower and Descent” (꽃과 하강) the subject is felled by a bullet from somewhere in the jungle and is evacuated by helicopter. “And now a helicopter is carrying me” The wounds make his body constrained, unfree, depriving him of control over his body. The narration of his transport, moreover, now differs from the earlier natural description – “dark-green leaves blazing as they caught the full sun” – to a series of repetitions: “I am descending.” The gap between perception and condition – “How far have I gone down? And when did my descent end?” – indicates not only that the subject’s visual faculty is impaired by the wound but also that he is not in a position to gain a whole grasp of the world in which he is situated. Note the circumstances and the subject’s state that follow. In a flash, as he is being carried, he

¹⁵ “나는 따뜻한 액체가 질척이는 아랫도리를 틀면서 천천히 넘어져갔다. 그리고 지금은 헬리콥터가 나를 실어 나르고 있다. 헬리콥터는 하강중이다. 나도 하강중이다. 난도질당한 빛을 타고 하강중이다. / 얼마나 내려갔을까. 그리고 나의 하강은 언제 끝났던 것인가. 거기서부터 냄새가 있었고 소리가 있었고 성한 빛이 있었다. 길게 드러누운 내 발끝에는 하얀 슬림을 걸친 여자가 웃고 있었다. [...] “여기는 어디요?” “그런 것 아실 것 없어요. 쉬셔야 해요. 이제 겨우 쉬시게 되신 것을, 쉬셔야 해요. 정말.” “이름은?” “꽃이에요.” / 나는 손을 뻗었다. 그때에도 나는 앞으로 손을 뻗었다. 꽃이 있었다. 나는 소년이었다. 바람과 빛과 냇물이 흐르고 있었다. 소리와 향기가 있는 곳에 꽃이 있었다. 나는 손을 뻗었다. [...] 가장 짙고 여린 꽃잎을 헤쳐 내 두 손을 넣었다. 오오 꽃 속에서 나도 또한 꽃의 향기, 꽃의 소리, 꽃의 빛이었다. 그때였다. 갑자기 꽃의 등허리가 활처럼 휘면서 눈부신 머리칼은 사납게 흩어지고 내 등허리엔 때리며 박혀드는 충격이 왔다. 틀리는 아랫도리에 질퍽한 액체. 질척이는 액체. 질척이는 하강. / 오오 하강. 그렇다. 나는 하강중이다. 헬리콥터는 하강중이다.” (Jeon Bong-geon, 전봉건 2008: 89, “Flower and Descent,” 꽃과 하강)

converses with “a woman in a white slim dress,” then finds himself somewhere with “wind and light and brook-water,” reaching toward a flower as sounds and fragrances are apprehended by his will. That such effects arrive without clear causal links points again to the subject’s inability to apprehend his world fully. The natural images and volitional gestures suddenly proposed are undercut by the poem’s ending, which returns us to his bleeding body and the helicopter’s descent; paradoxically, this emphasizes once again the constrained condition of the subject’s vision. As in “BISCUITS,” the subject faces events that occur irrespective of his will; he lacks initiative vis-à-vis the war; his tenuous subjectivity is overwhelmed by his condition. The constrained vision in this poem stems from injury-induced unfreedom and evacuation logistics; events arrive apart from will, and the subject’s agency is overwhelmed.

Up to this point I have examined configurations of the subject’s limited vision in Jeon Bong-geon’s poetry that take the Korean War as their principal matter. In contrast to the traditional lyric subject, Jeon’s subject appears with a restricted or constrained vision. In “Play” and “0157584,” devices of war – the rifle’s aperture and ballistic range – regulate the vision, producing a mechanized, anonymized subject. In “BISCUITS” and “Flower and Descent,” isolation in a trench and injuries from gunfire constrain the body and the subject’s vision, such that reality-perception is disabled. To sum up: unlike the contemplative vision of traditional lyric poetry, Jeon’s poetry figures the subject as overwhelmed by war, with a limited vision and tenuous subjectivity.

3. Dissolved subjectivity manifested within the cityscape of war through deconstructed vision: The case of Kim Gu-yong

What, then, of the vision in the subject who appears in Kim Gu-yong’s poems? The subject forms subjectivity through relations to others and to the world to which he belongs; this holds for act of seeing as well. Seeing is mediated by the social and cultural contexts to which the visual subject belongs; thus even the same object or landscape may, through this mediation, evoke different affects or be sensed in different ways by the subject. If the world and reality in which he is situated are

incomprehensible, then the subject, too, cannot help but take an incomprehensible stance toward his own subjectivity. Therefore, vision – namely, the act of seeing in Kim’s poems produces two problems: first, the subject cannot properly recognize what it is that he is seeing; second, the seeing subject cannot properly recognize himself. These twin uncertainties concerning vision appear in Kim’s poems either separately or in combination, deconstructing the subject’s vision. The deconstruction of the vision means that the subject who sees becomes split or undone; such splitting or undoing, in turn, is inseparable from a fissure in his sense of the world. As the subject’s perception of the world collapses, vision is deconstructed, leading in turn to the dissolution of the subject. To articulate the points outlined above, Kim Gu-yong’s poetry captures how the cityscape – hitherto the most familiar space for the modern subject – transforms into a profoundly alien space through the affective currents of anxiety induced by the event of war. Whereas Jeon Bong-geon’s poems explore the modalities of limited vision manifested in the subject within the battlefield, Kim Gu-yong’s poetry engages with the forms of deconstructed vision arising from the estrangement of the urban space as perceived by the subject amidst war.

With a trembling hand he draws the curtain. In the glass crammed with the city, a fighter plane passes, belly black and plainly exposed. A wall from the netherworld shakes the fog; high-rises standing like phantoms startle and darken every window. He too kills the light. The window trembles with the distant boom of guns. The vibration reaches into his very heart. As if a touch would set it roaring, the sun spins round and drops onto a spire. People boil over, at a loss, in every road, every alley, every house. The radio announces the tragedy of the twentieth century. Standing at the position of the future, he looks out a window that has no light, no smell, no sound, no taste. Rain falls from his two eyes. / Night falls. His face is a subjectless nation in the film. Each time the rain runs down, the he within the window keeps collapsing. Outside, too, under cover of darkness, things fall. The gun reports fly one after another. Bare skulls line up along the window.¹⁶ (Kim Gu-yong, 김구용 2000b:

¹⁶ “커튼을 떨리는 손으로 걷는다. 도시가 들어찬 유리창에 전투기는 검은 배를 노박 드러내며 넘어간다. 안개를 흔드는 저승의 아우성소리, 망령처럼 선 고층들은 소스라쳐 놀라 눈마다 불을 쬐다. 그도 불을 죽였다. 창이 먼 포소리에 떨린다. 마음속까지 진동한다. 닿으면 불이 활활 당길 듯, 해는 뱅그르르 돌며 침탐으로 떨어진다. 사람들은 행길마다 골목마다 집집마다 어쩔 줄을 몰라

339, “Windowpane,” 유리창)

Through the window the subject faces the cityscape of war – fighter planes passing, the window trembling at the sound of guns. The landscape no longer presents itself as a peaceful urban space, but as an estranged and alien cityscape of war. Fear of war shifts reality into an incomprehensible space where life is about to become death and death is sensed as vividly as life. Expressions that follow the fighter’s appearance – “a wail from the netherworld,” “high-rises standing like phantoms” – show that the subject’s sensation of the world collapses through the recognition of the war scene, such that he cannot properly recognize what he is seeing. Darkness produced by extinguishing the lights further intensifies this state. It nearly blocks the act of seeing and, beyond merely limiting vision, makes the subject’s sense of the flow of time uncertain; it thereby induces a division of the subject and opens the way for imaginary to intrude. This is why the sentence “Standing at the position of the future, he looks out a window that has no light, no smell, no sound, no taste” is crucial. It marks the point at which the imaginariness created by fear of war and death begins. As the loss of all senses makes clear, the “position of the future” is the place of death – not yet here, but soon to be undergone. Though he is inside the room, the expression “rain falls from his two eyes” indicates a reversal in which, under the premonition of death, the self-reflected in the window as imaginariness is felt more clearly than the self who looks at the window in reality. When the subject collapses, he no longer appears in the glass, but bare skulls – imaginary of death – stand out there in sharp relief. The bare skulls in this poem signify that, as vision is deconstructed and the subject’s identity collapses, the subject is rendered not through the face but through the form of the bones that delineate this very identity. This representation underscores how the deconstructed vision produces a dissolution of subjectivity, making the

들끓는다. 라디오는 이십 세기의 비극을 고한다. 그는 미래의 위치에 서서 빛도 냄새도 소리도 맛도 없는 유리창을 내다본다. 비가 두 눈에서 내린다. / 밤이 내린다. 얼굴은 액연 속의 나라 없던 백성. 비가 죽죽 흘러내릴 때마다 유리창 안의 그는 계속 무너진다. 바깥도 어둠에 가려 쓰러진다. 포소리가 연신 날아온다. 백골들이 유리창에 늘어선다.” (Kim Gu-yong, 김구용 2000b: 339, “Windowpane,” 유리창)

subject perceptible only in terms of its underlying structural or skeletal form.

Such intrusions of imaginary, which destroy the sense of reality and overwhelm the subject, appear often in Kim's 1950s poems: for example, in "Interior," (실내) where the snake-woman in a painting of Eden becomes embodied and binds the subject's body, or in "Myth," (신화) where the imaginary of the self in the mirror remains vividly present as "that fellow's torso standing erect in the room"¹⁷ even after the subject has shattered the mirror.

The lamp reflects that fishbowl too. Through the glass case that holds apples and bread, I am at a vantage from which I can see, in a single instant, the goldfish playing in a double interval. It is I who am in the water. Receipts undulate, appearing little by little in the water. Moss sprouts green on my hopes. Fish the color of searching part the air where there is not even a cloud, flashing silver scales as they fumble about me. Between the branches of the coral – constructions of my rashly outstretched mind – if I close my eyes, countless fish cross the full moon that pierces the abyss of the sea's sheer wall. But my face is that wall's DEATH MASK, sweating oil and oxidizing into music and neon.¹⁸
(Kim Gu-yong, 김구용 2000b: 306, "Cafe," 다방)

Although "Cafe" (다방) is set in one of the familiar city spaces that frequently appear in modern poems, the sensations the subject experiences within it are not a simple representation of reality; rather, they show the deconstruction of the subject's vision and dissolved subjectivity. The problem of vision here stems from the subject's inability to recognize what it is he is seeing. The medium for this

¹⁷ "방안에 우뚝 서 있는 놈의 동체" (Kim Gu-yong, 김구용 2000b: 335, "Myth," 신화)

¹⁸ "전등은 저 어항도 비친다. 나는 능금과 빵이 들어 있는 유리관을 통하여, 금붕어가 이중의 간격을 일순으로 노는 것이 보이는 위치에 있다. 내가 물 속에 있는 것이다. 계산서가 점점 물속으로 밀려거리며 나타난다. 이끼가 나의 희망에 파릇파릇 돌아난다. 모색의 고기들은 구름도 없는 분위기를 헤치며, 은린을 번쩍이며 내 주변을 헤맨다. 내 함부로 뺏은 정신의 구성인 산호의 가지들 사이로 눈을 감으면 수많은 고기들이 감벽의 해심을 뚫는 만월을 넘는다. 그러나 내 얼굴은 저 벽의 DEATH MASK, 기름땀을 흘리며 음악과 전광으로 산화하고 있다." (Kim Gu-yong, 김구용 2000b: 306, "Cafe," 다방)

problem is the glass case, the key apparatus that deconstructs the subject's vision. Because glass's transparency abolishes the division between inside and outside, it produces boundary-blur. It thus allows the subject to perceive "I am a vantage from which I can see, in a single instant, the goldfish playing in a double interval" and, unlike the earlier poems discussed, the uncertainty of the boundary mediated by the glass case intrudes into the subject's cognition in the image that "moss sprouts green on my hopes." Even though he is in a cafe, the subject comes to perceive himself as if he were "in the water." The subject's vision can no longer point to a single world; within the multi-layered space whose boundaries are smudged, it wavers. The world that the subject perceives once he supposes himself to be underwater differs from the world he recognizes within the cafe: it is dynamic, a variegated scene of flashing silver scales and coral. Yet what this supposition lays bare is the collapse of the subject's sense of the world. The vision no longer guarantees a stable grasp of reality; instead it works by producing superimposed, incomprehensible images. Even so, the forms that intrude when the subject looks at the glass case also collapse when the subject re-recognizes himself as the one looking at the glass case. As the statement "my face is that wall's DEATH MASK" shows, the subject functions both as the minimal condition for vision to be possible and as the inevitable reason that dismantles it. Though it treats an everyday familiar space of the postwar city, "Cafe" (다방) never forms a stable web of meaning. Through the mediating device of the glass case, the subject's vision trembles and splits, and, as a result, even the subject himself is re-recognized as a figure of death. In this way Kim's poetry reveals the postwar reality's incomprehensibility and the subject's powerlessness through the very process by which the vision is undone. Deconstructed vision in this poem is produced by transparency as mediating apparatus, yielding a double failure of recognition that undoes the vision and exposes a world-sense fissure.

I was dead. Another me was holding funeral rites for me. Tears flowed and set a seven-hued rainbow on the oil lamp's flame. A white deer with coral antlers came onto that bridge and, spreading its wings upon my fallen chest, cooed and cooed. From a distance just so far away. I was watching this other me.¹⁹ (Kim Gu-yong, 김구용 2000b: 318, "Hope,"

¹⁹ "나는 죽었다. 또 하나의 나는 나를 조상(弔喪)하고 있었다. 눈물은 흘러서 호롱불이 일곱 빛 무지개를 세웠다. 산호뿔 흰 사슴이 그 다리 위로 와서 날개를

희망)

Whereas in “Windowpane” the subject, though overwhelmed by fear of war and death, once existed as a distinctive subject (“he”), in “Hope” (희망) the subject appears in three simultaneous states: ‘the dead I’, ‘the I who mourns the dead I’, and yet ‘another I who watches the I who mourns the dead I.’ Death is an event that severs the subject both from himself and from the world. Yet the chain of “I” that appears even after “I” am dead turns the subject into an other to himself; the subject is in a state of uncertainty in which he cannot fully recognize himself. Such uncertainty also appears in the poem’s images. Images such as “tears flowed and set a seven-hued rainbow on the oil lamp’s flame” or a winged deer cooing are jumbled with no graspable causality; they indicate that the subject has lost the ability to recognize what he sees. Deconstructed vision results from the simultaneous failure of object- and self-recognition, thereby undoing the vision and exposing subjective splitting and a fractured world-sense. In this situation, the subject is no longer autonomous. The subject is deconstructed from ‘the dead I’ into ‘the I who mourns the dead I,’ and by the conclusion of the poem, is further deconstructed into ‘another I who watches the I who mourns the dead I. This chain – from the I who mourns the dead I to another I who watches the I who mourns the dead I – demonstrates that even the act of seeing is implicated in a process of deconstruction, signaling the impossibility of stable identity. In turn, it manifests the dissolution of the subject.

What, then, does the title “Hope” signify? We can approach this question through a point of contact with Jeon Bong-geon’s poem “Hope.” Just as the subject in Kim’s poem recognizes another subject as another me, so in Jeon’s “Hope” we find a subject recognizing another me, as in “because, leaving nothing out, the whole of the longed-for me / stands within the frozen soot-black of war / in my eyes”²⁰ (Jeon Bong-geon, 전봉건 2008: 246, “Hope,” 희망) Of course,

쓰러진 내 가슴에 퍼며 구구구 울었다. 나는 저만한 거리에서 또 하나의 이러한 나를 보고 있었다.” (Kim Gu-yong, 김구용 2000b: 318, “Hope,” 희망)

²⁰ “어느 것 하나 빠뜨리지 않고/다 함께 그리운 내가/전쟁의 숫검정이 자욱이 얼어붙은/내 눈시울 속에/서 있는 까닭이다” (Jeon Bong-geon, 전봉건 2008: 246, “Hope,” 희망)

the “other me” the subjects in the two poems discover are different in meaning. In Kim’s poem, the subject, by way of his own death, otherizes himself and seeks to cross over into another me, whereas in Jeon’s poem the subject recognizes another me as the totality of longing contained in his own eyes. Yet by presenting other selves different from the self, both poems test unknown possibilities for the subject and for the world to which the subject belongs. As Kim writes elsewhere, that “not knowing what ought to be done” “implies that many ‘possibilities’ lie ahead”²¹ (Kim Gu-yong, 김구용 2000a: 397, “Modern Literature and Experience,” 현대문학과 체험), the two poems titled “Hope” show both the confusion faced by the poetic subject who confronts the incomprehensible event of war and an attitude that seeks future possibilities to overcome that confusion.

4. Conclusion

This study has examined the configurations of the vision in Korean postwar poetry by focusing on the poems of Jeon Bong-geon and Kim Gu-yong. As Martin Jay’s discussion makes clear, vision is one of the important distinctions that set eras apart; at the same time, by means of that difference, it performs the function of revealing an era’s period-character. Thus, seeing is not merely a private, physiological perceiving of images upon the eyes but an action that occurs within relations to others and to society. This study analyzed modes of the vision that appear in Korean postwar poetry of the 1950s and sought to clarify, on the sensory plane, the distinctive ways in which the poetic subject perceives the world amid the experience of war and the urban and social realities that followed. In postwar poetry, the vision functions not merely as a tool for representing external objects but as a sensory conduit that mediates the war’s horrific memories and scars and as a device that exposes the splitting of the subject’s cognition.

For Jeon Bong-geon, the vision appears in a limited state. This differs from the traditional lyric subject who unites with the world

²¹ “어떻게 해야 좋을지 모른다는 것은 그만큼 앞으로의 여러가지 ‘가능’을 함축한다.” (Kim Gu-yong, 김구용 2000a: 397, “Modern Literature and Experience,” 현대문학과 체험)

through contemplation of nature. Jeon's poetic subject exists without any initiative over his situation, even when looking upon nature. The subject's vision, continuously narrowed by the "M1 sight aperture," is inseparable from his subjectivity growing ever more tenuous amid wartime conditions and serves to remind us of the tragic condition of the human being in war. For Kim Gu-yong, the vision appears deconstructed. If subjectivity is formed through relations to others, and to the world, then Kim's recognition that reality is incomprehensible connects directly to a recognition of his own subjectivity. In Kim's poems, the act of seeing consequently raises problems of uncertainty concerning both the object seen and the subject who sees, deconstructing the subject's vision. Through this deconstruction, the subject is split or undone; accordingly, confusion and division in the perception of the world come to the fore. The dissolution of the subject is thus articulated through these processes.

The significance of this study lies in its analysis of the modes of the 'vision' that appear in Korean postwar poetry, thereby clarifying, at the sensory level, the distinctive way the subject perceives both the world and the self after the experience of war. In this way we see that postwar poetry goes beyond the status of mere epochal testimony or record of war experience to render sensory and ontological anxiety in poetic form. It is hoped that, by way of the concept of the vision, this study will contribute to laying a foundation for deepening the problem of sense and perception in research on Korean postwar poetry.

Conflict of interest statement: The author has no conflict of interest to disclose.

Bibliography

- Choi, Dong-ho (최동호). 2014. "The Poetic Currents of the 1950s and Their Intellectual-Historical Significance." In *History of Modern Korean Literature*. eds. Yun-sik Kim, 311–331. Seoul: Hyundae Munhak.
- Cho, Gang-sok (조강석). 2021. "Affect and the Image-System in Korean

- Poetry (2).” In *The Poetics of Image-Thinking and Affect in Korean Poetry*, 349–50. Seoul: Somyeong Press.
- Jeon, Bong-geon (전봉건). 2015. “Brief Thoughts.” In *Selected Poetics of Jeon Bong-geon*, 260. Seoul: Munhak Seon.
- Jeon Bong-geon (전봉건). 2008. “Play.” In *Collected Works of Jeon Bong-geon*. eds. Jin-woo Nam, 23. Pajoo: Munhakhdongnae.
- Jeon Bong-geon (전봉건). 2008. “0157584.” In *Collected Works of Jeon Bong-geon*. eds. Jin-woo Nam, 28. Pajoo: Munhakhdongnae.
- Jeon Bong-geon (전봉건). 2008. “BISCUITS.” In *Collected Works of Jeon Bong-geon*. eds. Jin-woo Nam, 24. Pajoo: Munhakhdongnae.
- Jeon Bong-geon (전봉건). 2008. “Flower and Descent.” In *Collected Works of Jeon Bong-geon*. eds. Jin-woo Nam, 89. Pajoo: Munhakhdongnae.
- Jeon Bong-geon (전봉건). 2008. “Hope.” In *Collected Works of Jeon Bong-geon*. eds. Jin-woo Nam, 246. Pajoo: Munhakhdongnae.
- Ju, Eun-woo (주은우). 2003. “On the Problem of Seeing.” In *Vision and Modernity*, 19–20. Seoul: Hannarae.
- Jay, Martin. 1992. “Scopic Regimes of Modernity.” In *Modernity and Identity*, eds. Lash Scott, 178–195. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Kim, Hyeon-ja (김현차). 2007. “Poetry of the War Period and the Postwar.” In *A History of Modern Korean Poetry*. eds. Oh Sae-young, 245–336. Seoul: Minumsa.
- Kim, Gu-yong (김구용). 2000. “Reminiscence Blooming on an Old Vase.” In *Collected Works of Kim Gu-yong 6 – Ties*, 55–56. Seoul: Sol.
- Kim Gu-yong (김구용). 2000. “Modern Literature and Experience.” In *Collected Works of Kim Gu-yong 6 – Ties*, 397. Seoul: Sol.
- Kim Gu-yong (김구용). 2000. “Windowpane.” In *Collected Works of Kim Gu-yong 1 – Poetry*, 339. Seoul: Sol.
- Kim Gu-yong (김구용). 2000. “Myth” In *Collected Works of Kim Gu-yong 1 – Poetry*: 335. Seoul: Sol.
- Kim Gu-yong (김구용). 2000. “Cafe.” In *Collected Works of Kim Gu-yong 1 – Poetry*, 306. Seoul: Sol.
- Kim Gu-yong (김구용). 2000. “Hope.” In *Collected Works of Kim Gu-yong 1 – Poetry*, 318. Seoul: Sol.
- Shin, Dong-mun (신동문). 1961. “When I Wrote Balloon Chronicle.” In *Anthology of Korean Postwar Poetry*. eds. Chul Baek, Chi-hwan Ryu, Ji-hoon Cho, and Eo-ryung Lee, 388–391. Seoul: Shingu Munhwasa.
- Yu, Jeong (유정). 1961. “Conversation.” In *Anthology of Korean Postwar Poetry*. eds. Chul Baek, Chi-hwan Ryu, Ji-hoon Cho, and Eo-ryung Lee, 393–395. Seoul: Shingu Munhwasa.

International Journal of Korean Humanities and Social Sciences
vol. 11/2025

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14746/kr.2025.11.06>

ASPECTS OF VOICES APPEARING IN SHIN KYUNG-RIM'S POETRY

BOKYOUNG KIM, PhD

Division of Liberal Education

Gyeongbuk National University, Republic of Korea
1375 Gyeondong-ro, Andong-si, Gyeongsangbuk-do,
bk-kim@naver.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-0663-6628>

Abstract: This study explores the transformation in Shin Kyung-rim's poetic world in the 1970s-1980s by categorizing the vocal modalities that appear in his poems into three analytic categories - the lyric self, the poetic speaker, and the poetic subject. Criticizing the prior studies' tendency to interpret Shin Kyung-rim's work under the discursive category of 'Minjung,' this study seeks to move beyond ideological frameworks and to reinterpret his poetry through attention to the internal structures of the text and the layers of its practical relationships. When the voice of the lyric self is foregrounded, the poem remains at the level of the poet's inward confession; by contrast, the emergence of the *mudang* speaker actively embraces the voice of the other, converting the reader from a mere listener into a performer. Furthermore, the voice of the poetic subject enables readerly intervention, allowing the poem to function as a constantly renewed discourse. These shifts of voice show the process by which the text moves from singularity to complexity and from sameness to otherness, demonstrating that Shin Kyung-rim's poetry shapes the voice of actual other in reality as living events.

Keywords: Shin Kyung-rim, Farmer's Dance, Dalneomse, Minjung, lyric self, poetic speaker, mudang, poetic subject

신경림 시에 등장하는 목소리의 양상들

초록: 본 연구는 1970-80년대 신경림 시에 나타나는 목소리의 양상을 서정적 자아, 시적 화자, 시적 주체라는 세 범주로 나누어 분석함으로써 그의 시 세계의 변모 양상을 탐구하였다. 기존의 연구가 '민중'이라는 담론적 개념에 종속되어 신경림 시를 해석해 온 한계를 비판하며, 이데올로기적 틀에서 벗어나 시 텍스트의 내적 구조와 실제적 관계의 층위에서 시를 재해석하고자 하였다. 서정적 자아의 목소리가 전면에서 드러나는 경우 시는 시인의 내적 고백 차원에 머물렀으나, 무당 화자의 등장은 타자의 목소리를 적극적으로 수용하며 시를 사건화하고 독자를 단순한 청자가 아닌 수행자로 전환했다. 또한, 시적 주체의 목소리는 독자의 개입을 가능하게 하여 시를 끊임없이 새롭게 생성되는 담론으로 기능하게 했다. 이러한 목소리의 변화는 텍스트가 단일성에서 복합성으로, 동일성에서 타자성으로 나아가는 과정을 보여주는 것으로 신경림의 시가 현실에 존재하는 타자의 목소리를 살아 있는 사건으로 형상화했음을 드러낸다.

키워드: 신경림, 농무, 달넘세, 민중, 서정적 자아, 시적 화자, 무당, 시적 주체

1. Rereading Shin Kyung-rim's Poetry

Shin Kyung-rim (신경림, April 6, 1936-May 22, 2024) made his literary debut in 1955. After returning to his hometown in 1956, he ceased his poetic activities until 1965, and subsequently published his first poetry collection *Farmer's Dance* (농무) in 1973. *Farmer's Dance* (농무) primarily depicts the lives of the Minjung (people, 민중) who surrounded him at the time, together with the concrete rural experiences he had after moving back to his hometown. In his poetry, the Minjung (people) appear in a variety of forms and aspects grounded in the poet's experiences and perceptions, which indicates that a Minjung (people)-oriented sensibility strongly influenced his consciousness.¹

¹ The keyword of the 1970s and 1980s, 'Minjung', presents certain translation challenges. At the time, in Korea, the concept did not simply denote 'people', but rather designated a historically and politically constructed subject. These individuals

“Intellectuals must be among the Minjung (people). Within the ‘Minjung (people)’ they must speak and sing in their voices. Intellectuals are not an independent class. When they distance themselves from the Minjung (people), they lose their true intellectual voice and fade” (Shin Kyung-rim, *신경림* 1977: 14) reveals that he perceived himself particularly within the relationship with Minjung (people).

Shin Kyung-rim’s *Farmer’s Dance* (*농무*), winner of the first Manhae Prize for Literature (*만해문학상*) was highly praised for its realist poetry depicting the lives of marginalized farmers in the 1970s, and his poems, critical essays and poetics came to occupy a prominent place in the Changjakkwabipyung (*창작과비평*), which at the time was advancing the theory of Minjung Literature (*민중문학론*). Shin Kyung-rim likewise used Changjakkwabipyung, as a venue to articulate his views on farmers’ literature and Minjung literature. However, by the late 1970s – when Minjung literature theory was evolving into a theory of national literature (*민족문학론*) – the evaluation of Shin Kyung-rim by Changjakkwabipyung, shifted markedly. At a 1978 symposium on national literature, Yoo Jong-ho (*유종호*) and Baek Nak-cheong (*백낙청*) adopted a noticeably more critical stance toward Shin Kyung-rim’s poetry than before, criticizing on what they perceived as a lack of commitment to unification grounded in national spirit.² However, the remarks of Ko Un (*고은*), who also attended that symposium, deserve attention. His statement that issues such as peasant literature or Minjung literature were raised in response to the circumstances of the time, but only recently has the concept of national literature been established³

primarily comprised the oppressed working class, farmers and the urban poor, and were invoked as the agent of social transformation. When ‘Minjung’ refers to ordinary people, the term ‘people’ is appended; when the term is treated at the discursive level, it is simply written as ‘Minjung’.

² At the symposium, Yoo Jong-ho judged that since *Farmer’s Dance* (*농무*), Shin Kyung-rim had been writing “works of the same character,” and remarked that “he should stop lamenting and not remain confined to experiential depictions of the period around the 1950s, but rather explore new horizons.” In response, Baek Nak-cheong agreed with Yoo Jong-ho’s remark and further assessed that Shin Kyung-rim’s poetry exhibited a weak “density rooted in indigenous sentiment,” and, in particular, lacked “a fervent passion for unification” (Ko Un et al., *고은 외* 1978: 29-32).

³ The full passage containing this remark is as follows. “Entering the 1960s, criticism emerged against the Korean Writers’ Association (*한국문인협회*)’s purism that had dominated the literary world in the 1950s – criticism of literature that had become

subtly indicates that critics have, to some extent, interpreted and evaluated works according to the ideologies they uphold or the discourses promoted by the media. Afterwards, as the theory of national literature expanded with Changjakkwabipyung at the center in the 1980s, Shin Kyung-rim's poetry was no longer actively cited, and the significance of his poetic world became fixed as bearing a Minjung-oriented coloration under the dominant influence of the Minjung literature discourse.

Meanwhile, 'Minjung' emerged not only within the 1970s literary scene but also socially as a central subject of movements. As 'Minjung' combined with various contemporary issues through a complex and multifaceted process, the term came to signify the agent of historical transformation (Kang Jeong-gu and Kim Jong-hoi, 강정구, 김종희 2011: 293-323). However, at this time, 'Minjung' was less a reference to the numerous ordinary people who existed in reality than a potential being established as the subject of historical change. Likewise, the 'farmer as 'Minjung' that Changjakkwabipyung set as the subject of literature in the 1970s was a being of obligation demanded by the process of historical development – able to exist as a potentiality but not as an actuality (Lee Hyun-seok, 이현석 2011: 223-254). Yet, as shown above, the Minjung (people) appearing in Shin Kyung-rim's poems were the rural farmers the poet personally met and lived with, and his words "Intellectuals must be among the Minjung (people)" indicate that he established a practical relationship with actual people rather than with an abstract, conceptualized 'Minjung'. It is therefore necessary to discard the interpretive reading that treats 'Minjung' as a merely potential, conceptual construct and to reread Shin Kyung-rim's poetry accordingly.

Based on this awareness of a problem, various attempts have

detached from various real-world problems – and debates between pure literature (순수문학) and engagement literature (참여문학) took place; attention concentrated on those issues. Then, with the launch of Changjakkwabipyung, more serious discussions were led and the journal played a pioneering role up to that point. Adapting to the circumstances at hand, issues such as peasant literature or Minjung literature were raised, and recently the concept of national literature has been established. In that respect, it is true that many poets and writers were awakened through the consistent efforts of figures like Professor Baek and Professor Gu. But what will be important going forward is that, in fact, up until now it seems the focus has been on the examining the possibility of national literature.” (Ko Un et al., 고은 외 1978: 51)

been made to reinterpret Shin Kyung-rim's poetry from perspectives that depart from the conventional view. Studies that interpreted the Minjung (people) appearing in Shin Kyung-rim's poems as vivid, everyday beings who cannot be grasped through ideological interpretations (Kang Jeong-gu, 강정구 2005), and studies that have uncovered the Minjung(people)-ness in his poetry to involve not only realism but also an intellectual gaze – an aspect that Changjakkwabipyung side had rejected - (Park Yeon-hee, 박연희 2016)⁴ have opened up diverse possibilities for interpreting Shin Kyung-rim's poetic world. This study shares the premise that Shin Kyung-rim's poetry has been interpreted under the influence of dominant discourses and therefore seeks to read his poetry from a different perspective than before.

A defining characteristic of Shin Kyung-rim's poetry in the 1970s–1980s is that, over the course of his poetic activity, the modalities of the speaking voice in his poems show a marked transformation. The direction of this change moves from the lyric self to the poetic speaker, and from the poetic speaker toward the poetic subject. In *Farmer's Dance* (농무) (1973) and *Saejae* (새재) (1979), the voice is largely interpreted as that of the lyric self; in *Dalneomse* (달님세) (1986), a poetic speaker configured as a mudang (Korean shaman, 무당) emerges; and after that, voices appear whose meanings are to be read from the standpoint of the poetic subject. As the speaking voice in the poems changes in this way, the content of the poems

⁴ The 1970s literary field was polarized between the Changjakkwabipyung side and the Munhakgwajiseong (문학과지성) side. Although the two sides shared the themes of anti-dictatorship and the contradictions of capitalism, they were politically and culturally contrasted, each tending to pursue, respectively, nationalism and freedom; 'Minjung'-ism and intellectualism; and realism and modernism. Park Yeon-hee (박연희), however, attempted to dismantle the existing dichotomy by demonstrating that the way Shin Kyung-rim was placed in Changjakkwabipyung and Hwang Dong-Gyu (황동규) in Munhakgwajiseong "overlaps with the period in which the two media's mutually incompatible discourses were becoming solidified." Arguing that interpretations of the poems had been polarized according to media discourse, she attempted to reinterpret the poetry of the two poets by raising the need to read the poetry of Shin Kyung-rim and Hwang Dong-Gyu in a fresh way. According to Park Yeon-hee's study, the 'Minjung'-ness expressed in Shin Kyung-rim's poetry is "reproduced by an intellectual gaze," while the intellectual discourse emphasized through Hwang Dong-Gyu's poetry is "accentuated in contrast to the concept of 'Minjung' (Park Yeon-hee, 박연희 2016).

likewise progresses from unity to complexity, from closedness to expansiveness, and from sameness to otherness. This is because, depending on whose voice is speaking, the relationship between that voice and the poetic object, the relationship between the poetic object and the reader, and the degree to which readers may intervene in the poem all differ. Therefore, this study will examine the aspects in which the modalities of the speaking voice in Shin Kyung-rim's poetry change, while also proposing a specific methodology for analyzing the speaking voice in poetry through the case of his work.

2. The voice of the Lyric Self

When examining Shin Kyung-rim's poetry collections by period of publication, it becomes clear that no single vocal modality consistently predominates in any given period; even within a single volume, individual poems present differing kinds of speaking voices. Nonetheless, in the 1970s-1980s – the period in which the poet was most active, and which corresponds to his early poetic world – a sequential flow can be observed: as his output accumulates, the prominence of the lyric self's voice diminishes, and the voices of the poetic speaker, followed by the poetic subject, appear with increasing frequency. This shift cannot automatically be taken to signify, in itself, a developmental progression of his poetic world.⁵ What is clear, however, is that the transformation of the speaking voice that occurs over the course of his work in the 1970s–1980s brings about changes not only in the poem's formal elements but also, in terms of content, in the relations established between the speaking subject and the poetic object. This, in turn, leads to a change in the relationship between the poem and its readers. Depending on whose voice is speaking, the distance between reader and poetic object can either narrow or widen; the reader may actively participate in interpretation by inserting their own reality into the poem or may perceive the poem as detached from reality. Therefore, whose voice speaks in a poem determines whether

⁵ From the 1990s onward, the voice of the lyric self – identified with the poet – re-emerges as a prominent voice in Shin Kyung-rim's poetry. His poetic world thus takes on the character of the poet's inner confession.

the poem can function on the level of reality – since the reader functions as the mediator between poem and reality.

The lyric poetry genre has played a dominant role in the history of Korean poetry, and among its influences the concepts of ‘lyricism’ advanced by Hegel and by Staiger occupy considerable weight in Korean lyric discourse. According to Hegel, lyric poetry is “that in which the subject’s feeling and reflection absorb the world of existence into themselves, experience it upon this inward foundation, transform it internally, and only then express it in words” (Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel 2015: 256). In other words, ‘lyricism’ is characterized by inwardness or subjectivity produced through the synthesis of subjectivity and objectivity. By contrast, Staiger – who understands the essence of lyricism as ‘Reminiscence (Erinnerung)’ (회감) – conceptualizes ‘Reminiscence (Erinnerung)’ as “a term for the absence of distance between subject and object” and as “a term for lyrical mutual Harmony (Ineinander, Schmelz)” (Emil Staiger 1978: 96). Staiger does not acknowledge the dichotomy of subject and object; rather, argues that subject and object stand in an intersubjective relation and overcome distance through a process of ‘harmony’. Nevertheless, it is difficult to claim that Staiger has entirely broken with the initial state of separation and the dialectical process of synthesis through subjectivity that Hegel presupposes. ‘Reminiscence’ which brings about memories, begins from a relationship in which subject and object are separated, and ‘harmony’ is not markedly different from dialectical synthesis. Ultimately, then, ‘lyricism’ is uttered through the poet’s psychic activity, and the lyric self is identified with the poet.⁶

Therefore, we should regard the poet’s inwardness as the original center of lyrical poetry. Yet this inwardness itself is partly a state in which the individual is purely unified with himself and partly something that becomes richly particularized and is fractured and dispersed into a wide variety of representations, emotions, impressions, insights, etc.; their conjunction exists only insofar as the same self, as a mere vessel, receives and contains them within self. Consequently, for a lyric work to acquire the unifying point that binds the whole, the poet must enter into a particular mood or situation and, at the same time, identify

⁶ In relation to the issue of literary genres: in addition to Staiger’s definition of lyric poetry as the ‘Reminiscence (Erinnerung)’ of the lyric author (self), if we synthesize Hamburger’s view of lyric as an empirical statement of the lyric self and Kayser’s understanding of lyric as ‘internalization,’ the result is that the lyric self in lyric poetry remains inseparable from the author (Cho Kang-sok, 조강석 2009: 4).

himself with these particularizations – thereby feeling and representing himself from within them. Only by this means does it become a totality confined to the self and express only what is raised in and related to that bounded situation.⁷ (Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel 2015: 255)

Hegel explicitly states that lyric poetry is an expression of “the poet’s inner life.” Moreover, through inwardness, the individual is simultaneously “purely united with oneself” and “richly particularized,” and the self produces a totalized “identical self” through specialization and identification with itself. Staiger’s theory, which defines the essence of the lyric poetry as ‘Reminiscence,’ is likewise explained as ‘the Self-Internalization of the World’ (세계의 자아화) or ‘the Principle of Sameness’ (동일성의 원리) – that is, the world’s entry into the subject.⁸ In this way, the lyric self presupposes the concept of a unitary subject as the center of integrated thought. However, although reading poems in the voice of the lyric self, equated with the poet, is an appropriate concept for exploring individual’s inner life, it has the limitation that it is ill suited to apprehending objects and aspects of the world that are not subsumed within the self’s consciousness.

⁷ “그러므로 우리는 시인의 내적인 것을 서정적 시가의 원래적인 중심으로 보아야 한다. 그러나 이 내면성 자체는 부분적으로 개인이 자신과 순수하게 합일되는 것이며, 또 부분적으로는 매우 다채롭게 특수화하며 지극히 다양한 표상, 감정, 인상, 통찰력 등으로 분열·분산하고 있으며, 그 결합은 동일한 자아가 단순한 그릇으로서 그것들을 자기 속으로 수용하는 것에만 존재한다. 그러므로 서정시적 작품이 전체를 묶어 주는 통일점을 획득하기 위해서는, 시인은 특별한 기분을 가지거나 특별한 상황으로 들어가야 하는 동시에, 자기의 이 특수화와 자기를 동일시하고, 그리하여 이 특수화 속에서 자신을 느끼고 표상하도록 되어야 한다. 이것에 의해서만 그것은 자기 속에 국한된 하나의 총체가 되고, 이 한정된 상황에서 제기되고 이것과 관련을 가지는 것만을 표현한다.” (Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel 2015: 255)

⁸ ‘The Self-Internalization of the World’ is a concept of Jo Dong-il (조동일), who divided literature into four branches and explained the lyric branch as ‘the Self-Internalization of the World’ (Jo Dong-il 조동일 1974: 23). Kim Jun-oh (김준오) explains in the lyric poetry the world’s subordination to the subjectivity of the self as the ‘Principle of Sameness.’ According to Kim Jun-oh, the ‘Principle of Sameness’ is synonymous with the ‘Self-Internalization of the World’ (Kim Jun-oh 김준오 2017: 36).

Furthermore, so long as the poet brings the world into his own subjectivity and renders it in language, the lyric self will inevitably fail to achieve full identity between world and self. The moment this identity fails, there is little room for the reader to intervene. If the lyric self is identified with the poet, the poem becomes attached to the poet, and the reader is reduced to an observer witnessing a single person's frustration, unable to narrow the distance to the poetic object. In such cases, the poem may be a reflection of the contemporary reality confronting the poet and an outpouring of personal feeling, but it will be difficult for readers to re-cognize the poem on a realistic plane.

Farmer's Dance (농무) has been evaluated as a new form of realism that, grounded in intellectual discernment, moderates pain and sorrow and overcomes the aggressiveness, extremeness and crudeness characteristic of earlier realism. However, it is unreasonable to assume that this appraisal applies to every poem in *Farmer's Dance* (농무). Rather, the collection frequently exhibits poems in which the suffering and sorrow of the lyric self – identified with the poet – overwhelm the whole poem. This tendency is especially pronounced when the lyric self that appears as the 'I' is foregrounded.

Barefoot they go
Through the pouring rain
Bruises bloom
On the gaunt hands they clasped
They call for me
In angry voices
Then spit
On my terrified face⁹

(Shin Kyung-rim, 신경림 1973: 46)

⁹ “쏟아지는 빗발 속을/맨발로 간다/서로 잡은 아원 손에/머리 맺혔다/성난 목소리로/나를 부른다/겁먹은 내 얼굴에/침을 뱉는다” (신경림 1973: 46)

Even after twenty years my hometown
Remains unchanged poverty-like smoke
Coils around the village
And in it dog's bark
Kids cry and they all
Shout at me
Speak Speak Speak
Ah - I can say nothing at all.¹⁰

(Shin Kyung-rim, 신경림 1973: 67)

The two poems cited illustrate cases in which the speaking voice is unmistakably that of the lyric self. In these poems the 'I' contemplates the arduous lives of the 'Minjung' and feels a sense of duty and indebtedness – one aspect of the relationship between intellectuals and the 'Minjung' that the poet repeatedly emphasized across various venues. However, no communication takes place between the 'I' and 'They,' and in the latter part of the poems, the 'I' even becomes severed from the 'Minjung'. In the first poem, the “angry voices” and the act of “spitting” occur at the level of the speaker's consciousness rather than belonging to 'Them': the naked 'They' who are receding “through the pouring rain” are too powerless and frail to shout or carry out violent acts of rage. In the second poem, the cries of “Speak” likewise reflect the 'I's consciousness rather than their voices – 'They' merely weep. Thus, although the 'I' is enraged by their painful reality and feels compelled to speak, that impulse is transformed into an intensified guilt that one “can say nothing at all.” Ultimately, both poems conclude as confessions of the 'I's own powerlessness.

¹⁰ “20년이 지나도 고향은/달라진 것이 없다 가난 같은/연기가 마을을 감고/그 속에서 개가 짖고/아이들이 운다 그리고 그들은/내게 외쳐댄다/말하라 말하라 말하라/아아 나는 아무 말도 할 수가 없다.” (신경림 1973: 67)

When the emotions of the lyric self overwhelm the entire poem, the poetic object is pushed into the background. If the rhetorical poetry of the time, written with the aim of awakening the ‘Minjung’, faced the problem of excessive purposefulness, poems that are merely expressions of the lyric self’s feelings encounter the problem of failing to attain concreteness on a realistic level, as they render the poetic object and events as background. The lyric self not only fails to make something an object of perception with a certain meaning but also increases the distance between the reader and the poetic object. Readers are left without a pathway to understand the poetic object or to add their own interpretation to the poetic situation – in other words, they cannot intervene with their own reality. One reason why long poems and epic poems actively submitted in the 1970s–1980s was that they provided readers with sufficient information, which could be expected to provide a sense of immersion and persuasive appeal. However, when the emotions of the lyric self are maximized, readers may momentarily empathize with the self’s feelings, but such empathy remains that of a third party.

3. The Voice of the Mudang, the Poetic Speaker

New critics, who regard the poem as a world that operates beyond the author’s intention and control, present lyric poetry as a linguistic structure and treat the poetic speaker as a speaker situated within a specific context. The poetic speaker can be understood as analogous to the persona in a play composed of characters’ dialogue, operating without overt authorial intervention. According to the conception that treats the lyric voice as a speaker, lyric poetry becomes an utterance overheard by the reader, and readers participate in the work as overhearers. In this formulation, the work appears as a unified whole that achieves order and harmony and thus becomes an object of analysis. However, this perspective also raises a problem: it implicitly presupposes the existence of an omniscient author expected to achieve the work’s unity behind the poetic speaker or persona. Even if we assume that the speaker exists solely within the poem, the speaker’s voice is confined within the work, and the work lacks its historical context and becomes socially and culturally vacuous.

While the forms of Madanggeuk (마당극)¹¹ and Madang shamanic rite (마당굿)¹² became common place in the culture of the activist in the 1980s, in poetry, a current that formalized shamanistic ritual – ‘shamanic rite poetry’ (굿시)- came to occupy a notable position in the era. In particular, the pain and historical meaning of the Gwangju Uprising (광주항쟁) were expressed in various genres such as Madang shamanic rite poetry (마당굿시) and Salpuri shamanic rite poetry (살풀이굿시)¹³, and ‘shamanic rite poetry’ (굿시) came to be established as a representative form of poetry for commemorating the countless souls who suffered in the 1980s (Kim Eun-jung, 김은정 2012; Cho Yeon-jung 2016; Lee Kyung-soo 2021).¹⁴ The speaker of ‘shamanic rite poetry’ (굿시) is the mudang (shaman).¹⁵ Although the mudang occupies a marginal status insofar as they are a messenger, they acquire a distinctive position not simply as a messenger but as one who, in a state of self-loss, accepts another’s soul and speaks on that other’s behalf. If the poetic speaker is inevitably a concept that presupposes the poet’s existence, the mudang speaker disturbs the speaker-author connection by drawing in the voice of the other through the powerful device of the mudang. Moreover, just as Madanggeuk (마당극) and

¹¹ ‘Madanggeuk’ (마당극) is an indigenous and experimental outdoor theatre that, since the 1970s, has creatively inherited and developed traditional folk performative forms such as Talchum (mask dance, 탈춤), Pungmul (folk performance, 풍물), and Pansori (narrative song, 판소리); it primarily stages social critique and accusations of reality.

¹² ‘Madan shamanic rite’ (마당굿) refers to the final ritual, performed in an open area outside the main gate to send away wandering souls that had gathered at the ritual site. Both ‘Madanggeuk’ (마당극) and ‘Madan shamanic rite’ (마당굿) become solemn play-sites that soothe the pains of life.

¹³ ‘Salpuri’ (살풀이) is a shamanic chant/dance performed to dispel bad fortune or malignant influences, typically carried out to the rhythmic pattern called the ‘Salpuri Jangdan’ (살풀이장단).

¹⁴ For the performativity and activism of ‘shamanic rite poetry’ as a Minjung (people)’s movement, see these papers.

¹⁵ ‘Shaman’ originally referred to religious intermediaries in the Siberian region; by means of intense movement, music and sometimes mysterious substances, they fall into trance or a state of self-loss and, in that condition, make contact with supernatural beings. Thereafter they preside over rituals such as divination, healing, and ceremonies. A shaman is thus an experiencer of possession, a guide of souls, a priest, a mystic and at times even a poet (Mircea Eliade 1992: 23-24).

shaman ritual (굿) – which publicize the historical suffering and the vivid voices of the victims – function as collective plays completed through the audience’s voluntary participation, readers of ‘shamanic rite poetry (굿시)’ acquire the role of performers who receive and embody the other’s anger and aspirations. The genre-mixing of ‘shamanic rite poetry (굿시)’ and the emergence of the mudang speaker therefore help to offset the theoretical weaknesses attributed to the conventional poetic speaker.

A gong jing booms out the curtain falls

A rough stage, lights dangle from a paulownia tree

Everyone’s gone home and playground’s empty

Our faces still daubed with power

We rush to the little tavern by the school and drink

Life’s mortifying when oppressed and wretched

Off down the long rout behind the kkwaenggwari

Only some kids running bellowing behind us

While girls lean pressed against the oil shop wall

Giggling childish giggles

The full moon rises and one of us

Wail like Im-Kkeokjeong another

Laughs like Seorim after all

What’s the use of fretting and struggling tucked away in these hills

With farming not paying the fertilizer bills

Leaving it all in the hands of the wives

Passing through the cattle-fair and dancing in front of the slaughterhouse

Bokyoung KIM: Aspects of Voices Appearing in Shin Kyung-Rim's...

We start to get into the swing of things

Shall we dance on one leg and blow the Nallari

Shall we shake our heads and make our shoulders rock¹⁶

(Shin Kyung-rim 1973: 26)

I cannot go with broken necks and severed limbs,

I cannot close my two bruised eyes that brim,

I can't hold, these torn hands cannot hold,

I cannot hold that blood-stained hand.

Returned, returned with bruised eyes wide,

Embracing broken necks and severed limbs

Gnashing the teeth so the hard frost falls from the sky,

With these shredded, ragged hands I cannot seize,

I cannot seize that bloodied hand,

¹⁶ “징이 울린다 막이 내렸다/오동나무에 전등이 매어달린 가설무대/구경꾼이 돌아가고 난 텅 빈 운동장/우리는 분이 얼룩진 얼굴로/학교 앞 소줏집에 몰려 술을 마신다/답답하고 고달프게 사는 것이 원통하다/팽과리를 앞장세워 장거리로 나서면/따라붙어 악을 쓰는 건 쪼무래기들뿐/처녀애들은 기름집 담벽에 붙어서서/철없이 킬킬대는구나/보름달은 밝아 어떤 녀석은/걱정이처럼 울부짖고 또 어떤 녀석은/서림이처럼 해해대지만 이까짓/산구석에 처박혀 발버둥친들 무엇하랴/비룻값도 안 나오는 농사 따위야/아예 여편네에게나 맡겨두고/쇠전을 거쳐 도수장 앞에 와 돌 때/우리는 점점 신명이 난다/한 다리를 들로 날라리를 볼거나/고갯짓을 하고 어깨를 흔들거나” (신경림 1973: 26)

To alleys, market stalls, factory yards, the docks

Returned as a relentless bank of dark clouds,

Returned as a fierce howling uproar.¹⁷

(Shin Kyung-rim 1986: 150-151)

When the two cited poems are read together, the difference between the poetic speaker who plays the role of persona and the mudang speaker becomes clearly apparent. The first cited poem is “*Farmer’s Dance*” (농무), the title piece of the collection, and it follows a prototypical dramatic structure. The speaker appears both as a character within the play and as a narrator. At times, the speaker utters the character’s own lines – “Life’s mortifying when oppressed and wretched” – and at other times explains the dramatic situation in which the story unfolds, beginning with “A gong jing booms out the curtain falls.” “*Farmer’s Dance*” (농무) is a complete composition in itself, and the poem’s content is presented as if it were a scene on a theatre stage. Readers will visually conjure up the image of farmers left in an empty countryside, drinking and venting their grievances, and the farmers’ dance they do. Yet, apart from whether readers are able to acquire concrete images of the poetic objects or situations, the speaker is entirely unaffected by who the reader is. When the readers are not given space to participate in the context of the situation presented by the speaker, readers remain merely eavesdroppers.

The second poem is included in *Dalneomse* (달님세), a volume composed entirely of ‘shamanic rite poetry (굿시)’. ‘Ssitgim’ (씻김) is a purificatory act that washes the soul of the deceased clean and sends it to the afterlife; ‘Ssitgim Shamanic rite’ (씻김굿) is the shamanic ritual intended to wash away the grudeges of the living and to guide the dead to the next world. However, the soul voiced through the mudang

¹⁷ “꺾인 목 잘린 팔다리로는 나는 못 가,/피멍든 두 눈 고이는 못 감아,/못 잡아,
이 찢긴 손으로는 못 잡아,/피묻은 저 손을 나는 못 잡아.//되돌아왔네, 피멍든 눈
부릅뜨고 되돌아왔네./꺾인 목 잘린 팔다리 끌어 안고/하늘에 된서리 내리라
부드득 이빨 갈면서,//이 갈가리 찢긴 손으로는 못 잡아,/피묻은 저 손 나는 못
잡아./골목길 장바닥 공장마당 도선장에/즐기찬 맥구름 되어
되돌아왔네./사나운 아우성 되어 되돌아왔네.” (신경림 1986: 150-151)

declares that it has returned as “a relentless bank of dark clouds” and “a fierce howling uproar.” This unappeased spirit is a marginalized Minjung (people) who mainly lived in “alleys, market stalls, factory yards, the docks,” and the declaration functions as a protest against socio-structural contradictions. If the ‘Ssitgim Shamanic rite’ (씻김굿) ordinarily guides the dead to the afterlife and thereby achieves reconciliation that upholds the world’s order, this poem effectively redirects the ritual’s function by revealing a rupture with the world through the voice of the unappeased spirit. Moreover, unlike the voice of the poetic speaker that relegates the poetic object to the distance, or the voice of the lyric self that operates apart from the reader – leaving the reader in the position of an eavesdropper – the utterance of the other mediated by the mudang directly addresses the reader. The vivid voice conveyed by the unappeased spirit as victim evokes an affection in the reader, enabling the poem to be situated within a social context – that is, to be located as an event on the level of reality. Thus, ‘shamanic rite poetry’ (굿시) in which the chanter (mudang) transmits the voice of the other to the reader (audience) turns the domain through with the other’s voice is conveyed into a communicative space and converts the reader (audience) from a passive spectator into a participant in the event.

4. The Voice of the Mudang, the Poetic Speaker

The proposition that literature, insofar as it functions as discourse, cannot be freed from otherness has now become a general theory of literature. According to Antony Easthope, discourse is composed of two dimensions. One is ‘Enunciative content,’ which refers to the content itself that is uttered or stated; the other is ‘Enunciative operations,’ the act of utterance through which that content is materially performed. He understands Enunciative operations not merely as functions of meaning-transmission, but as a process that unfolds materially. Under these circumstances, the reader does not remain a passive interpreter of the discourse but actively intervenes in the poetic text as the agent of Enunciative operations. Through this intervention, enunciation always takes on the continual aspect of presence that occurs in the here-and-now, and the poem exists not as a fixed meaning, but as a living discourse newly created in that moment by the reader (Antony Easthope

1994: 81-82). And when the poetic text is determined both by the symbol system designed by the poet and by meanings constructed through the reader's enactment of discourse, the reader is established as the 'poetic subject.' At this point, the reader becomes a poetic subject through encounters with the text's others – the 'you' – or with the 'I-that is not I' that firmly exists within the reader. In other words, within the text, the reader can be the 'I' as the poetic subject only in relation to the other.

In the pitch-black darkness, a shape slowly began to appear. At first, the outline of the basket balanced on her head showed, then the lines of her face, then the neck, shoulders, and torso, and at last, against the dark, a young woman bearing a fish-basket stood there.

A still, viscous darkness lay between us. She moved her lips as if to speak, her words swam through the dark and slowly came toward me.

Ah – at last her words reached me. But even then, the woman's form was already being reburied in the dark. Her torso sank back, the contours of neck and shoulder vanished, and finally the outline of her face, the basket that had rested on her head became one with the darkness.

Now my own form is also slowly emerging from the dark. The lines of my face, neck, and shoulders are revealed, the outlines of my limbs appear. Thus, I am saying something to you. My utterance will swim through the darkness, slowly making its way to you. Ah – but when my utterance reaches you, my form will already be gradually disappearing again into the dark.¹⁸

(Shin Kyung-rim 1986: 203)

¹⁸ “새카만 어둠속에서 서서히 형상이 나타나기 시작했다. 처음, 머리에 인 광주리의 윤곽이 나타나고, 얼굴의 선이 드러나고, 목 어깨 몸통이 드러나더니, 마침내 어둠을 배경으로 생선 광주리를 인 젊은 아낙네가 거기 서 있었다./아직도 끈적끈적하고 진한 어둠이 우리 둘 사이를 가로막고 있었다. 아낙네는 무슨 말을 하는 듯 입술을 달싹이고 있었고, 그의 말은 어둠을 헤엄치면서 천천히 나를 향해

This poem explores the relation among utterance, being, and the poetic subject through images that appear in and vanish into darkness. What deserves attention is that the poetic subject is not presupposed as a fixed self, but is presented as fluid, relational being that is temporarily formed in the flow of speech and then soon dissolves. In the poem, this aspect of the poetic subject is structured by “utterance” that have not been fully semanticized and by variations in person. The “utterance” the “woman” offers to the “I” and the “I”’s “utterance” addressed to “you” can be understood as enunciative movements just before becoming words, in that they are not yet meaningfully articulated. Yet, the moment those “utterance” reaches their addressee, the speaking being disappears “into the dark.” Thus “utterance” performs a double function: they simultaneously constitute and deconstruct the poetic subject. The poetic subject exists temporarily during the process of verbalization, but the moment language acquires meaning, the subject has already passed into the realm of nonexistence – the “dark.” Nonetheless, the poetic subject can be formed only within relations with the other – ‘woman-I’, ‘He-I’, ‘I-you.’ This is because the poetic subject that exists in the variations of the person is not a self that expresses its independent self-identity in language; but rather it appears as a subject that constitutes itself through enunciative relations with the other. This subject is a being that emerges within the relational tension with the other, and because it withdraws at the moment utterance reaches the other, the poetic subject is continually repositioned and reconstituted between self and the other.

In this way, this poem presents the poetic subject as a being in the process of forming a poetic subject through non-semanticized utterance and figures of subjectivity – a subject that slides between the

오고 있었다./아, 마침내 그의 말이 내게 이르렀다. 그러나 이미 그때 그 여자의 모습은 서서히 어둠속에 되묻히고 있었다. 몸통이 묻히고, 목 어깨의 형상이 사라지고, 끝내는 얼굴의 윤곽이, 머리 위에 얹었던 광주리가 어둠과 하나가 되었다./내 형상도 지금 서서히 어둠속에서 드러나고 있다. 얼굴과 목과 어깨의 선이 드러나고 팔다리의 윤곽이 나타나고 있다. 그리하여 나는 당신을 향해서 무엇인가를 말하고 있다. 나의 말은 어둠속을 헤엄치면서 천천히 당신을 향해 갈 것이다. 아, 그러나 나의 말이 당신에게 이르렀을 때, 이미 내 형상은 서서히 어둠속으로 사라져가고 있을 것이다.” (신경림 1986: 203)

moments before and after the arrival of the language. Utterance does not serve to fix the identity of the poetic subject; rather, only through processes that defer and delay it does utterance provisionally reveal the subject. Therefore, the poetic subject is not a completed self, but a processual being formed and simultaneously dissolved by the reader who participates in the text as the agent of Enunciative operations. This structure, based on the incompleteness of language and the fundamental asymmetry of communication, creates the very process of enunciation – intimately intertwined with temporality and otherness – into a space for poetic thought.

5. Conclusion

This study analyzed how Shin Kyung-rim's poetic world has reshaped over time by grouping the vocal modalities that appear in his poetry of the 1970s–1980s into three analytic categories: the lyric self, the poetic speaker, and the poetic subject. In particular, to overcome the prior research tendency that has mainly interpreted his work under the discursive concept of the 'Minjung,' in this research, his poems were reinterpreted not within an ideological framework, but from the perspective of the voice, which is an internal element of the poetic text, and the layer of actual relationships and experiences surrounding the poetic text.

First, when the voice of the lyric self comes to the forefront in a poem, the poem functions as an inward confession based on the poet's personal experience. Because the text supplies little concrete information about the poetic object in such cases, objectification fails, and readers remain at the level of recognizing or merely empathizing with the lyric self's affective state. Second, the mudang speaker's voice actively draws in the voice of the other and, by evoking an affection in the reader, converts the reader from an eavesdropper into a participant in the event. At this time, poems acquire historical and social contexts and can operate as events located within real-world contexts. Third, the voice of the poetic subject appears as a fluid entity that is formed and dissolved through relationships with the other in the process of Enunciative operations. The reader participates in the text as an agent of Enunciative operations and becomes subjectified through relations

with the other. With the emergence of the poetic subject, poetry functions not as a fixed system of meanings, but as a living discourse that is constantly being regenerated through the reader's participation.

The shifts of voice in Shin Kyung-rim's poetry should be read not simply as variations in expression, but as a process that expands the poeme-reader relationship and reconfigures how poetry connects to reality. At the level of the lyric self, poem functioned merely as a confession of the poet's inner life; the advent of the mudang speaker, however, actively accepted the voice of the other and renders historical reality visible. When the voice of the poetic subject appears, it opens up the possibility for the reader to actively intervene in the text. Along with this flow, Shin Kyung-rim's poetic world moves from singularity to complexity, from closedness to expansiveness, and from sameness to otherness. Shin Kyung-rim's poetry transcends the discursive limits of 'Minjung' and shapes the voices of actual others in reality as living events.

Conflict of interest statement: The author has no conflict of interest to disclose.

Bibliography

- Cho, Kang-sok (조강석). 2009. A Study on the Poetic Voices – Who or what speaks in poetry? In *Journal of Korean Modern Literature*, Vol. 39: 103–126.
- Cho, Yeon-jung (조연정). 2016. Rethinking the interrelations of popular movements and women's movements in the 1980's Korean literature. In *Urimalgeul*, Vol. 71: 241–273.
- Easthope, Antony. 1994. *Poetry as Discourse*. tr. by Park In-ki. Seoul: Jisik-sanup Publishing Co. Ltd.
- Eliade, Mircea. 1992. *Shamanism*. tr. by Lee Yun-ki. Seoul: Kkachi.
- Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. 2015. *Hegel's Aesthetics*. tr. by Choi Dong-ho. Seoul: Seojeong Sihak.
- Jo, Dong-il (조동일). 1974. A Preliminary Study on the Novelistic Confrontation between Self and World. In *Humanities Studies East and West*, Vol. 7: 7–60.
- Kang, Jeong-gu (강정구). 2005. A Re-interpretation about Min-jung on

- Poem of Shin, Kyeong-rim. In *The Society for Korean Language and Literary Research*, Vol. 33 no. 3: 303–322.
- Kang, Jeong-gu, and Kim, Jong-hoi (강정구·김종희). 2011. A Re-interpretation about Min-jung on Nationalistic Literature of Shin, Kyeong-rim. In *Journal of Korean Modern Literature*, Vol. 43: 293–323.
- Kim, Eun-jung (김은정). 2012. Koh Jung-hee's "religious poems", language of the necromancy duet of the desire. In *Yongbong Journal of Humanities*, Vol. 71: 55–74.
- Kim, Jun-oh (김준오). 2017. *Poetics*. Seoul: Samjiwon.
- Ko, Un, Yoo, Jong-ho, Goo, Joong-seo, Lee, Bu-young, and Baek, Nak-cheong (고은·유종호·구중서·이부영·백낙청). 1978. My Understanding of National Literature. In *Changjakkwabipyung*, Vol. 13 no. 3: 2–52.
- Lee, Hyun-seok (이현석). 2011. The Senses and Logic of Non-Politics in the Literary Discourse after the 4.19 Revolution and in the Late 1960s. In *The Journal of Modern Korean Literature*, Vol. 35: 223–254.
- Lee, Kyung-soo (이경수). 2021. Auditory Perceptions and Soundscapes in Go Jeong-Hee's Poems. In *The Studies of Korean Language and Literature*, Vol. 71: 167–217.
- Park, Yeon-hee (박연희). 2016. Shin Kyung-rim and Hwang Dong-Gyu, The Parallax of Minjung Poetry in 1970s. In *Journal of Korean Modern Literature*, Vol. 60: 403–437.
- Shin, Kyung-rim (신경림). 1977. *Literature and Popular*. Seoul: Minumsa.
- Shin, Kyung-rim (신경림). 2004. *The Complete Poems of Shin Kyung-rim*. Seoul: Changjakkwabipyungsa.
- Staiger, Emil. 1978. *Basic Concepts of Poetics*. tr. by Lee Yu-yeong and Oh Hyeon-il. Seoul: Samjungdang.

**THE TRANSITION FROM “FANTASTIC
REALITY” TO THE “REALISTIC
FANTASY” IN THE 1990S AND THE
NOVEL AS PRACTICE – REREADING
KIM YOUNG-HA’S “JEON TAE-IL AND
SHOWGIRL”**

SEONG-AH LEE, PhD student

Institute of Korean Studies, Yonsei University

Republic of Korea

#617 Oesol-gwan50 Yonsei.-ro

Seodaemun-gu, Seoul

Kjl05027@naver.com

Abstract: A perspective that seeks to understand ‘what a novel does’ before asking ‘what a novel means’ stems from a will to deconstruct the notion of a transcendental reality. This will reveals that a novel is not simply ‘about’ something, but that it ‘constitutes’ something producing new meaning by communicating with the external world. In this way, the literary scene of the 1990s serves as a suitable experimental ground for a perspective that focuses on the novel’s performativity, as it was a time and space where the conceptual frameworks once considered representations of reality were lost. While an amorphous reality and inner self are constructed alongside the process of writing, the contradiction that serves as the foundation for the existence of the subject of authenticity persists. Therefore, as a part of a project to sketch a big picture of how the (im)possibility of forming a subject of authenticity in the 90s is realized through the novel, this paper focuses on Kim Young-ha’s novels. His novels reveal an internal motility through a cognitive shift: moving from viewing reality fantastically to the recognition that reality itself is a

fantasy – that is, from ‘fantastic reality’ to ‘realistic fantasy’. Based on this understanding, “Jeon Tae-il and Showgirl!” gains the possibility of being read anew, freed from its initial interpretation as a mere reflection of its era. Through the montage-like insertion of advertisements, this novel doesn't just reflect a reality controlled by capitalism. It creates a reality as another form of virtuality by embodying the fantasy of advertising. Within this fantasy, attempts to deconstruct the dichotomous perception that gives rise to conflict are repeated. In this way, a moment is captured in which the novel's immanence and transcendence resonate to produce meaning.

Keywords: 1990s, Fantasy, The performativity of novel, Authenticity, Kim Young-ha, Jeon Tae-il and Showgirl.

1990년대 ‘현실의 환상성’으로부터 ‘환상의 현실성’으로의 전환과 실천으로서의 소설 – 김영하의 「전태일과 쇼걸」 다시 읽기

초록: 하나의 소설 텍스트에 대하여 그것이 ‘무엇을 의미하는지’를 묻기에 앞서 ‘무엇을 하는지’를 파악하고자 하는 관점은 선형적 실재라는 관념을 해체하려는 의지에서 비롯된다. 그리고 이 의지를 통해 소설은 원본에 대한 이차적 재현에 그치는 것이 아니라 그 자체로 내재적 운동성을 지니며 외재와 소통함으로써 새로운 의미를 생산해 낸다는 것이 드러나게 된다. 이처럼 소설의 실천성에 주목하는 관점에서 1990년대의 문학장은 현실의 표상으로 여겨졌던 개념들이 상실된 시공간이라는 점에서 적합한 실험장이 된다. 무정형의 현실과 내면이 소설을 쓰는 과정과 함께 구성되는 동안 진정성 주체의 존립 근거가 되는 모순이 지속되는 것이다. 이에 본고에서는 90년대 진정성 주체의 형성 (불)가능성이 소설을 통해 실천되는 것의 큰 그림을 그려보고자 하는 기획의 첫 발걸음으로 김영하의 소설에 주목해 본다. 그의 소설은 현실을 환상적으로 보는 것에서 현실 자체가 환상이라는 인식으로, 즉 ‘현실의 환상성’에서 ‘환상의 현실성’으로의 인식적 전환을 통해 내재적 운동성을 드러낸다. 그리고 이러한 이해를 바탕으로 할 때, 제목에서부터 시대에 대한 반영적 표상이 강하게 나타나는 「전태일과 쇼걸」은 그 첫인상에서 벗어나 새롭게 읽힐 가능성을 지니게 된다. 이 소설은 몽타주적으로 삽입되는 광고를 통해 자본주의에 잠식된 현실을 반영하는 것에서 나아가 광고의 환상성을 체화함으로써 또 다른 가상으로서의 현실을 만들어낸다. 그리고 이 환상 속에서 대립과 갈등을 초래하는 이분법적 인식에 대한 해체의 시도가 반복된다. 이로써 소설의 내재와 외재가 공명하면서 의미를 생산해 내는 순간이 포착되는 것이다.

키워드: 1990년대, 환상, 소설의 실천성, 진정성, 김영하, 전태일과 쇼걸

1. Introduction: Reconstruction of Reality and Inner Self and Kim Young-ha's Fantasy

1.1. Loss of representation of reality and inner self in the 1990s

This paper raises an issue about the problematics of reading a novel as a reflection of something else, and instead seeks to capture the process by which new meaning is produced within the text itself. To this end, this study signifies Korea's 1990s as a fertile territory for understanding the productivity of the novel, and offers a re-reading of Kim Young-ha's novel. The 1990s, which began with the monumental historical events of the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, holds a historical significance of both catastrophe and transition on a global scale. South Korea, which also bears the scars of division, is no exception to this broader historical flow. The 1990s in South Korea is described as a period in which there was a strong sense of historical self-awareness that not only felt the need for change but also felt that change had actually occurred (Hwang Jung-a, *황정아* 2020: 119). This period is characterized by a sense of 'discontinuity'.

In particular, it is said that the progressive forces of the 1980s in Korea were able to dedicate themselves to the transformation movement perhaps because they deliberately ignored the fact that revolutionary ideologies were globally in retreat (Kang Nae-hui *강내희*, 2013: 32). This highlights the shock of the historical turning point that hit Korean society. While the 1980s could be unified under the ideology of progress in history, in the 1990s, with the collapse of socialism and the retreat of revolution, historical-philosophical imagination was no longer a standard that could help understand life and drive practice (Hwang Jong-yeon, et al, *황종연 외* 1999).

In the literary landscape of the 1990s, this transformation leads to a crisis of representation surrounding both reality and the inner self, in conjunction with the artistic trend of postmodernism. The conceptual frameworks of the 1980s, such as history, era, and nation collapse (Ryoo Bo-sun, *류보선* 1996: 53), and reality can no longer be identified or made meaningful through the ideologies of the past. The ideologies that had dominated everyday life are now merely described as a play

that comes to an end without acting, and the 1990s marks an era where even such a play has come to an end, rejecting any reflection of reality.

In this context, where the very external objectivity of reality has become uncertain, the inner self of individuals living within that reality is depicted as lacking a central subjectivity. As society transitions from an era dominated by dreams of community and solidarity to one of solitary individuals, the symbols of capitalist commodities come to replace the inner lives of individuals, who have become depoliticized.

However, the barrenness of the 1990s, paradoxically, becomes a historical condition that enables the discovery of literary productivity because of the lack of substance in both reality and the inner self.¹ This can be related to a key literary development shown by the so-called ‘April 19 generation’ of the 1960s in Korea – writers who also belonged to the first generation raised with the Korean alphabet (Hangul). These writers transformed the language of the previous era, which had been considered a representation of reality or ideology, into a medium for independently shaping the formless and unrepresentable object of the individual’s inner self.

Representative figures of the 1960s such as Kim Seung-ok and Lee Cheong-jun provide clear examples. Their sentences, grounded in the ‘inner self’ as the origin of writing, allow the unreal to appear as if it were real through the act of writing itself. This is distinctly different from sentences that directly reflect social reality or objective experiences. In other words, their sentence is not writing ‘about’ something, but writing that ‘constitutes’ something (Baeg Ji-eun 백지은, 2004; 2006). In this sense, their works hold practical significance and demonstrate the effectiveness of literature, as literature itself shapes reality and inner life through its resonance with life outside the text (Baeg Ji-eun, 백지은 2008: 230).

¹ However, the actual Korean literary discourse field in the 1990s appeared to lean toward ‘post-textualist’ tendencies, and consequently, there was insufficient discussion regarding the internal motility of text. With the global flow of capitalism, terms like ‘nation,’ ‘the people,’ and ‘resistance’ lost their central status in literary history, leading to a historicist shift based on ‘Postmodernism-Postnationalism-Postcolonialism.’ At this time, perspectives focusing on the internal reality of literature were condemned as ‘literary-centric’, and a dichotomy between discourse-centered research and literature-centered research has persisted. In relation to this, for a discussion arguing that the productivity of the text is not something inherent to the text but rather resonates with historical and social contexts, refer to: Lee Seong-ah, 이성아 2025.

The way the productivity of literature leads to its performativity can be understood through discussions that focus on the internal potential for expansion of an image to interpret its politicality. According to Bergson, the image is defined as a self-moving material, not a representation of reality. This is a perspective that prioritizes the movement of difference that exists potentially prior to any transcendental concept in the image. Through this, the generation of new values formed in the unconscious and their discovery become possible. This unconscious can be otherwise defined as the unrepresented. All results of representation, whether image or language, prove by their very existence that there is something unrepresented, or excluded. And looking into this unconscious reveals that we are situated within an order that divides what can be seen from what cannot be seen, thereby bringing forth the possibility of changing the conditions of visibility (Hito Steyerl, 2012). The perspective that focuses on the internal motility of the novel similarly seeks to focus on what newly takes shape and appears at the level of the unconscious – something that is not merely represented through the novel, but rather crosses the boundaries of representation. Through this, the performativity of the novel will be revealed as it creates a dissensus with the existing distribution of the sensible.

If, in the 1960s – a period when individuals who had internalized modernity began to emerge in earnest – the issue of constructing an ‘own world’ was at the center of critical discourse, by the 1990s, that issue was reframed through the concept of ‘authenticity’. Kim Hong-jung, who viewed society based on a structured order of collective heart, defines authenticity as follows: it is “a new ideal that emerges in the process by which a modern individual – who has internalized individualistic values – recognizes a gap between the role models imposed by the community and their own ‘genuine’ desires, and seeks to overcome that gap subjectively (Kim Hong-jung, 김홍중 2009: 26).” In other words, authenticity begins from the individual’s inner self, but it cannot be secured solely within that self. Rather, it is an ideal of the self that is constructed through the contradictions and confusions that arise in the relationship with the community.

In an era where ideology – once the sole center and mirror of reality – has been lost, and where the transcendental notion of a ‘true self’ can no longer be accepted, authenticity becomes something that lacks a concrete, imitable form. Put differently, just as the literature of

the 1960s became a process of own world-construction by giving language to desires that penetrated everyday life, the literature of the 1990s does not aim to represent authenticity, but instead practices its construction. It does so through repeated attempts at self-overcoming within the symbols of capitalist commodities that have replaced ideology (Seo Young-chaе, 서영채 1999).

1.2. Kim Young-ha’s Fantasy and Novel as Practice

From the perspective of focusing on the performativity of literature as what makes it literature, Kim Young-ha (김영하)'s texts from the 1990s become an important experimental ground. Existing studies on him share a view that explores the possibility and ethics of the individual against the backdrop of the 1990s, a period facing an unprecedented crisis in perception of the immediate present. At this point, the narcissistic character type frequently appearing in his novels is said to reveal the limitations of the traditional epistemology centered on the subject. Furthermore, the repetition of images filled with capitalist symbols is interpreted as a way in which the ego of a schizophrenic subject is constructed amid social and cultural conflicts.

These discussions reject transcendental or fixed nature of the inner self and the reality, and conceptualize them as a space of infinite potentiality. However, by failing to notice that the novel itself can also be a space of infinite potentiality, the narrative or images of the novel remain as having been written by such a conception. In contrast, studies that read Kim Young-ha’s fantasy or imagination not as the ‘fantastic reality’ but as the ‘realistic fantasy’ read the resonance between the novel’s internal and external aspects (Wu Chan-je, 우찬제 1999: 1250).

The Korean literary field in the 1990s is said to have expanded the theoretical possibilities of fantasy, acting as a fertile ground for fantasy (Jang Sei-jin, 장세진 2003: 212). According to Todorov, who theoretically established fantasy literature, the essence of the fantasy lies in ‘hesitation’ between the real and the imaginary, that is, the epistemological uncertainty. However, with the influence of scientific positivism in the 19th century, the supernatural was absorbed into the system of modern scholarship, and with the modernist novels of the 20th century, the reality they represented could no longer lead to a

common consensus. Consequently, fantasy literature lost both its basis for existence: ‘the real’ and the ‘imaginary’.

Against this backdrop of a dual loss, the novel texts of the 1990s created what can be called ‘modern fantasy’ by shifting the opposition between the ‘real’ and the ‘imaginary’ to the gap between ‘reality’ and ‘language’. To look at this more specifically, the opposition between the ‘real’ (which had no doubt about its representational possibility) and the ‘imaginary’ (the supernatural that defies scientific explanation) became the gap between ‘reality’ (the actual world outside the text) and (the text in) ‘language’.

While modern fantasy thus sustained a ‘hesitation’ by shifting the object of doubt from the supernatural to language, Kim Young-ha's fantasy goes a step further, placing reality itself under suspicion. Beyond the idea that reality represented through language is fantastic, it posits that there is no such thing as an actual reality existing outside the uncertainty of language, and that reality itself is a fantasy ‘constituted’ through language.

This shift in perception refers to Baudrillard's theory of the simulacrum (Jean Baudrillard 2001). From Baudrillard's critical perspective on late-capitalist society, a reality in which commodities are priced not by their use-value but by their symbolic value is interpreted as an illusion, or a simulacrum, has swallowed up reality. The key point here is not merely that the illusion has gained power equivalent to reality, but that the illusion generates reality, and thus the very difference between reality and imagination has been dissolved.

The inverted relationship between reality and illusion is related to how, in Kim Young-ha's novel, digitized cultural experience replaces ontological experience and constructs a world in itself. In his novels, “Heaven in the name of the Three Kingdoms” (삼국지라는 이름의 천국) and “The Wind Blows” (바람이 분다), individuals become isolated as their real lives are encroached upon by the virtual world of a game. If the analysis of these novels were to stop merely at diagnosing a reality in which cultural experience has overwhelmed lived experience, it would not abandon the ‘reality’ that the novels deny, and the novels would ultimately remain a tool for diagnosing that reality.

Conversely, a perspective that can overcome this limitation is to recognize that experiences in the virtual world ‘produce’ lived experiences, and to see that the internal tension of an individual torn between these two experiences is materialized through the novel's

‘unique stylistic sensibility’ (Choi Seung-tae, 최승태 2023: 203). In this way, the inner self is presented as something created in an interrelationship with a reality that is being generated. What is most important here is the discovery that the novel possesses a productivity as it embodies the formation of inner self.

The novel “Calling” (호출), in which events narrated as if they actually happened are revealed to be merely the character’s imagination, also demonstrates a narrative program ‘rewriting while being written’ through a shift to ‘realistic fantasy’ (Wu Chan-je, 우찬제 1999: 1263). Regarding the character who only imagines the act of calling but cannot actually perform it, it is correct but insufficient to interpret this as a meaning that an individual’s freedom from dominant power is possible only in the virtual world. Although the character in “Calling” appears to be alienated from reality by repeating the imaginations, through these very imaginations, he become able to write a novel, and the novel becomes the second chapter of “Calling”. In other words, his imagination within the novel is transformed into his reality (Baek Chang-ik, 백창익 2025: 80). The novel is written through imagination, while at the same time writing reality as fantasy, and in doing so, resonates with the external world.

Through a transition from ‘fantastic reality’ to ‘realistic fantasy’, Kim Young-ha’s fantasy of the 1990s demonstrates that the novel is not merely ‘about’ something but also ‘constitutes’ it. Focusing on this point, this paper aims to offer a new reading of the novel “Jeon Tae-il and Showgirl” (전태일과 쇼걸) – which is easily interpreted as a diagnosis of contemporary reality from its title – on a perspective that seeks to capture the performativity of the text.

2. The Transition of Fantasy and performativity in “Jeon Tae-il and Showgirl”

2.1.A review of prior research on “Jeon Tae-il and Showgirl”

The novel “Jeon Tae-il and Showgirl” starkly reveals the 1980s, steeped

in ideology and community consciousness, and the 1990s, dominated by capital and desire, through the metonymy of ‘Jeon Tae-il’ and ‘showgirl’. The protagonist, ‘the man’, who lived in an “era where he would recall an NHK video of the ‘Gwangju Uprising’ even when dreaming of sex”, now thinks of that past as “nothing special”. And he goes to a movie theater where <A Single Spark> (아름다운 청년 전태일) and <Showgirl> are playing at the same time.

As is clear from the novel's content, the work is first read as a ‘seal on a historical phenomenon’, where the political individual of the 1980s is dissolved into a post-political one by the omnivorous nature of 1990s capitalism, and even Jeon Tae-il’s sublime ideals are commodified (Joung Yoon-he, 정윤희 2017: 165). This interpretation is a valid diagnosis of the era, focusing on literature’s function to capture temporal changes and sociocultural phenomena. However, if the function of literature ends there, it loses its reason for being. While literature can serve as a lens to examine the sensibilities of individuals who lived through such periods, it is not necessarily the best lens for this purpose.

Meanwhile, the montage-like insertion of advertisements and specific brands in “Jeon Tae-il and Showgirl” is interpreted as having the meaning of fiction or fantasy, related to the effect of virtual images. An ad is defined as a fantasy because it presents a product’s symbolic value, not its use-value, thereby moving daily life into the imagination and making the consumer smile with happiness (Joung Yoon-he, 정윤희 2017: 174). However, the virtual image is interpreted as reflecting a fragmenting reality or as demonstrating the omnivorous nature of capitalism that makes reality fantastic, thereby presupposing the existence of an objective external reality. For example, interpretations that read the narrative technique of juxtaposing brand names and ad as a reflection on a consumer society where desire has become the dominant pathos, or as a reflection of changes in perceptual modes and fragmented lifestyles due to mass media, fall into this.

On the other hand, a discussion that addresses “Jeon Tae-il and Showgirl” through the concept of metafiction is read as moving closer to the discovery of the novel's productivity. Metafiction can be a narrative form possible in a postmodern society that dismantles the idea of an absolute, objective reality conceived by the reason-centered subject. It shows that the novel is not a reflection of reality, as in its traditional concept, but a reflection of representation itself. As the

objective external reality that past realist novels sought to reflect turned out to be absent in postmodernism, the novel came to represent not the outside world but itself – that is, the process of writing.

By means of metafiction, the creative process of the fictional world is revealed, and it becomes clear that reality is not something that precedes and can be imitated, but something that is written. In other words, metafiction makes a shift to 'realistic fantasy' possible by exposing the aesthetic conventions of literature that make one forget the difference between reality and fiction, thereby making readers aware that the real world is an extension of fiction and can be another fiction (Chae Young-hee, *채영희* 2019: 29).

However, existing discussions that focused on the significance of metafiction repeat the limitations previously reviewed. It interprets the metafictional techniques in “Jeon Tae-il and Showgirl” as a method to make reality understood as it is, by showing the daily life of a fetishized late-capitalist society as it is or by showing an attitude of accepting capitalism into one’s life (Chae Young-hee, *채영희* 2019: 62). Accordingly, this paper will thoroughly examine the productivity that “Jeon Tae-il and Showgirl” possesses as a work of metafiction. Through this analysis, it seeks to capture what the reality-lacking fantasy of the 1990s, which is being written along with the novel itself, truly is.

2.2. The reality created by the game “Jeon Tae-il and Showgirl”

“Jeon Tae-il and Showgirl” may be read as a novel about ‘the man’, who is depicted as the main character of the narrative. However, it is in fact the story of the narrator, the author within the novel. The accidental recollection, which is said to be the primary method of narrative development, is less about ‘the man’ reflecting on his own past and more about the narrator attempting to show what kind of person ‘the man’ is through his past. This can be confirmed through the following descriptions: “‘The man’ was not the kind of person who could live married to a working-class woman.” and “What is certain is the fact that in a place called Gwangju, the man and the woman did not have sex.”

Like this, what drives the novel's development is not the thoughts or actions of 'the man', but the narrator's discourse about them. This follows naturally from the narrator's clear statement at the beginning of the novel that this story is a novel – that he himself is the author writing "Jeon Tae-il and Showgirl".

The narrator begins the novel by stating that "it has no interest in explaining the relationship between three events": a man and a woman came to see a Jeon Tae-il biopic, on a weekday afternoon, by themselves. However, the narrator offers no mention of what the novel intends to do, and instead, an advertisement that seems entirely unrelated to the story's content is inserted, and the narrative proceeds to the next chapter.

Because of this, "Jeon Tae-il and Showgirl" is read like a thought experiment conducted by the narrator. As a manipulator of fiction, the narrator clearly reveals his position but presents a manipulated world without clarifying his intent, thereby provoking thought and prompting the reader to go through a process of deduction (Yoo Hui-sok, 유희석 2017: 68). However, since no hypothesis is set up to be verified, it's more fitting to call it a 'game' with a strong purpose of play rather than a 'thought experiment'. From this perspective, the novel's beginning lays out the groundwork and presents the rules of the game to the reader, who is a participant, before the game begins.

The fact that he met her in front of the Seoul Cinema was a completely coincidental event. However, in a certain sense, there is no such thing as a 'completely coincidental' event. (...) This novel has no interest in explaining the relationship between these three events. (...) It doesn't matter whether it is by chance or by inevitability (Kim Young-ha 김영하 1997: 199-200).²

In contrast to the beginning, the story that follows is read like an explanation for the relationship between the three events, repeatedly posing the question of chance versus inevitability. And through the revealed intervention of the narrator in these descriptions, the reader is

2 그가 그녀를 서울극장 앞에서 만나게 된 것은 전적으로 우연한 일이었다. 그러나 어찌 보면 '전적으로 우연한' 일이란 없는 것이다. (...) 이 소설은 이 세 가지 사건의 관계를 해명하는 일에는 관심이 없다. (...) 그것이 우연이든 필연이든 중요하지 않다 (김영하 1997: 199-200).

Seong-Ah LEE: The Transition from “Fantastic Reality” ...

faced with a continuous dilemma: what is this manipulation of fiction trying to accomplish, and does it really not matter whether something is by chance or inevitable?

When “Jeon Tae-il and Showgirl” is viewed as a game created by the narrator, the advertisements and specific brands placed throughout the novel are read just like the ads we encounter when consuming TV programs or internet content. It could be argued that showing how the daily lives of individuals in a capitalist society are not free from the encroachment of commodification. However, considering the novel’s metafictional form, it is more accurate to see the intrusion of advertising not as something that ‘dominates’ the narrator’s game, but as a deliberate ‘choice’ made by the narrator. The next question, then, is why the narrator chose to insert ads into his game-like content. It is at this point that a reversal of reality and fantasy occurs.

The key to enabling this transition is that individuals living in a capitalist society are not unaware of the fantastical nature of advertisements. All people of the contemporary are caught in a ‘double-bind’, in which they criticize the system while being a part of it. Even if escape is impossible, individuals in a capitalist society know that advertising drives their desires by presenting continuously updated images of a better future through the fantasy of commodity value. They also know that the purpose of advertising is to implant fantasy in as many people as possible to conceal capital’s pervasive influence and more thoroughly dominate reality.

It is from this awareness that a peculiar reversal occurs. The presence of ads within the content one wants to consume implies that the content holds enough value to satisfy the purpose of the ads. In other words, it means that many people want that content. This is why the ads placed at each point of change, as if dividing the novel’s chapters, and the brands that unnaturally pierce the interior of the novel, paradoxically make the novel itself appear to have a certain value.

“Jeon Tae-il and Showgirl” is a meaningless game. Because it is revealed to be a mere fiction manipulated by the author-narrator, and in which it has already been declared that it “does not matter” whether something is by chance or by inevitability. However, this novel attracts participants by adopting the strategy of advertising, in which the symbol itself has become the value of the commodity. The reason readers participate in this game despite the fatigue of being exposed to ads is that the very fatigue caused by the ads’ intrusion creates a fantasy of the

game's value, which in turn evokes the desire to participate.

Thus, the advertisements inserted into the novel not only reveal the author's critical awareness of a reality inverted to symbolic value but also become the very force that drives the novel itself. The game that is made possible by this process then constitutes the reality of the reader. Baudrillard's theory – that representation has come to replace reality – implies that reality is not something distorted by images but is rather absent, and is only derived after a play of infinite reference between images. In this way, something called reality is created by the meaningless play of “Jeon Tae-il and Showgirl”.

2.3. What is practiced through participation in the game

If so, what is the reason the author-narrator of “Jeon Tae-il and Showgirl” carries out this meaningless game, or what is the reality that is derived from that very manipulation? If we have grasped the motility occurring within the novel, what must do now is interpret the meaning that emerges through its resonance with the outside of the text. Of course, this meaning is not a message finalized by the author's consciousness or social phenomena, but something that is practiced through the novel's productive form.

This is made possible by the narrator who, despite having directly created the character ‘the man’, acknowledges his otherness. The narrator, who claims to be the omniscient manipulator of the novelistic game, not only describes the outward actions of ‘the man’ but also knows his unstated inner world. For example, the narrator knows that ‘the man’ suddenly laughed while reading a newspaper article related to the enactment of the May 18 Special Law because “he was reminded of the story of a Democratic Liberal Party congressman who, during the last regular National Assembly inspection, requested that the amount of meat and flour in the kalguksu noodle soup enjoyed at the Blue House be made public.”

However, there are narratives that contradict this: “To this day, the man still could not remember why he went on a trip to Gwangju then” and “It is unknown why the man decided to go see <A Single Spark> so easily.” As revealed here, the narrator does not put language on the memory of ‘the man’ who has lost the 80s, or on the confusion

he experiences in the reality of the 90s. Instead of the individual's contradiction in the face of a generational change being resolved, what is revealed is a dilemma over whether something is a matter of chance or historical causality, and ultimately the awareness that such a dilemma is completely unnecessary. The novel, which appears to have value by embodying the fantasy of advertising, does nothing but repeat valuelessness.

However, the fact that a contradiction does not find the language for a resolution and remains a contradiction means that the struggle to overcome it continues. When that struggle loses its power, the contradiction is no longer a contradiction; in other words, the narrator's words “it is unknown” are a statement that makes one circle around that unknowable something. In this struggle and wandering, the awareness that “what is important is that it is still doing so” is practiced, regardless of whether the reality before us is due to chance or follows historical inevitability.

‘Beyond the Boundaries’ – they puzzled over the Gwangju Biennale’s slogan for a while. What boundaries should we cross? What does the ideology of Gwangju have to do with boundaries? C scoffed. Maybe it’s the boundary between a visitor’s room and an execution ground? (...) Deconstruction? What have we ever integrated to deconstruct? the man muttered in front of Jeon Soo-cheon’s work, where silkworms were spinning thread. C then said, Man, deconstruction is just another name for integration, isn’t it? A silkworm deconstructs itself while spinning thread, but in the end, that thread makes cloth (Kim Young-ha 김영하 1997: 214-215).³

Right. But then why do those things exist together? The visitor’s room and the execution ground, pleasure and death, progress and regression. Gwangju and the Biennale? C said with a bitter smile, and continued

³ ‘경계를 넘어서’—그들은 광주 비엔날레의 슬로건 앞에서 한동안 고개를 갇아거렸다. 무슨 경계를 넘어야 하나? 광주의 이념과 경계는 무슨 상관이 있나? C가 비아냥거렸다. 면회실과 사형장의 경계 같은 게 아닐까? (...) 해체? 뭘 통합한 적이 있다고 해체를 하지? 그 남자가 누에고치가 실을 짓는 전수천의 작품 앞에서 중얼거렸다. 그러자 C가 말했다. 형, 원래 해체란 통합의 다른 이름이잖우. 누에는 실을 자으며 자신을 해체하지만 결국 그 실들은 천을 만들잖수 (김영하 1997: 214-215).

(Kim Young-ha 김영하 1997: 205).4

In the novel, the ‘boundary between a visitor’s room and an execution ground’ means a boundary in which it’s important that it’s still divided that way, ‘whether by chance or not’. C says that the boundaries the Gwangju Biennale – a place where opposing things are mixed, giving an “unpleasant sense of dissonance” – seeks to deconstruct are also of that nature. In response to ‘the man’s question about whether there was ever an integration which is a premise for deconstruction, C replies that deconstruction and integration are ultimately the same thing. Their conversation recalls the earlier question about things that are ‘still’ in opposition and inverts it.

Regarding opposing things, what is more important than asking for their causality is the fact that they continue to maintain a state of opposition, and that deconstruction and integration are merely a matter of naming. If so, the question “why do those things exist together?” leads to a suspicion of the human act of drawing boundaries and creating frameworks of opposition on things that have inherently existed together. In other words, the idea of opposition does not arise because conflicting things happen to be together, but rather from a cognitive framework that draws lines and divides hierarchies on an empty foundation. This shift in thinking reveals that ‘the man’s cynicism and ennui do not stem from a loss of ideology, but from the very cognitive system that dichotomizes ideology and daily life.

Film is king, C said self-deprecatingly. You can say that again. I heard that when <A Petal> was being filmed, traffic was controlled on Chungjang-ro and Geumnam-ro, and citizens voluntarily became extras, didn’t they? C, why don’t you try that too? Tell them you need to clear out Chungjang-ro and the roundabout in front of the provincial office because you need it for a poem about Gwangju. C laughed painfully and said, Film seems like a very convenient genre. No one says anything even if the director shoot a pornographic film like <To You, From Me> and then shoot a work like <A Petal>. But why can’t poetry or novels do that?“ (...)

The two people who had left Mangwoldong returned to Seoul, to their

4 그러게. 그런데 왜 그런 것들은 함께 있을까. 면회실과 사형장, 쾌락과 죽음, 진보와 퇴행. 광주와 비엔날레? C가 씩씩하게 웃으며 말을 이었다 (김영하 1997: 205).

Seong-Ah LEE: The Transition from “Fantastic Reality” ...

daily lives (Kim Young-ha 김영하 1997: 216-217).⁵

C, who writes poetry, looks at film with envy, as it can ‘arbitrarily’ move between the Gwangju Uprising and pornography. And he coldly mocks himself for not being able to do the same. This is likely a feeling that ‘the man’, who has a past where revolution and asceticism were undoubtedly joined, also feels. For them, ‘Mangwoldong’, where the cemetery for the victims of the Gwangju Uprising is located, has meaning as a space-time distinct from not only ‘Seoul’, which is always filled with commodity signs as if a biennale were being held, but also from ‘daily life’, a concept that transcends the category of space. Accordingly, the novel’s critical awareness proceeds to a deconstruction of the dichotomy between ideology and daily life – that is, to the insight that creating opposition among things that have inherently coexisted without boundaries, and then deconstructing or integrating them, is merely the result of a human consciousness superimposed on reality.

And this reflection, in turn, meets the novel’s form, which is a game that repeats worthlessness through fantasy. For a being thrown into this world, it is impossible not to frame the world they face. Therefore, reflection on this must necessarily take the form of a continuous practice, leaving contradictions as contradictions. As a result, the practical movement created by the novel’s internal and external resonance can be said a ceaseless reflection on the dichotomous framework of perception that gives rise to opposition and conflict. If this is the quest given to us who have participated in the game “Jeon Tae-il and Showgirl”, then the reward would be the recognition that

⁵ 영화가 왕이야. C가 자조적으로 말했다. 그러게 말이야. <꽃잎> 촬영을 한다니까 총장로와 금남로에 교통을 통제하고 시민들이 자발적으로 엑스트라가 되었다지? C, 너도 한번 해보지 그러냐? 광주를 소재로 하는 시를 쓰는 데 필요하니 총장로와 도청 앞 로터리를 좀 비워달라고. C가 아프게 웃으며 말했다. 영화는 참 편리한 장르 같아. <너에게 나를 보낸다> 같은 포르노를 찍다가 <꽃잎> 같은 작품을 찍어도 아무도 뭐라고 하지 않잖아. 근데 왜 시나 소설은 그게 안 되지? (...)

파전을 안주삼아 이동막걸리를 한 뒷박쯤 마시고는 망월동을 떠난 두 사람은 서울로, 일상으로 다시 돌아갔다 (김영하 1997: 216-217).

reality is not a solid thing as we have accepted it to be, but rather a fantasy, and the freedom felt from that recognition.

3. Going Out: The (Im)possibility of Subject Formation in the 1990s and the Practice of Novel

The conventional way of reading a novel text is to ask ‘what it means’. However, before asking about any meaning a novel reflects or implies, what can be and must be asked first is ‘what it does’. The will to erase ‘meaning’ from the conventional question of reading originates from a desire to deconstruct the notion of a transcendental reality waiting to be reflected. Through this, a novel is revealed not to be a mere secondary representation of an original, but to possess an internal motility of its own. It is shown that a novel produces meaning in a way that “rewriting while being written” by its internal communicating with the external.

The literary scene of the 1990s serves as a suitable experimental ground for proving the novel as practice, in that it was a time and space where conceptual frameworks once considered representations of reality and the inner self were lost. An amorphous reality and inner self are constituted along with the process of writing the novel, and are revealed as if they possess substance. This paper, therefore, focuses on Kim Young-ha’s novels as one piece of the puzzle, aiming to sketch out the broader picture of how the (im)possibility of forming a subject of authenticity in the 90s is realized through literature. His novels reveal an internal motility through a cognitive transition from seeing reality as fantastic to the recognition that reality itself is a fantasy – that is, from ‘fantastic reality’ to ‘realistic fantasy’. And based on this understanding, “Jeon Tae-il and Showgirl”, which shows a strong representational sign of the era from its very title, gains the possibility of being read anew, free from its initial impression.

In the novel, advertisements inserted without regard for narrative development are made to function as a way to enable participation in the novelistic game by the author-narrator, who clearly reveals that the novel’s world is a manipulated fiction. Human being in the present era, caught in a double-bind by capitalism, is not ignorant of the desires of advertising, even while existing within the fantasy that creates images of a utopia through commodity value. Accordingly, the

meaningless novelistic game is paradoxically revealed to have value through the ads inserted into it. In a society dominated by capital from which an escape route can no longer be found, an ad inserted into any content serves to implant the illusion that that content has enough value to fulfill the desires of advertising. Moving beyond the interpretation that “Jeon Tae-il and Showgirl” shows the omnivorous nature of capitalism through ads, the interpretation that the novel embodies the fantasy of advertising to create a reality as another fantasy is made possible by this understanding.

What is repeatedly realized in the game made possible by the fantasy is the endless deconstruction of the dichotomous perception that gives rise to opposition and conflict. The subject of authenticity of the 90s cannot be defined by any inherent nature it may contain; it is revealed to be possible through the practical process of struggle surrounding contradictions. For Todorov, who saw hesitation between reality and the imaginary as the core of fantasy, this uncertainty is extended to the mode of existence of literature, and it is said that “literature, more generally, denies the existence of any dichotomy (Todorov, Tzvetan 1996: 293).” “Jeon Tae-il and Showgirl”, by embodying the fantasy of advertising to create another fantasy that replaces reality, deconstructs the dichotomy through its form. Simultaneously, this is also achieved through the novel’s content, thereby showing the resonance between the immanent and the transcendent. It will now be the reader’s role to repeat the contradictions in the newly emerged reality by interpreting the conjunctive particle ‘and’ placed between ‘Jeon Tae-il and showgirl’ as a sign of togetherness, instead of definitively labelling it as an indicator of separation.

Conflict of interest statement: The author has no conflict of interest to disclose.

Bibliography

Baeg, Ji-Eun (백지은). 2004. A study on Form and Style of Kim Seung-

- ok's stories. In *Journal of The Society of Korean Language and Literature*, Vol. 49: 454-489.
- Baeg, Ji-Eun (백지은). 2006. The Study on the Significant form of Lee Cheong-jun's "Jeodo". In *Korean Literary Theory and Criticism*, Vol. 10. No. 1: 125-148.
- Baeg, Ji-Eun (백지은). 2008. Of Necessity for the Concept and the Sphere of the "Style-Study". In *Korean Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 31. No. 4: 229-252.
- Baek, Chang-Ik (백창익). 2025. A Study on the Epistemology of Kim Young-ha's Early Novels - Focused on collection of short novels, Calling. In *Literary Criticism*, Vol 96: 63-87.
- Baudrillard, Jean. 2001. *Simulacres et simulation*. tr. by Ha, Tae-hwan, Seoul: Mineumsa.
- Chae, Young-hee (채영희). 2019. A Study of Kim Young-ha's metafiction. In *Major in Korean Language Educational Graduate School of Korea National University of Education*.
- Choi, Seung-tae (최승태). 2023. 'Cultural Human' and the Ideal of Postmodern Authenticity in 1990s Novels. In *Journal of Korean Culture*, Vol 63: 163-211.
- Hwang Jong-yon, et al (황종연 외). 1999. *How to View 1990s Literature*. Seoul: Mineumsa.
- Jang, Sei-jin (장세진). 2003. Another Potentiality of the 1990's "the fantastic" novels-On "the fantastic" of Meta-fiction. In *Sanghur Hakbo: The Journal of Korean Modern Literature*, Vol 10: 211-230.
- Joung, Yoon-hee (정윤희). 2017. A Critique of Commodity Fetishism in Consumer Society and Narrative Strategies: Christian Kracht's Faserland and Kim Young-ha's Jeon Tae-il and Showgirl. In *German Language and Literature*, Vol 144: 159-179.
- Kang, Nae-hui (강내희). 2013. Inheriting the Tradition of Revolutionary Thought: Korean Cultural Studies in the 1990s. In *Korean Journal of Cultural Studies*, Vol. 2. No. 2: 3-35.
- Kim, Hong-jung (김홍중). 2009. *the Sociology of the Heart*. Seoul: Munhakdongne.
- Kim, Young-ha (김영하). 1997. *Calling*. Seoul: Munhakdongne.
- Lee, Seong-ah(이성아). 2025. Tragedy as 'Post of Post' and Literature's Autonomy: An Approach to Yi Taejun's Text Through Tragedy. In *Sanghur Hakbo*, Vol. 73, 177-208.
- Ryoo, Bo-sun (류보선). 1996. Death, Its Beautiful and Ominous Temptation. In *Munhakdongne*, Vol. 3. No. 3: 1-6.
- Seo, Young-chae (서영채). 2024. Cynicism, Death, and Masochism: A Reflection on 1990s Fiction, In *Munhakdongne*, Vol. 6, No 4: 1-33.
- Steyerl, Hito. 2012. Missing People: Entanglement, Superposition, and Exhumation as Sites of Indeterminacy. In *e-flux Journal*, Vol 38. <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/38/61209/missing-people->

Seong-Ah LEE: The Transition from “Fantastic Reality” ...

[entanglement-superposition-and-exhumation-as-sites-of-indeterminacy](#) (accessed December 7, 2025).

- Todorov, Tzvetan. 1996. Introduction to Fantastic Literature. tr. by Lee, Gi-woo, Seoul: Hangukmunhwasae.
- Wu, Chan-je (우찬제). 1999. The Pre-written Story and the Newly-Writing Text: A Study on Kim Young-ha. In *Munhak-gwa Sahoe*, Vol. 12, No 3: 1246-1270.
- Yoo, Hui-sok (유희석). 2017. “Thought Experiment” and the Forms of the Novel. In *Journal of English Studies in Korea*, Vol. 32: 59-90.

**CHANGES IN 18TH-CENTURY
JAPANESE ACADEMIC CIRCLES AND
TONGSINSA EXCHANGE: FOCUSING ON
THE EMERGENCE OF THE SORAI
SCHOOL AND THE PUBLICATION
PROCESS OF THE
PILDAMCHANGHWAJIP**

HYO-WON LEE, Associate Professor

Department of Korean Language and Literature

Inha University, Republic of Korea

100, Inha-ro, Michuhol-gu, Incheon-si

leehw@inha.ac.kr

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-5706-4981>

Abstract: Of the 18th century in Japan, new academic trend that called Soraigaku (徂徠學) have emerged. Soraigaku has expanded the force while criticizing the Neo-Confucianism and poet of Song dynasty (宋詩). In the mid-18th century, Soraigaku is as prevalent widely in Japan. However, in fact, crucial opportunity to Soraigaku has become epidemic, it was for the publication to criticize the Tongsinisa. The Sorai school (徂徠學派) was in conflict relation with Rinke (林家), Mokumon (木門), Jinsaimon (仁齋門). So, the opportunity to contact with the Tongsinisa was little. In addition, Sorai school's literary works aren't included in *Geyrimchngghwajip* (鷄林昌和集). So, the Sorai school published *Munsagisang* (問槎畸賞) that include their own literary works. He was severely criticized the Tongsinisa in *Munsagisang*. As a result, Sorai school's reputation has become to be known throughout the

country. Sorai is to criticize the authority of Tonsinsa which was very high in Japan, so it was able to improve their own phase of school.

Keywords: Tongsinsa, Ogyu Sorai, Soraigaku, *Munsagisang*, Huma Susumu

18세기 일본 학계의 변화와 통신사 교류: 소라이학파의 출현과 필담창화집의 편찬 과정을 중심으로

초록: 18세기 일본에서 소라이학이라 불리는 새로운 학문이 등장하였다. 소라이학은 성리학과 송시를 비판하며 세력을 확장하였다. 18세기 중반에는 소라이학이 일본 전역에 널리 퍼졌다. 그런데 소라이학파 형성에 결정적 계기가 된 것은 통신사를 비판하는 출판물이었다. 소라이학파는 린케, 기노시타학파, 진사이학파와 갈등 관계에 있었다. 따라서 통신사와 접촉할 기회가 거의 없었다. 게다가 소라이 학파의 문헌은 계림창화집에 거의 수록되지 않았다. 이에 소라이는 독자적으로 자기 학파의 필담과 창화시를 수록한 문사기상이라는 필담창화집을 출판했다. 그는 문사기상에서 통신사를 혹독하게 비판했다. 그 결과 소라이학파의 명성은 전국적으로 알려지게 되었다. 소라이는 일본에서 존송의 대상이었던 통신사의 권위를 비판함으로써 자기 학파 위상을 높일 수 있었다.

키워드: 통신사, 오규 소라이, 소라이학, 문사기상, 후마 스스무

1. Introduction

Pildamchanghwajip (筆談唱和集) has recently garnered attention as a resource that provides concrete evidence of the scenes of Tongsinsa (通信使) and the diverse forms of exchange between Joseon and Japanese literati. Through the collection of brush talks, we can now glimpse the vivid scenes of exchange that existing diplomatic mission records failed to show. We can obtain more concrete information about what the common interests of Korean and Japanese literati of the time were, and the sharp positions they took in opposing each other on these issues. Among Japanese scholars, Huma Susumu stands out as an early researcher who focused on these collections of brush talk. Through his series of studies on the envoys, He questioned

the prevailing scholarly view that the missions primarily served to introduce advanced Joseon culture, such as Confucianism and Classical Chinese, to Japan. Furthermore, after extensively analyzing the collection of brush talk published in the late 18th century, he argued that the missions were highly responsive to emerging scholarly trends in Japan and made persistent efforts to assimilate them. (Huma, 2015)

The new academic trend mentioned by Huma Susumu refers to the expanding influence of Gohak (古學) during that era – specifically, the Kogigaku (古義學) of Ito Jinsai (伊藤仁齋, 1627–1705) and the Soraigaku (徂徠學) of Ogyu Sorai (荻生徂徠, 1666–1728). These two schools criticized Neo-Confucianism, which had been imported through Joseon in the early Edo period. The Kogigaku and Soraigaku exerted a profound influence on Japanese academia, providing the impetus for the diversification of the previously Neo-Confucian-dominated scholarly world.¹

¹ The Jinsai School and the Sorai School emphasized gomunsa (古文辭) in literary study and composition. They adopted the classical prose of the Pre-Qin (先秦) period as their model instead of the Tang-Song (唐宋) style prevalent in their own era, and they preferred Tang poetry (唐詩) and Ming poetry (明詩). In Confucian studies, a tendency emerged to emphasize the Six Classics over Neo-Confucianism (六經). This phenomenon, though differing in timing, appeared commonly across Korea, China, and Japan. The gomunsa movement initiated by the Jeonhuchilja (前後七子) exerted a certain influence on Joseon and Japan. In Joseon, the collected works of Jeonhuchilja had already been transmitted by the late 16th century, and thereafter, scholars inclined toward gomunsa emerged one after another. For example, the 17th-century Joseon Confucian scholar Heo Mok (許穆) not only embraced literary theories but also advocated an sanggojui (尙古主義) emphasizing the Six Classics (六經) at the scholarly level. This tendency persisted steadily until the 18th century, primarily among literati affiliated with the Southerners (南人) faction. (Lee Hyowon, 이효원 2007; Ha Jiyeong, 하지영 2014). However, it is necessary to note the historical and cultural differences between Joseon and Japan. Compared to Japan, Joseon had a longer history of adopting Neo-Confucianism and establishing it as the official state doctrine. Moreover, the Confucian scholars who were responsible for literature were also the main actors in politics. Their mode of existence was fundamentally different from that of Japanese literati, who built a self-contained scholarly world detached from practical politics. Furthermore, the asymmetry of the exchange must be considered, as the Jeoseulgwan (製述官) and Seogi (書記) of Tongsinso (通信使), who interacted directly with Japanese literati, were not top-tier scholars in Joseon. Without considering these points, applying a simplistic theory of historical development to

According to Huma Susumu, the envoys first detected these changes in Japanese academia during the 1748 mission, and it was during the 1763 mission that the envoys actively responded for the first time. However, considering that Jinsai advocated the Kogigaku and generated significant resonance in the late 17th century, and that Sorai first published his writings advocating the Kobunjigaku (古文辭學) and presenting his literary theories in the early 18th century, it is difficult to conclude that the envoys visiting Japan in the early 18th century failed to detect Japan's new scholarly trends at all. Of course, substantive literary or scholarly exchanges via brush talk only began during the diplomatic missions of 1748 and 1763. However, a thorough reading of 18th-century collections of brush talk reveals that scholars from the Kogigak school (古義學派) and the Sorai school (徂徠學派) were actively participating in diplomatic envoy exchanges even before the two missions of the late 18th century. It also shows that the envoys themselves were to some extent aware of new trends in Japanese academia.

This fact appears to have been largely overlooked until now. Furthermore, the missions' visits exerted a certain influence, directly or indirectly, on Japan's literary circles and academic community. Notably, the visit of the mission played a role in the nationwide popularity of Soraigaku in the late 18th century, a point that has also been neglected in Japan. Ogyu Sorai appears to have been well aware that the envoys formed a kind of exchange network by interacting with literati across Japan, and that their critiques carried a certain authority within Japanese academic circles. Sorai, needing to draw the attention of the academic world as a new school of thought, seems to have attempted to leverage the envoys' authority to elevate the status of his own school. While established Japanese scholars sought to secure their own authority by venerating the envoys and gaining recognition for their literature and scholarship from them, the Sorai school took the opposite approach. They sought to elevate the Sorai school's name throughout Japan by sharply criticizing the envoys based on the Kobunjigaku, which was considered the latest literary theory in Japan at the time.

This paper focuses on this point, highlighting that the visits of

argue that Japan departed from Neo-Confucianism earlier than Joseon and that Joseon actively sought to embrace this trend, as Susumu Huma interprets, appears to be an arbitrary and biased perspective that does not align with reality.

the envoys and the publication of their collection of brush talk served as a catalyst for the nationwide popularity of Soraigaku in Japan from the mid-18th century onward. It aims to trace this process.

2. Conflict Surrounding the Publication of the Sorai School's Brush talk collection

When the Tongsinsa visited Japan in 1711, scholars from across Japan flocked to exchange poetry with the envoys. Three scholars from the Sorai School also met with the mission to exchange poetry. In Shimonoseki (下關), Yamagata Shūnan (山縣周南, 1687–1752) participated; in Edo, Andō Tōya (安藤東野, 1683–1719) and Honda Iran (本多猗蘭, 1691–1757) took part. At the time, the Kenen Academy (護園塾), which served as Sorai's private study hall, was attracting outstanding scholars drawn by his reputation. However, their numbers were still small, and since he had not yet gained nationwide fame, it appears they did not participate extensively in the brush talk.

At that time, Japan's Confucian circles were dominated by several factions: the Hayashi family (Hayashi-ke, 林家; represented by Hayashi Hōkō [林鳳岡, 1645–1732] and his disciples), who had served as Confucian advisors to the shogunate for generations; the Ansai school (Ansai-mon, 闇齋門; consisting of Yamazaki Ansai [山崎闇齋, 1619–1682] and his disciples), active mainly in Kyoto; and the Mok school (Mokumon, 木門; consisting of Kinoshita Jun'an [木下順庵, 1621–1699] and his disciples), who served as Confucian officials for the shogunate and interacted with the Hayashi family. The Jinsai school, which advocated for the kogigak (古義學), also formed a certain influence centered in Kyoto. In contrast, the Sorai School, which advocated the slogan 'Prose must be Qin-Han, poetry must be the Tang' (Munpil Jin-Han, Sipil Seongdang, 文必秦漢, 詩必盛唐) – a concept unfamiliar in Japan at the time – was regarded as an alien presence within the scholarly community. This was because, prior to Sorai's promotion of gomunsa, the works of the Jeonhuchilja were merely one among many Chinese literary texts imported via Nagasaki. The Sorai School dismissed not only Joseon poetry and prose but even Dangsonggomun (唐宋古文) as lacking literary merit. This extreme preference for Ming literature drew ridicule from Japan's mainstream

literati, who regarded the Joseon envoys as progressive.

In this context, an incident occurred in 1711 surrounding the publication of a collection of brush talk, hinting at the conflict between Japan's mainstream schools of thought and the Sorai School. Shortly after the Tongsinso returned to Joseon in February 1712, a collection of brush talk and poems exchanged between the mission and Japanese literati, similar to an anthology, was published in various parts of Japan. This collection of literary exchanges, titled *Gyerimchanghwajip* (鷄林唱和集), was compiled by Kyoto publishers Izumonojo Izumiji (出雲寺和泉掾) and Seo Genbei (瀬尾源兵衛, 1691–1728) and Tohonya Seibei (唐本屋清兵衛), a publisher in Edo. It primarily contains brush talk and poetic compositions from regions where envoys stayed during their sea voyages: Edo, Kyoto, Osaka, Akamagaseki (赤間關), Iwakuni (岩國), Murotsu (室津), Ōtsu (大津), Ogaki (大垣), Imazu (今須), Yoshida (吉田), Hamamatsu (濱松), and Mishima (三島). The number of individuals featured in this book reaches 121. Izumoji Izuminojo and Tohonya Seibei were venerable booksellers, significant enough to be included in the Compendium of Booksellers Since the Keicho Era (慶長以來書賈集覽). Izumoji Izuminojo also held the position of Shobutsu Bugyo (書物奉行) within the shogunate, responsible for collecting, classifying, organizing, preserving, and researching books. He was so closely connected to the Hayashi family that rumors circulated suggesting he was a member of Hayashi Razan (林羅山)'s clan. (Jeong Yeongs-sil, 정영실 2012: 124)

Meanwhile, the shogunate stipulated that all results of the exchanges between the Korean envoys and Japanese scholars, beginning with the 1682 visit of the Korean envoys, must be submitted to the shogunate. Furthermore, an official was always present at the locations where brush talk and discussions took place, ensuring everything was meticulously recorded and reported to the shogunate's Daigakunokami (太學頭). The Daigakunokami was the highest authority appointed by the shogunate, a Confucian scholar responsible for diplomacy and official documents. This position was held by the Hayashi family for generations. The reason for requiring all brush talk to be recorded and managed by the shogunate was to prevent Japanese literati from boasting about their knowledge or engaging in poetic exchanges out of mere curiosity, thereby avoiding damage to the shogunate's authority or unnecessary friction. The Hayashi family played a role in implementing the shogunate's control measures on the

ground and was also deeply involved in the collection and publication of brush talk collections. (Jeong Yeongs-sil, 정영실 2012: 128-132) Given these circumstances, the publication of *GyerimChanghwajip* can be seen as deeply influenced by the shogunate's intent to monitor and control exchanges between the diplomatic missions and Japanese literati, beyond the previously known commercial purposes.

At this time, Yamagata Shunan, a disciple of Sorai, exchanged letters with the Tongsinsa at Akamagaseki, while Ando Toya and Honda Iran met the mission in Edo, engaging in brush talk and composing poetry together. When the shogunate compiled the *pildamjip*, their poems and brush talk should have been included. However, most of Yamagata Shunan's poems were deleted during the publication process, and not a single poem by Andō Tōya or Honda Iran was included. Their poems were deleted during the censorship process by the Hayashi family. Knowing his work was excluded from *Gerimchanghwajip*, Yamagata Shunan expected poems by his school's scholars to appear in the subsequent sequel. However, their poems were scarcely included in the sequel either. The sequel was published under the title *Chilgachanhwajip* (七家唱和集), compiling seven anthologies of poetic exchange. The included anthologies were: *Banhyeongjip* (班荊集, 2 vols.), *Jeongdeokchngchwajip* (正德和韓集, 2 vols.), *Jigihandam* (支機閑談, 1 vols.), *Jeosongaekgwansimungo* (朝鮮客館詩文稿, 1 vols.), *Sanghanchangsujiip* (桑韓唱酬集, 1 vols.), *Sanghanchanghwajip* (桑韓唱和集, 1 vols.), and *Bingwanhojeojip* (賓館縞紵集, 2 vols.). The figures featured in each collection are Kinoshita Kikutan (木下菊潭, 1667–1743), Fukami Teni (深見天漪), Miyake Kanran (三宅觀瀾, 1674–1718), Muro Kyūsō (室鳩巢, 1658–1734), Hattori Nakaku (服部寬齋, 1667–1721), Dohi Kashū (土肥霞洲, 1693–1757), Gion Nankai (祇園南海, 1677–1751). All were disciples of Kinoshita Jun'an (木下順庵, 1622-1699).

Kinoshita Junan (木下順庵) studied Confucianism under Matsunaga Sekiko (松永尺五, 1592–1657), a disciple of Fujiwara Seika (藤原惺窩, 1561–1619), who is regarded as the founder of Japanese Confucian studies. He served in the Kagahan (加賀藩) and in 1682 became an official responsible for Confucian studies within the shogunate, teaching Confucianism to the fifth shogun, Tokugawa Tsunayoshi (德川綱吉, 1646–1709). He participated in various compilation projects undertaken by the shogunate and interacted with scholars from the Hayashi family, such as Hayashi Hōk (林鳳岡, 1644–

1732) Ten of his most outstanding disciples are known as the Mokmunsipcheol 木門十哲. Among them, Arai Hakuseki (新井白石, 1657–1725) became a tutor to Tokugawa Ienobu (徳川家宣, 1662–1712) and led the shogunate's foreign policy. When the Tongsin arrived in Japan in 1711, he implemented policies favorable to the shogunate, such as reducing the enormous reception costs and scaling back the ceremonial welcome for the envoys.

In short, during the 1711 diplomatic mission, not only the Hayashi family but also Kinoshita Junan and his disciples played a significant role in the exchange by meeting the envoys, engaging in brush talks, and exchanging poems. Consequently, they were in a favorable position when compiling the collection of brush talk and would have strived to include many of their own poems and brush talks. All of them were Neo-Confucian scholars. From their perspective, the Sorai School, which criticized Neo-Confucianism, was likely not a welcome presence. Furthermore, it is possible they believed the Sorai School's poetry and brush talks, which rejected Song poetry and contained content critical of Neo-Confucianism, violated the shogunate's regulations instructing them to avoid friction with the envoys. In any case, the *Gyerimchanghwajip* and its sequel, the *Chilgachanghwajip*, included almost no poetry by the Sorai School. During the compilation of the *Chigachanghwajip*, Yamagata Shunan, realizing their own poetry and brush talk had been omitted, was deeply disappointed. He wrote to his teacher Sorai, expressing the opinion that it would be better to publish the Sorai School's poetry and prose separately. In response, Sorai resolved to personally publish a collection of brush talk containing the poems and brush talk exchanged between Shunan, Andō Tōya, and Honda Iran with the envoys. He entrusted the publication to Irie Jakusui (入江若水, 1671–1729), a literati townsman from Osaka with whom he shared a close friendship. Ultimately, they decided to include Jakusui's own poetry and prose as well. Thus, the Sorai School's brush talk collection, *Munsagisang* (問槎畸賞), was published.

Irie Jakusui was a pivotal figure in the publication of the *Munsagisan*. He was born into a family that had operated a sake brewery in Osaka for generations, he nevertheless devoted himself to scholarship and literature from an early age. He passed the family business on to his son and cultivated relationships with literary figures throughout Japan. In his youth, he studied poetry under the Kyoto poet Toriyama Shiken

(鳥山芝軒, 1655–1715) and later devoted effort to compiling his master's posthumous poetry collection. Subsequently, he studied Confucianism under Ito Togai, son of Ito Jinsai. In Edo, he also associated with Ogui Sorai, who had been in opposition to Togai. Sorai, impressed by Irie Jakusui's poetry, wrote the preface to his poetry collection *Seosanchochang* (西山樵唱), thus establishing their friendship. (Hino Tatsuo, 1999: 444) However, it appears that Jakusui remained close to Sorai while not following his scholarship.

Jakusui, a wealthy merchant from Kyoto, cultivated relationships with diverse figures across schools of thought and appears to have wielded influence over Kyoto's prominent bookstores and publishing houses. Seo Genbei, one of the co-publishers of the previously mentioned *Gyerimchanghwajip*, was a prominent Kyoto publisher and poet. Given that he published most of Jakusui's works, it can be inferred that he was very close to Jakusui.

At that time, the Sorai School was just beginning to make a name for itself in Edo. Facing difficulties in independently publishing their brush talk collection due to opposition from the Hayashi family and figures like Kinoshita Junan, they approached Jakusui to pursue the publication of *Munsagisang*. Besides *Munsagisang*, Sorai's early works *Genenzuihits* (護園隨筆) and *Yeokmunjeonje* (譯文筌蹄) were also published by Kyoto publishers, likely facilitated through Jakusui's mediation. While preparing for the publication of *Genenzuihits*, Sorai, sensing attempts by the Jinsai school to obstruct it, sent a letter to Jakusui stating, "Let the world know that you are the one publishing it."² This episode reveals the public's wariness toward the Sorai school and Sorai's distrust of Kyoto literati.

Meanwhile, *Munsagisang* was originally published together with *Gwangreungmunsarok* (光陵問槎錄) under the title *Munsaijong* (問槎二種). *Gwangreungmunsarok* contains the brush talk between Ajiki Rikken (味木立軒, 1650–1725) and his disciple Terada Rinsen (寺田臨川, 1678–1744). Rikken was a disciple of Hayashi Hōkō, and both were Neo-Confucian scholars. Sorai published this collection of brush talk between Neo-Confucian scholars – specifically, scholars from the Hayashi family – alongside works from his own school, even writing the preface. In the preface, he stated, "Ajiki was a distinguished

² For details on the conflict between Kyoto literati and the Sorai school, see Hino Tatsuo 日野龍夫 (1999: 450–452).

disciple of Kukja Seonsaeng (國子先生), renowned from an early age, having received envoys from great nations. His literary skill and scholarship were already widely acknowledged.”³ Regarding Rinsen, he praised him as “blue surpassing the indigo”, meaning he excelled beyond his teacher. Kukja Seonsaeng refers to Hayashi Hōkō, the Daigakunokami. This preface represents an attitude completely at odds with the criticism in *Munsagisang* that the envoys were obsessed with Song poetry and Song scholarship. Why did Sorai publish a collection of brush talk with the scholars of the Hayashi family, with whom he had been in academic opposition, and even write a preface praising them?

As mentioned earlier, considering that the *Gyerimchanghwajip* and *Chilgachanghwajip* were published within the context of friendly relations with the shogunate and the Hayashi family, Sorai could not have been unaware of the Hayashi family when publishing his own school's collection of essays. A collection of essays containing criticism of the envoys could face shogunal regulation. Given that Sorai's school of thought took a critical stance toward Neo-Confucianism, it inevitably drew scrutiny from the Hayashi family and the Kinoshita Junan school, which dominated the academic mainstream at the time. Indeed, Sorai was extremely angry that scholars from his own school were excluded when the *Gyerimchanghwajip* and *Chilgachanghwajip* were compiled, blaming it on the “wickedness of the Kyoto people.” (Hino Tatsuo, 1999: 450)

The reaction of the academic community, including the Kinoshita Junan school, following the publication of *Munsagisang* clearly shows that Sorai was not at all welcomed by existing Neo-Confucian scholars.

Ogyu Sorai now proclaims himself the foremost master of literature in Edo. Recently he published a book titled *Munsagisang*, in which he personally critiques the poetry and prose exchanged between his disciples and envoys. It is a matter to be dismissed with a laugh. ‘Gisang’ (畸賞) seems to be synonymous with ‘appreciating the bizarre (奇賞)’. Not long ago, Mr. Hukami (深見) also scoffed that there was nothing ‘bizarre enough to appreciate’ – only ‘bizarre laughter (奇笑)’. Ogyu Sorai claimed that apart from Han Yu (韓愈) and Liu Zongyuan (柳宗元) of the Tang dynasty, and Wang Shizhen (王世貞) and Li

³ “味君者，今國子先生高第弟子，早歲蜚譽，應聘大國。其文章學術業，已經伯樂一顧者，是固亡論已。”(荻生徂徠. 光陵問榘錄, 光陵問榘錄序).

Panlong (李攀龍) of the Ming dynasty, there was no writing worthy of the name. He even went so far as to say that Ouyang Xiu (歐陽脩) and Su Shi (蘇軾) were ignorant of literature. How bizarre!⁴

(Muro Kyūsō 1853: vol. 110)

This is a text written by the Neo-Confucian scholar Muro Kyūsō (室鳩巢, 1658–1734). Muro Kyūsō was born in Edo and became a disciple of Kinoshita Junan. Later, through the recommendation of his fellow student Arai Hakuseki, he became a scholar of the shogunate. The Hukami mentioned by Kyūsō appears to refer to Hukami Teni (深見天漪, 1649–1722), who appears in the *Jeongdeokchanghwajip* (正徳和韓集). Teni was a descendant of immigrants who had come to Japan from Fujian Province (福建省), China. His father, Kō Daisō (高大誦), worked as an interpreter in Nagasaki. Teni studied medicine and Chinese under the Chinese-born naturalized monk Dokuritsu (獨立) and learned Confucian studies under Kinoshita Junan. He served as a Confucian physician in the Satsumahan (薩摩藩) and, through the recommendation of Arai Hakuseki, became an official of the shogunate.

Through the quotations, we can see that Sorai's arrogance and his literary theory, overly inclined toward classical Chinese texts, became a laughingstock for the Kinoshita Junan school. *Munsagisang*, too, is being ridiculed as merely a laughingstock rather than the strange spectacle its title suggests. So, let us examine specifically what content *Munsagisang* contains and from what perspective it criticizes the envoys.

3. The Sorai School Exploiting the Reputation of Tongsinsa

The preface to *Munsagisang* was written by Tanaka Tōkō (田中桐江,

⁴ “荻生惣右衛門事、只今江戸にて文章は我一人と稱し申後。此度問榘崎賞と申物を板行仕、弟子共朝鮮人と贈答の詩文、自身に批評を加え出し、一笑を發申事に候。‘崎賞’は‘奇賞’と通申哉と存候。崎賞にては無之、奇笑にて候とて、先日も深見氏など笑申候。唐の韓・柳、明の王・李の外は外國にてても文章無之候、歐・蘇もいまだ文章を不存候由申候。近來の奇怪に候。” (Muro Kyūsō 1853)

1668–1742), a disciple of Sorai. He wrote that the poetry of Sora School scholars, “Even with dust, grime, chaff, and husks, one can mold the poets of the Three Tang Dynasties (三唐)

“How much more so the poetry of Koreans?”⁵ He subtly disparaged the envoys' poetry by comparing them to the hideously ugly figures Zhilishu (支離疏) and Aitaituo (哀駘它) mentioned in the *Zhuangzi* (莊子). This preface clearly reveals the nature and purpose of this collection of brush talk.

Sorai included the letters exchanged during the diplomatic mission in his publication, openly revealing his critical views on the envoys. After meeting the envoys in 1711 and exchanging poems with them, Irie Jakusui wrote to Sorai to inform him of this fact. Upon reading the letter, Sorai remarked: “It was as if I could clearly see you composing poetry with the Joseon envoys and being barred from entering the government offices. Thinking of the spectacle you must have made then, I cannot help but laugh. You really are quite the busybody.”⁶

Jakusui, of course, disparaged all the Japanese literati who flocked to the envoy to exchange poems as people seeking only honor and profit.⁷ Jakusui also enclosed the envoy's poetry with his letter to Sorai. Regarding the envoy's poetry, Sorai remarked, “Not only is it vulgar, but it uniformly imitates the outdated poetic styles of the Song and Yuan (元) dynasties. This is due to the customs of the Joseon.”⁸ Regarding the poems composed in response to Jakusui by envoys, he noted that they failed in both rhyme and parallelism, rendering them incapable of being proper responses.⁹ Sorai was evaluating the literary

⁵ “其塵垢粃糠將猶陶鑄三唐者，何況韓人乎？”(田中桐江. 問榭畸賞，問榭畸賞跋)

⁶ “足下與韓使相酬和詩及官禁嚴不得入者狀，宛乎在目，想足下其時作何態，遂至失笑也。好事癖，一至于此耶。”(This letter is included in the *Munsagisang* and is titled Letter to Jakusui 與江若水書 in Volume 16 of the *Soraishu* 徂徠集. Here, the version from the *Soraishu* is quoted. The same applies below.)

⁷ “足下懂懂爲利往來，嗚呼！當今世不可無足下矣。”(ibid.)

⁸ “亡論其卑靡，一沿襲宋、元之舊，是自三韓土俗使然。”(荻生徂徠. 徂徠集 volume 21, 與縣次公)

⁹ “卽其和子徹詩，猶且不能變子徹意而發之，窘窘乎既受病于韻與對之間，是未可以子和子徹之詩，而況對足下壘也乎？”(ibid.)

capabilities of the envoys as inferior to those of Japanese scholars. From Sorai's perspective, advocating the Gomunsaron (古文辭論) that took the ancient prose of the Pre-Qin (先秦) period and Tang poetry as models, it was clear that the Song-style poetry favored by the envoys appeared to be perpetuating long-standing flaws. However, citing the customs of the Joseon as the basis for this criticism is uncharacteristically weak logic for Sorai, and the standard of criticism is also arbitrary.

A noteworthy point is that Sorai provided evaluated and punctuated criticism in the *Munsagisang*. Given that among the over 200 collections of brush talk, very few contain such criticism, it is necessary to examine Sorai's purpose in offering these critiques. Sorai meticulously annotated poems and prose exchanged between envoys and his disciples, marking points for critique and offering commentary on noteworthy passages. He was particularly harsh in his criticism of the envoys' poetry, using expressions like 'too vulgar' and 'ridiculous'. Conversely, he excessively praised Shunan's poetry, comparing it to that of Li Panlong and He Jingming (何景明), declaring it superior even to Wang Shizhen's. This assessment is wildly divorced from reality. It is thought that Sorai's scathing criticism of the envoys and his excessive praise of his own school's scholars were intended to highlight his school's superiority through comparison with the envoys. In other words, Sorai published *Munsagisang* to emphasize that he could criticize the envoys' outdated literary theory based on his new literary theory, the Gomunsaron.

The colophon of *Munsagisang* also clearly reflects the stance of the Sorai School. Written by Hattori Nankaku (服部南郭, 1683–1759), one of Sorai's foremost disciples, it explicitly reveals how the Sorai School perceived the Korean envoys.

In his preface, Nankaku stated that when thunder roars, all creatures are startled, but the deaf remain undisturbed and at ease. He added that the same principle applies to writing.¹⁰ And he likened the envoys' failure to recognize the Sorai School, which had appeared like thunder in Japanese academia, to deafness. He also stated: "Weak-minded people of the world, upon hearing thunder, immediately flee into a closed room and boast that they are not afraid. Though not deaf

¹⁰ “雷霆之奮發也，則能驚物，而聾者恬焉，於文亦然。”(服部南郭。問榘畸賞，跋問榘畸賞後)

themselves, they follow the deaf, and thus are no different from the deaf.”¹¹ This was a condemnation of the Japanese literati of the time who ignored and turned away from the emergence of the Sorai School. Given the series of events mentioned earlier, this condemnation can be understood to target the Hayashi family and the Kinoshita Junan School, among other Neo-Confucian scholars in Japan at the time. Furthermore, the envoys who adhered to Neo-Confucianism were also targets of criticism.

Through the above discussion, the purpose behind compiling *Munsagisang* has become clearer. By likening the envoys to deformed or disabled individuals, it undermines the status that most Japanese literati had long admired in the envoys, while simultaneously enabling criticism of the Japanese literati who had followed them. This criticism effectively conveyed the Sorai School’s Gomunsaron (古文辭論) to the Japanese academic world. As is well known, the envoys traversed all of Japan, engaging in constant literary exchanges and exchanging poems with prominent scholars in key regions. In this process, scholars recognized by the envoys gained renown throughout Japan.¹²

It is thought that Sorai devoted such effort to publishing *Munsagisang* precisely because he understood this point. He likely reasoned that if, instead of seeking recognition from the Communications Office, he criticized it using new literary theory, this too could become a nationwide topic of discussion. The publication of *Munsagisang* can be seen as precisely leveraging the authority the Communications Office held in Japan against itself.

With the publication of *Munsagisang*, the Sorai School instantly emerged as a new school commanding attention in academic circles. The Sorai School’s status was significantly elevated by its critique of the Tongsinsa’s previously unquestioned scholarly and literary stature, grounded in the clear basis of the theory of ancient texts. Subsequently, the perspective toward the envoys in Japan changed

¹¹ “世之内荏者，一遇雷動，輒避諸密室中，而詫其不怯。非聾而學聾，均之聾耳。”(ibid.)

¹² For instance, Arai Hakuseki gained fame through his literary prowess during the 1682 diplomatic mission, leading to his appointment as a shogunate official. During the 1719 diplomatic mission, then an unknown poet Toriyama Shiken 鳥山芝軒 (1655–1715) became known even at the Imperial Palace in Kyoto because Shin Yuhan 申維翰 highly praised him and wrote the preface to his poetry collection.

rapidly. By the 1748 and 1763 envoy missions, individuals emerged who viewed the envoys critically and sought to engage in debate through scholarship and literature.

We have examined the perspectives from which Ogyu Sorai and his disciples criticized the Tongsinsa. It is noteworthy that while classical prose was popular in all three nations of Joseon, China, and Japan, Japan alone exhibited a particularly exclusive focus on Neo-Confucianism and Song poetry. It is natural for newly emerging ideologies or literary trends to achieve an intellectual turning point by criticizing and negating their predecessors. However, as previously examined, the criticism from the Sorai School was not justified or rational; rather, it consisted of exclusionary and contemptuous language bordering on condemnation. Underlying this, it is thought that a samurai mentality – believing Japan had overwhelmed Joseon through military might – was at play.

The following is a poem composed by Sorai after witnessing the horsemanship display held at Edo Castle during his diplomatic mission in 1719.

Have you not seen it? Toyotomi Hideyoshi's hundred thousand soldiers
Crossing the sea with wind and thunder roaring,
Capturing two capitals in less than ten days,
And conquering all eight provinces within three months.
This tactic is only good for fleeing
It cannot be used to stand firm and fight.
The emperor of Japan 皇和 now has a wise and enlightened ruler,
A century of peace has banished the spirit of war,
The way of appeasing neighboring lands is practiced,
So they do not hesitate to cross seas and climb mountains,
and petty men from distant lands follow envoys,

Hyo-Won LEE: Changes in 18th-Century Japanese Academic...

delighting the imperial countenance 玉顏 with their lowly arts.¹³

(Ogyu Sorai, 1719)

The title of this poem is A Song Written Upon Seeing a Goryeo (高麗) bastard Performing horsemanship (麗奴戲馬歌). The horsemanship was performed by Joseon to demonstrate its military might to Japan, but Sorai dismisses it as a trivial skill only good for fleeing. This poem shows no reflection or remorse regarding Japan's invasion and ravaging of Joseon during the Imjin War. Instead, it proudly recounts the ravaging achieved through military force. Rather than reflecting the mindset of a Confucian scholar advocating civil governance, it prominently displays the mentality of a samurai seeking domination through military might (武威). “Enlightened ruler” denotes Tokugawa Ienobu (徳川家宣), the shogun of the Tokugawa shogunate at the time; “the imperial countenance” also signifies the shogun. These terms reveal a deliberate belittling of the envoys as mere tribute-bearing messengers. The phrase ‘appeasing neighboring lands (柔遠)’ similarly implies the superior nation gently coaxing and appeasing, reflecting an underlying perspective that places Japan in a position of dominance. It appears Sorai held a self-centered and exclusive perception, completely divorced from reality, that since Japan had subjugated Joseon not through civilization but by military force, Joseon was now paying tribute. This viewpoint recurs repeatedly in Sorai’s writings concerning the envoys.

Sorai’s ethnocentric and exclusive perception is thought to have had a certain connection with the shogunate's foreign policy. At that time, the Edo shogunate sought to suppress rebellion and stabilize its regime through military force by demonstrating its martial might to the daimyo 大名. This created a fictitious international order in which surrounding nations submitted to the shogunate’s military force, and it was for this purpose that the envoys were mobilized. Following the war, exchanges resumed out of mutual necessity and were staged within Japan as tribute missions. This staging appears to have been accepted as fact, particularly among the lower classes. For instance, puppet

¹³ “又不見豐王十萬兵，叱吒風雷度大瀛，二都決旬拔，八道三月平，此技祇云奔亡資，難與堂堂陣爭衝，皇和今值仁明君，百年昇平息戰氛，交隣柔遠賴有道，不厭航海梯山勤，遐方小人伴長官，聊以賤技娛玉顏。” (Ogyu Sorai, 1719)

theater *jōruri* (浄瑠璃) plays like *Shingonghwanghusamhanchaek* (神功皇后三韓責) or *Bonjo Samgukji* (本朝三國志), staged to coincide with the envoys' visits, enjoyed immense popularity among the populace. These works were based on the fictitious history of Empress Jingū (神功皇后) and the legend of her conquest of the Three Han (三韓). (Suda Tsutomu 2011: 276-390) Furthermore, the shogunate orchestrated calculated displays, such as having the envoys pass by the Ichong (耳塚) in Kyoto and hosting banquets at Toyotomi Hideyoshi's memorial hall, thereby subtly transforming the envoys into tribute missions. (Ronald Toby 2013: 84-87) Moreover, the legend of Empress Jingū's conquest of the Three Han, found in the *Kojiki* (古事記) and *Nihon Shoki* (日本書紀), was perceived as historical fact by Japanese intellectuals until it was revealed as a fictional account in modern times. Many Japanese scholars of the time linked ancient history to the present to justify wars of aggression and disparaged exchanges for friendship as mere tribute missions. It appears Sorai did not significantly diverge from this perception.

In short, Sorai's perceptions of the Tongsinša, and indeed perceptions of Joseon itself, are underpinned by a distorted historical view and a samurai mentality that values military force. As examined earlier, this mindset likely played a role in Sorai's extreme and exclusionary condemnation of Joseon in *Munsangisang*.

4. Conclusion

With the emergence of the Sorai School, Japan's Confucian academic world moved beyond merely importing Neo-Confucianism through Joseon and began to forge its own independent scholarly realm. Maruyama Masao (丸山眞男) assessed this as a turning point in intellectual history, breaking free from the premodern nature of Neo-Confucianism and moving toward modernity. However, since Neo-Confucianism never became the principle defining the consciousness and life of Japanese society as a whole, the schema that it was overcome and developed further does not hold either. I believe Huma Susumu's series of studies also uncritically follows Maruyama Masao's perspective. Therefore, Huma's claim that the envoys were desperate to learn Japan's advanced learning, the *Go-hak*, also requires

reconsideration.

Unlike earlier periods where envoys sought to learn Neo-Confucianism, the brush talk collections clearly reveal a situation where Japan evaluated Joseon's Neo-Confucianism from an equal footing, raising questions or expressing new scholarly theories. Thus, the 18th century can be seen as a period when Japanese academia displayed confidence and pride. The envoys also sensed this change and showed interest. On the other hand, it should not be overlooked that the new trends within Japanese academia could emerge as matters of nationwide interest through the visits of the envoys.

Conflict of interest statement: The author has no conflict of interest to disclose.

Bibliography

- Chilgachanghwajip* (七家唱和集, 칠가창화집). National Library of Korea, Seoul.
- Gu, Jihyoen (구지현). 2011. *Tongsinsa pildam changhwajip-ui segye* [The World of the Collections of Sinitic Brush-talk and Poetic Exchange of the Joseon Envoys]. Seoul: Bogosa.
- Gyerimchngwhajip* (鷄林唱和集, 계림창화집). National Library of Korea, Seoul.
- Ha, Jiyeong (하지영). 2014. *Sippalsegi Jin-Han gobunron-ui jeongae-wa silhyeon yangsang* [The Development and Embodiment of Qin-Han Writings in the 18th Century]. PhD dissertation, Iwha Womans University.
- Hino, Tatsuo. 1999. *Hattori Nankaku Denkō* [A Study of the Biography of Hattori Nankaku]. Tokyo: Perikansa.
- Huma, Susumu. 2015. *Chōsen Enkōshi to Chōsen Tsūshinshi* [Joseon Envoys to Yanqing and Joseon Envoys to Japan]. Nagoya: Nagoyadaigakusyupankai.
- Jeong, Yeongsil (정영실). 2012. *Chōsen Tsūshinshi to Nihon Chishikijin no Sōgo Ninshiki Kenkyū* [A Study on Mutual Perception between Joseon Tongsinsa and Japanese Intellectuals]. PhD dissertation, Kansai University.
- Lee, Hyowon (이효원). 2007. *Heo Mok gwa Ogyū Sorai ui Sanggojuui munhak sasang bigyo yeongu* [A Comparative Study on the

- Archaism in Literary Thought of Heo Mok and Ogyū Sorai].
Master's thesis, Seoul National University.
- Munsagisang* (問槎畸賞, 문사기상). National Library of Korea, Seoul.
- Ronald, Toby. 2013. *Ilbon geunse-ui 'swaeguk'-iraneun oegyo*
[Foreign relations in early modern Japan: The so-called
'national isolation']. Translated by Eun Ju Heo. Seoul:
Changhae, 2013.
- Soraishu* (徂徠集, 조래집). Waseda University Library Collection:
Tokyo.
- Suda, Tsutomu. 2011. *Japan Speaks on the Annexation of Korea*. Seoul:
Yeollin Chaekdeul.

**CULTIVATING EFFECTIVE
EDUCATORS: EXPERIENTIAL
LEARNING IN KOREAN LANGUAGE
TEACHER EDUCATION¹**

JI HOON CHUNG², Ph.D. candidate

Yonsei University, Republic of Korea

chung.jihoon@yonsei.ac.kr

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-4714-8766>

YESEUL CHOI, Ph.D. candidate

Yonsei University, Republic of Korea

vanechoi@yonsei.ac.kr

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-0886-3723>

¹ The authors would like to thank the students enrolled in Survival Korean: Mobile Learning in the Digital Era (KOR2315) for their enthusiasm and participation, as well as the Institute for Higher Education Innovation for their support of this project.

² First Author

NAYOUNG KIM, Ph.D. student
Yonsei University, Republic of Korea
ny2619@yonsei.ac.kr

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-3802-1286>

MINJI YOU, M.A. candidate
Yonsei University, Republic of Korea
Minjiyouuu78@yonsei.ac.kr

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-5723-6547>

THEODORE JUN YOO³, Professor
Yonsei University, Republic of Korea
yoojun@yonsei.ac.kr

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2359-4214>

Abstract: The global rise in Korean language education, driven by the growing influence of the Korean Wave (Hallyu), has sparked a need for innovative teaching methods to effectively address the needs of an increasingly diverse community of learners. This study examines the effectiveness of experiential learning programs in Korean language teacher education, focusing on their role in developing pedagogical competencies, shaping professional identities, and preparing educators for multicultural classrooms. By integrating hands-on, immersive activities such as classroom simulations, practicum placements, and community engagement projects, experiential learning enables future educators to bridge theory and practice, fostering deeper language proficiency and cultural understanding. Grounded in Situated Learning Theory and Possible Selves Theory, the research demonstrates how real-world teaching experiences not only enhance instructional skills but also broaden career aspirations and cross-cultural competencies among teacher candidates. The study further examines institutional responses to the growing demand for Korean language instruction, including curriculum innovations at leading universities and the expansion of international language programs. As Korean language education undergoes a paradigm shift driven by global cultural

³ Corresponding author

engagement and domestic demographic changes, this study contributes to the evolving discourse on effective teaching methodologies, underscoring the importance of adaptability, cross-cultural competency, and experiential learning in shaping the future of Korean language educators.

Keywords: Experiential Learning, Situated Learning Theory, Possible Selves Theory, Professional Identity Formation, Career Exploration, Language Teaching Practicum

예비 교사 양성을 위한 경험 중심 학습의 효과: 한국어 교원 교육에서의 정체성 형성과 진로 탐색

초록: 한류의 세계적 확산에 따라 한국어 교육에 대한 수요가 급증하면서, 다양한 학습자 공동체의 요구에 효과적으로 대응할 수 있는 혁신적인 교수법 개발의 필요성이 대두되고 있다. 본 연구는 한국어 교원 양성과과정에서 경험 중심 학습 (Experiential Learning)의 효과를 고찰하며, 이러한 접근이 예비 교원의 교수 역량 향상, 전문 정체성 형성, 다문화 교실에 대한 준비도 제고에 어떠한 영향을 미치는지 분석한다. 교실 시뮬레이션, 교육 실습, 지역사회 참여 프로젝트 등 몰입형 실천 활동을 통합한 본 연구의 프로그램은 예비 교사들이 경험을 통해 이론과 실재를 연결하고 언어 능력과 문화적 이해 능력을 동시에 심화하는 데 기여한다. 본 연구는 상황 학습 이론 (Situated Learning Theory) 과 가능 자아 이론 (Possible Selves Theory) 에 기반하여, 실질적 실질적 교육 경험이 예비 교원의 교육적 기술은 물론 진로 동기와 문화 간 역량을 어떻게 고양하는지를 조명한다. 또한, 한국어 교육 수요의 급증에 대응하는 대학 커리큘럼 혁신 및 국제 교육 프로그램 확대 등 제도적 차원의 변화도 함께 분석하였다. 본 연구는 한국어 교원 양성의 패러다임 전환 속에서, 적응력, 문화 간 소통 역량, 실천 기반 교수법의 중요성을 강조하며, 앞으로의 한국어 교육자 양성에 있어 경험 중심 학습이 갖는 이론적·실천적 함의를 제시한다.

키워드: 경험 중심 학습, 상황 학습 이론, 가능 자아 이론, 전문 정체성 형성, 진로 탐색, 한국어 교육 실습

1. Introduction: Global Korean Wave (Hallyu) and the rising importance of Korean language education

Over the past decade, the Korean Wave (Hallyu) has profoundly transformed global cultural consumption patterns, with K-pop groups

like BTS, television series such as *Squid Game*, and films like the Oscar-winning *Parasite* spearheading this cultural phenomenon. The rapid rise in the popularity of Korean cultural exports has driven a dramatic increase in demand for Korean language education, creating both significant pedagogical challenges and opportunities (Kim Suk-Young 김석영, 2023; Courtney McLaren and Jin Dal-Yong 진달용 2020; Nan Mei Mingxue 2023; Yoo Theodore Jun 2020). This phenomenon has triggered a paradigm shift in language instruction, compelling educators and institutions to innovate their teaching methodologies and curricula. The growing surge in Korean language acquisition necessitates a thoughtful reevaluation of traditional teaching methods, prompting the development of innovative instructional strategies tailored to the evolving and diverse needs of a rapidly expanding global student population (Wang and Kelly 2023). Educators must now develop strategies that cater to learners from diverse cultural backgrounds, varying proficiency levels, and varied motivations for studying Korean, thereby ensuring effective and inclusive language instruction in this dynamic educational landscape. At the same time, this global interest offers unique opportunities for advancing the field, encouraging research into effective teaching practices, and promoting the integration of cultural elements into language instruction. This trend not only challenges existing educational frameworks but also stimulates progress in teaching methodologies, curriculum design, and cross-cultural communication strategies.

South Korea's rapidly changing demographic landscape has led to a more diverse population, creating an urgent need for certified instructors equipped to address the complex demands of a heterogeneous student body.⁴ In response, leading institutions such as Seoul National University, Korea University, and Yonsei University which are collectively known as the SKY universities, have introduced experiential learning programs into their curricula. These programs integrate theoretical knowledge with practical experience to address the critical shortage of certified educators capable of meeting the diverse needs of a heterogeneous student population. This study explores the impact of these initiatives on undergraduate students, focusing on how they shape students' understanding of Korean language education and

⁴ Recent data indicate that the global Hallyu fan base reached 225 million enthusiasts across 119 countries by the end of 2023, underscoring the urgent need for qualified language instructors.

influence their professional aspirations. The ultimate aim is to identify effective strategies for preparing future educators to excel in increasingly diverse and dynamic educational environments.

2. The Changing Landscape of Korean Language Education

The field of Korean language education now stands at a critical juncture, necessitating innovative approaches to address emerging challenges. Future research must develop pedagogical methods tailored to diverse learner backgrounds, integrate advanced technology into language instruction, and enhance educators' cross-cultural communication skills. By embracing these challenges, the field can evolve to meet the demands of Hallyu's global spread and the changing demographics of language learners (Jin Dal-yong 진달용 2023; Kim Hyun Mee 김현미 and Lah Tae Jun 나태준 2023). As the Korean Wave continues to influence global popular culture, its impact on language education promises to reshape Korean language pedagogy and approaches to fostering cultural understanding in an increasingly interconnected world (Pyun, Miran 편미란, Fang, Lu, and Pi, Yunjin 피유진 2024). This evolving landscape presents opportunities for creativity, adaptability, and a renewed commitment to bridging linguistic and cultural divides in language education.

This study employs a theoretical framework that integrates Situated Learning Theory and Possible Selves Theory (Markus and Nurius 1986) to examine the efficacy of experiential learning programs to develop teaching skills and shape professional identities among future Korean language instructors. Through this framework, the study investigates how experiential learning programs can prepare students for the complex demands of Korea's diverse educational landscape while fostering both practical skills and professional identity development.

South Korea's evolving demographics and the global popularity of Hallyu have created unprecedented demand for Korean language education, prompting institutions and policymakers to respond with targeted initiatives and expanded infrastructure. The demographic landscape has undergone significant changes, marked by

a sharp increase in children from multicultural families, rising from 46,954 in 2012 to 193,042 in 2024 (Ahn, Hyun Seon 안현선, Lee, Jeesoo 이지수, Jin, Yuanying 2023). This demographic shift has amplified the demand for educators proficient in teaching Korean as both a first and second language. These transformations underscore the increasing importance of Korean language education domestically, reflecting the broader global interest in learning the Korean language. The convergence of these factors has created an urgent need for educators who can effectively address the complexities of teaching Korean in an increasingly multicultural context, both within Korea and internationally. The Ministry of Education's ambitious goal of attracting 300,000 international students by 2027 further underscores the pressing need to resolve the current teacher shortage.⁵ Despite introducing a certification system for Korean language educators in 2005, only 83,749 teachers had been certified as of February 2024, revealing a persistent gap between supply and demand.

To meet the growing global demand for Korean language education, the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism has announced an ambitious plan to expand the number of King Sejong Institute centers worldwide to 350 by 2027.⁶ This initiative aims to strengthen the global infrastructure for Korean language learning by increasing the number of international instructors to 350 and training 500 local educators during the same period. Additionally, the ministry plans to develop educational materials incorporating popular Korean cultural content, such as K-pop and dramas, to engage learners and enhance overseas education programs.

The National Institute for International Education has revamped the Test of Proficiency in Korean (TOPIK) to address the growing demand for proficiency assessments (Han, Sun-Hwa 한선화 2019). It introduced a Computer-Based Testing (CBT) and Internet-Based Testing (IBT) Speaking Test, officially launching the speaking section in 2023. This addition marks a significant evolution in TOPIK, which now includes speaking alongside its traditional sections of

⁵ Ministry of Education, Republic of Korea. (2023, August 31). "Targeting 300K International Students by 2027."

⁶ The Korea Times. "Korea Designates 18 More King Sejong Institute Centers." <https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/foreignaffairs/20240624/korea-designates-18-more-king-sejong-institute-centers> (accessed June 24, 2024).

reading, listening, and writing. These innovations aim to evaluate the diverse needs of learners better worldwide and reflect the institute's commitment to adapting the test to global trends in language education.

This trend reflects broader cultural and educational engagement with Korea. The global Korean language education landscape has significantly changed, driven by cultural interest. For instance, the Korea Foundation noted a dramatic rise in Korean Wave fan club membership, from 9 million in 2012 to 224 million by 2023. This cultural enthusiasm has led to an expansion of educational infrastructure. By 2023, the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism, in collaboration with the King Sejong Institute Foundation, expanded the King Sejong Institutes to 248 locations across 85 countries, serving over 216,000 learners. The Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology also administered the Test of Proficiency in Korean (TOPIK) to a record 417,800 test-takers from 88 countries in 2023, marking a significant milestone in Korean language proficiency assessment. Recent data show a notable increase in interest in the Korean language within American higher education, marked by significant growth in student enrollment in Korean language programs. The Modern Language Association (MLA) tracks language enrollments and reported a substantial 78% increase in Korean language course enrollment from 2009 to 2016, reaching about 15,000 students. The MLA's latest report highlights Korean as one of only three languages, alongside American Sign Language and Biblical Hebrew, that have consistently shown enrollment growth (Modern Language Association 2023).

This dramatic expansion in demand for Korean language education has created both challenges and opportunities for preparing qualified educators. Leading Korean universities have responded by developing innovative experiential learning programs that integrate theoretical knowledge with practical teaching experience. This study examines one such initiative, a collaborative pilot program at Yonsei University, to understand how experiential learning shapes future educators' professional identities and career aspirations. Drawing on Situated Learning Theory and Possible Selves Theory (Markus and Nurius 1986), this research investigates how authentic teaching experiences within diverse educational contexts can prepare undergraduate students for the complex demands of contemporary Korean language education. The findings aim to inform curriculum

development and policy decisions as institutions worldwide work to meet the growing global demand for qualified Korean language instructors.

3. Theoretical Foundations: Situated Learning and Possible Selves

To understand the effectiveness of experiential learning in teacher education, this study draws on Situated Learning Theory and Possible Selves Theory, which together illuminate how authentic experiences shape professional identity and motivation among future educators. Career exploration programs in Korean language education have traditionally been designed as “helper” or “mentoring” initiatives. These programs are grounded in the Situated Learning Theory principles, as they immerse students in real-world contexts where they engage with Korean language learners and actively contribute to a collaborative learning environment (Lave and Wenger 1991).

Situated Learning Theory posits that learning is most effective within authentic contexts and communities of practice, highlighting the crucial role of contextual immersion in developing professional skills and knowledge (Kim, Jung-Hee 김정희, Lim, Jong-Mi 임종미, and Kim, Eun-Man 김은만 2022). In Korean language education, this paradigm suggests that aspiring educators benefit significantly from engaging in real-world teaching scenarios, facilitating their transition from passive knowledge recipients to active contributors within the professional community. Through these immersive experiences, learners engage in “legitimate peripheral participation,” advancing from the periphery to the core of the community of practice as they accumulate expertise in supporting language learners (Lave and Wenger 1991: 29). This process enhances language proficiency and fosters cultural understanding, adaptability, and the formation of a professional identity.

Complementing this approach, Possible Selves Theory asserts that individuals are motivated by their perceptions of “potential future selves”. As such, experiential learning programs offer students the opportunity to envision themselves as future educators, making the

career path both tangible and personally meaningful (Markus and Nurius, 1986: 954). By synthesizing these theoretical perspectives, this study explores how experiential learning programs in Korean language education can prepare students for the complex demands of a diverse educational landscape. It examines how these programs can develop practical skills, promote cultural understanding, and cultivate professional identities among aspiring educators. By analyzing the connection between theoretical knowledge and practical application, this study aims to demonstrate how experiential learning aligns students with the evolving needs of Korea's multicultural society (Lee et al. 2025).

Recent studies have demonstrated that practical, career-oriented courses effectively enhance students' career planning and motivation (Oh Juil 오주일 and Jeong, Daeyul 정대울 2019; So, YeonHee 소연희 2022; Song Hanna 송한나 2013). Recent research highlights the effectiveness of such programs in fostering meaningful learning experiences. For instance, Seo Kyung-hye and Park Sun-ok (2019) found that Korean language mentoring programs help international students adjust to university life and provide mentors with valuable experiential learning opportunities in Korean language education. Similarly, Choi Anna and Lee Myung-gwi (2023) observed that mentors build positive relationships with learners and gain confidence through interactions, underscoring the transformative impact of situated learning experiences. These findings demonstrate how such programs benefit both mentors and mentees, enriching the professional development of future educators while supporting learners' integration and growth.

Building on this foundation, our study examines how experiential programs impact students' perceptions of Korean language education, cultivate professional identities, and inspire future career aspirations. In addition to addressing the growing demand for proficiency assessments, we aim to contribute to the expanding body of literature on Korean language pedagogy by examining the efficacy of experiential learning for future teachers. Our findings provide critical insights that can inform policy decisions and curriculum development in Korean language education programs, helping to meet the needs of both global learners and Korea's increasingly diverse student population.

The expansion of Korean Language Education programs across

various institutions highlights this approach's creative nature and growing relevance. For example, Yonsei University's Korean Language Institute (KLI) and Sogang University's Korean Language Education Center exemplify innovative curriculum development and teaching methodologies. These programs emphasize practical speaking skills and cultural immersion, with Yonsei focusing on diverse cultural activities and experiential learning to facilitate students' adaptation to Korean society. Sogang, meanwhile, has developed a curriculum that prioritizes speaking ability and incorporates authentic, real-life scenarios into the classroom.

Enhancing professional identity in Korean language education requires more than informal interactions and extracurricular activities, often the focus of traditional programs. These approaches, while valuable, can limit mentors' opportunities to acquire specialized knowledge or systematically refine their teaching methodologies. This study advocates a shift toward structured programs offering participants immersive Korean language education experiences. Such programs would enable educators to explore innovative teaching methods and cultivate professional competencies, fostering a deeper connection to their roles as language instructors and advancing their professional growth.

To implement this vision, we designed an undergraduate course titled "Survival Korean," the first collaborative pilot program involving the Department of Korean Language and Literature, the Office of International Affairs, the University of California Education Abroad Program (UCEAP), and the Institute of Higher Education Innovation (IHEI). IHEI's mandate to address social innovation and tackle societal challenges shaped part of the initiative. We offered the program as a 3-credit course, running from March to June 2024, for 15 weeks. In the course syllabus, we highlighted that traditional Korean language instruction remains rooted in a conventional second language (L2) teaching model, where instructors maintain complete control over the curriculum (Henry and Liu 2023). This rigid structure often fails to address the needs of diverse learner groups, leading to increased anxiety for some students and providing few opportunities for interactive and engaging learning.

The "Survival Korean" course was specifically designed for exchange students enrolled at Yonsei University during the spring semester who had little to no prior knowledge of the Korean language.

Unlike traditional language courses, this program emphasizes real-life challenges and cultural adaptation, empowering learners to navigate their new environment more effectively. The course also introduced a novel “project-based learning” (PBL) approach, which IHEI promoted, replacing conventional teaching methods (Wang and Kelly 2023). Korean language majors participating in the program were paired with international students as part of a collaborative learning experience. We intentionally chose the term “buddy” instead of “helper” or “mentor” to highlight the reciprocal nature of these relationships, emphasizing mutual growth and cultural exchange. This approach also provided participants with practical experience designing learning materials, planning class activities, and directly supporting learners. Through these hands-on opportunities, participants gained a clearer understanding of the teaching profession and were able to explore potential career paths in Korean language education.

This innovative framework fostered a supportive learning environment for Korean language learners and their peers, referred to as “buddies”. Grounded in the principles of Possible Selves Theory, the program encouraged participants to envision themselves as future educators through meaningful engagement with the field of Korean language education (Kubanyiova 2009; Sato 2020). It addressed shortcomings in traditional teaching methodologies and empowered participants to develop practical skills and cultural competencies vital for personal and professional growth.

By examining these experiential programs, we aim to identify the best practices and areas for improvement, highlighting effective strategies for cultivating linguistically proficient and culturally competent Korean language educators. We recognize the challenges in addressing structural curricular changes and decision-making processes involving university language institutes, broader educational politics, and traditional teaching methodologies. While implementing structural reforms requires time and deliberation, these debates are particularly relevant given the changing cultural landscape of contemporary students. Today's learners, having grown up in a society characterized by exposure to diverse cultures and languages, navigate multicultural environments with greater confidence and adaptability. As educators, we must equip students with the skills necessary for success in both academic and professional spheres by adopting a multifaceted approach to Korean language education. This study seeks to contribute to

advancing new pedagogical practices, supporting the field's ongoing growth and evolution in response to increasing global interest and significant demographic shifts in South Korea. By addressing these challenges, we aim to enhance the quality and effectiveness of Korean language education in an increasingly globalized context.

Additionally, the program responds to the evolving landscape of Korean language education. The global market for Korean language learning is projected to reach \$67 billion by 2034, with 2,154 schools across 47 countries already offering Korean language classes. This growing demand highlights the urgent need for qualified educators. By providing structured, experiential learning opportunities, universities can play a pivotal role in preparing the next generation of Korean language instructors to meet both global demand and domestic needs in this rapidly expanding field.

4. Experiential Program Design and Implementation

Building on these theoretical foundations, the “Survival Korean Program” at Yonsei University was designed to immerse undergraduates in real-world teaching scenarios, utilizing a “buddy system” and collaborative learning to foster hands-on skill development. Experiential career exploration programs play a vital role in bridging the gap between academic study and career pursuit, helping students envision themselves as future Korean language educators. While Korean Language and Literature programs in South Korea provide a strong foundation in language and culture, they often lack practical experiences necessary for fostering interest in teaching careers. This disconnect highlights the limitations of theoretical knowledge alone in motivating students to pursue careers in Korean language education. Undergraduate career exploration programs address this issue by allowing students to apply their academic knowledge in real-world settings. Such experiences are instrumental in helping students make informed career decisions (So, Yeon-Hee 소연희 2022). By connecting abstract concepts with practical application, these programs empower students to see themselves more clearly as educators, inspiring them to consider teaching a viable and rewarding career path.

Studies on experiential programs in foreign language education confirm their positive impact on strengthening the link between academic knowledge and career choices. Lee, Kilryoung 이길영 (2018) found that indirect experiences played a significant role in the career exploration of students in English education. Lee highlighted activities such as tutoring friends or observing teachers as key factors in students' career decisions. Similarly, Lee, Song 이송 (2023) reported that a course entitled “French Language and Culture Experience” in a French studies department helped students connect their academic studies to practical career paths. This course situates students’ theoretical learning in a real-world teaching context, enabling them to envision potential career opportunities more concretely.

Experiential learning programs have proven highly effective in helping students explore career paths and build professional identities (Layton et. al. 2020). Researchers across various fields have shown that hands-on experiences are crucial in shaping students’ career trajectories. For example, So, Yeon-Hee 소연희 (2022) found that experiential learning activities encouraged career preparation behaviors among engineering and education majors, while Jang, Nayoung 장나영 et al. (2024) reported that field experiences positively influenced the career decisions of pre-service teachers. Similarly, Kim, Yeon Hee 김연희 et al. (2024) demonstrated that modern dance students improved their career readiness and satisfaction through immersive experiences, and Kim, Ji Young 김지영 et al. (2012) observed that physical education majors participating in special education programs developed more positive perceptions of disabilities and adapted better to special education environments. These findings collectively highlight how experiential programs provide a platform for skill development, personal growth, and forming a professional identity, enabling students to refine their career aspirations through direct engagement with their chosen fields.

Providing hands-on teaching experiences is essential for fostering interest and confidence in Korean language education among undergraduate students. Immersing students in authentic classroom settings, such as collaborating with exchange students, allows them to build confidence, explore career options, and develop practical teaching skills. These experiences enable students to interact with learners, apply teaching methods, and receive constructive feedback from experienced educators, helping them envision a more straightforward and more

desirable future as educators. By addressing self-doubt through practical application, students can cultivate a more substantial interest in pursuing Korean language education as a career.

Building on these theoretical foundations, the “Survival Korean” program at Yonsei University was designed to immerse undergraduates in real-world teaching scenarios, utilizing a buddy system and collaborative learning to foster hands-on skill development. This study aims to empirically investigate how experiential Korean language education programs provide meaningful career exploration opportunities for undergraduate Korean Language and Literature majors. These programs play a crucial role in preparing the next generation of educators by sparking greater interest in teaching Korean as a potential career path. The findings will contribute to developing effective strategies to nurture future Korean language teachers, meeting both the growing global demand and domestic needs in an increasingly interconnected linguistic landscape.

It examines how undergraduate students in the Korean Language and Literature Department at Yonsei University perceive and engage with Korean language education through this experiential course. Using a qualitative approach, we selected eleven undergraduate students (seven female and four male) from the Department of Korean Language and Literature at Yonsei University, who were enrolled in the “Survival Korean” course, to participate in our focus group to analyze the impact of these experiences on their professional aspirations and decision-making. The group consisted of nine third-year students, one first-year student, and one fourth-year student. These students participated as “buddies” in a Korean language education program designed for exchange students, actively engaging in hands-on learning through various tasks. They developed learning materials, planned and facilitated class activities, and supported learners throughout the program.

During the academic semester, we collected data through surveys and in-depth interviews to evaluate the program’s impact. Pre- and post-surveys were administered via Google Forms, incorporating demographic and open-ended questions. The study involved 11 undergraduate Korean buddies who assisted 54 Korean language learners, exchange students from the University of California Education Abroad Program (UCEAP). For 15 weeks, participants engaged in bi-weekly online discussions on a password-protected bulletin board

called LearnUs. Using a message board format, they responded to weekly exercises, interacted with their buddies, and discussed course-related content in detailed, multi-paragraph posts. These interactions resembled focus group dynamics but allowed for deeper reflection due to the extended response time. All qualitative data were examined thematically to identify patterns and insights.

We began by evaluating the baseline knowledge of the Korean students regarding Korean language education to establish their starting point. Next, we analyzed their learning outcomes from the experiential program, emphasizing their engagement in a community of practice and the hands-on learning opportunities it offered. Lastly, we explored changes in their interest in Korean language education and career aspirations. We employed a detailed and multifaceted approach to gain a comprehensive understanding of the program's impact on students' experiences, learning outcomes, and career aspirations in Korean language education. As part of this process, we conducted follow-up interviews in four small groups, each lasting approximately 40 minutes, to delve deeper into survey responses and gather more nuanced perspectives on participants' experiences. These interviews provided valuable insights that clarified and expanded upon the data collected. Using Naver Clova Note for automatic transcription, we recorded the interviews and ensured their accuracy through a meticulous review and correction process conducted by five researchers. This integrated analysis provided a rich and holistic understanding of the program's impact on students' professional development and their evolving interests in pursuing careers in Korean language education.

We designed an experiential Korean language education program to immerse undergraduate students in Korean Language and Literature through practical, hands-on classes for exchange students. This immersion facilitated Situated Learning by providing participants with authentic experiences in the field. We structured the program based on Keller's ARCS model (Attention, Relevance, Confidence, Satisfaction) (1987) to maintain motivation for both learners and buddy participants (Cai et. al. 2022). By implementing the ARCS model, we aimed to maximize the potential for positive identity formation, aligning with the Possible Selves Theory.

We created a buddy system to encourage undergraduate buddies to explore their potential roles as Korean language educators. The program was supported by a supervising professor and four

graduate Korean language teachers. This structure allowed us to create a comprehensive learning environment that fostered practical skills, cultural exchange, and professional development for all participants. We divided learners into four groups, each supported by two or three buddies. Korean language teachers conducted primary instruction and managed the overall program, providing guidance and support to the buddy participants. Buddies collaborated closely with learners, assisting in creating educational materials, teaching Hangeul, grammar, and vocabulary, planning and facilitating classroom activities, supporting communication practice, and engaging in cultural exchange. This hands-on involvement gave buddies direct insight into the challenges Korean language teachers face, such as effectively conveying authentic Korean expressions and addressing learners' difficulties. The first four weeks focused on learning Hangeul, followed by nine weeks (excluding exam periods) dedicated to thematic lessons based on real-life topics. We chose these topics based on the practical needs of learners living in Korea.

We structured each thematic unit into two distinct stages: preparation and activity. During the preparation stage, learners selected vocabulary and expressions they wished to focus on, which “buddies” then used to create customized Korean language materials. These materials incorporated authentic, practical expressions alongside the learners’ specific requests and questions, ensuring the content was relevant and engaging. This personalized approach allowed students to learn and apply their knowledge effectively.

The activity stage consisted of three speaking-focused sessions designed to enhance communication skills. First, learners practiced dialogue using buddy-developed materials, emphasizing pronunciation and expression. Next, they participated in classroom role-playing activities that simulated real-life scenarios to improve their conversational abilities. Finally, learners visited real locations, such as restaurants or cafes, where they applied their Korean language skills in authentic situations. By involving buddy participants in curriculum design and teaching, the program offered them valuable hands-on teaching experience while inspiring them to envision themselves as future Korean language educators.

We designed this study to investigate the impact of experiential learning in Korean language education on undergraduate students’ career interests and professional development. Focusing on students

from the Department of Korean Language and Literature at Yonsei University, our research explores how participation in a hands-on Korean language education program shapes their perceptions of the field and influences their career choices. Adopting a qualitative research approach, we employ in-depth interviews and thematic analysis to better understand students’ lived experiences and evolving perspectives regarding their career trajectories and professional identities. This qualitative methodology allows us to capture the complexity and richness of students’ reflections, motivations, and aspirations as they engage with experiential learning opportunities. This research aims to provide meaningful insights into the role of Korean language education in undergraduate students’ professional development and to inform them about the design of more effective educational programs. By doing so, we seek to contribute to the ongoing efforts to meet the growing global demand for highly qualified Korean language educators.

5. Findings: Transformative Impact on Future Educators

Analysis of participant feedback and survey data reveals that experiential learning significantly enhances pedagogical skills, deepens cultural competence, and inspires undergraduates to pursue careers in Korean language education. A survey on perceptions of Korean language education provided valuable insights into participants’ prior knowledge, experiences, and interest in the field, establishing a baseline for evaluating the program’s impact.

Table 1. Understanding and Interest in the Field of Korean Language Education, Unit: Number of Participants

	Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	I was aware of Korean language education.	1 (9.1%)	1 (9.1%)	0 (0.0%)	7 (63.6%)	2 (18.2%)

2	I was interested in Korean language education.	1 (9.1%)	1 (9.1%)	3 (27.3%)	5 (45.5%)	1 (9.1%)
---	--	-------------	-------------	--------------	--------------	-------------

Source: Authors' survey data (pre-survey, 2024).

Before engaging in the experiential program, 9 out of 11 students (81.8%) were aware of Korean language education, while 2 (18.2%) indicated no prior awareness. Additionally, five students reported having some relevant experience in the field. Two had participated in private tutoring for elementary school students from multicultural backgrounds or engaged in language exchange programs at a Korean language institute. The other three described activities are less directly related to Korean language education, such as tutoring native Korean-speaking adolescents or volunteering as subway interpreters and city tour guides. While these experiences offered exposure to language and cultural exchange, they fell outside the traditional scope of Korean language education. This diversity in prior experiences enriched the program by bringing varied perspectives and setting the stage for a dynamic and engaging learning environment.

Before joining the program, we assessed participants' initial interest in Korean language education. Of the group, six participants (54.6%) expressed interest in the field, three (27.3%) reported feeling neutral, and two (18.2%) indicated no prior interest. To gain deeper insight into their motivations, we collected open-ended responses, revealing various reasons for their interest. Some participants aspired to major in Korean Language Education. In contrast, others enjoyed teaching Korean to foreigners or found language teaching personally rewarding, driven by a desire to share knowledge about Korea. Several participants expressed a passion for the Korean language and a curiosity about teaching it as a second language. One participant was inspired by a course they had taken on Korean Language Education as a foreign language. These responses highlighted the diverse motivations that shaped participants' engagement with the program.

Table 2. Fields of Courses Taken in the Department of Korean Language and Literature, Unit: Number of Participants (Multiple responses allowed)

	Field of Area	Answer
1	Modern Literature	7(48.8%)
2	Classical Literature	5(31.2%)
3	Korean Linguistics	2(12.5%)
4	Korean Language Education	2(12.5%)

Source: Authors' survey data (pre-survey, 2024).

Despite varying levels of awareness and interest, we found that this interest had not yet translated into substantial academic engagement. To explore this further, we examined the coursework of participants in the Korean Language and Literature department. Most students had taken courses in modern literature (7 students, 48.8%) and classical literature (5 students, 31.2%). Only two students (12.5%) had enrolled in Korean linguistics or language education courses, revealing a disconnect between expressed interest and formal academic pursuit.

Table 3. Understanding of Korean Language Teaching Certification and Instructional Methods, Unit: Number of Participants

	Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	I was aware of the profession of Korean language teachers.	3 (27.3%)	4 (36.4%)	2 (18.2%)	2 (18.2%)	0 (0.0%)
2	I was aware of the qualification requirements for Korean language teachers.	5 (45.5%)	2 (18.2%)	3 (27.3%)	1 (9.1%)	0 (0.0%)
3	I was aware of Korean language teaching and learning methods.	4 (36.4%)	3 (27.3%)	2 (18.2%)	2 (18.2%)	0 (0.0%)

Source: Authors' survey data (pre-survey, 2024).

We also assessed participants' knowledge of the Korean language teaching profession and their qualifications before the program. Three participants (27.3%) were unaware of the profession, while four (36.4%) reported limited knowledge. Regarding teaching

qualifications, five participants (45.5%) had no prior understanding, and two (18.2%) had limited awareness. These findings highlight the gap between initial interest and formal engagement in Korean language education, setting the stage for our program to bridge this divide and provide practical, hands-on experience in the field.

We asked participants about their knowledge of Korean language teaching methods and strategies, and the responses revealed significant gaps in their understanding. Four participants (36.4%) reported having no prior knowledge, while three (27.3%) indicated only a limited understanding. Notably, none of the participants demonstrated a firm grasp of these areas. Open-ended responses provided further context, with one participant stating, “This program was my first real exposure to Korean language education, so I did not know much before.” Another shared, “I had no prior knowledge other than knowing that foreigners study Korean at language institutes or academies.” Others mentioned limited awareness of the field, such as the need to pass specific exams or complete graduate-level coursework to become a certified teacher and the lack of teaching certification options in their undergraduate programs.

These responses revealed that while some participants believed they were generally aware of Korean language education, their understanding was often superficial or incomplete. For instance, some misconstrue unrelated activities, such as volunteering as subway interpreters, as relevant teaching experience. Additionally, participants showed low enrollment in related coursework and limited knowledge about the qualifications required to teach Korean. To explore these patterns further, our research team conducted follow-up interviews, uncovering several structural factors that hindered deeper engagement with Korean language education.

The interviews highlighted a scarcity of specialized courses in Korean language education at the undergraduate level, leaving students with few opportunities to advance their studies. Many participants also expressed a lack of awareness about potential career pathways in the field, highlighting a need for improved information dissemination. Furthermore, a common misconception among interviewees was the belief that advanced degrees were mandatory for obtaining teaching certification. This misunderstanding may discourage some students from pursuing careers in Korean language education altogether.

These findings shed light on the complex challenges facing

Korean language education and underscore the importance of addressing these barriers. They emphasize the need for more comprehensive and accessible information about career pathways and more straightforward guidance on pursuing teaching certification. By addressing these issues at the undergraduate level, institutions can better support students interested in Korean language education and foster greater participation and growth in this critical field.

Before participants joined the program, we assessed their understanding and interest in Korean language education. As we explored the reasons behind low engagement in this field, a nuanced story unfolded from our participants' experiences. One student's journey highlighted the limited departmental opportunities, as they noted, "I knew that Korean language education differed from Korean language and literature, but there were not many opportunities to explore it in my department. It was not until I took a Korean Language Education course as a foreign language that I learned more about it." This scarcity of options seemed to influence course selection priorities, with another participant observing, "Most students choose courses based on credits and workload, rather than genuine interest in Korean language education."

The narrative revealed a troubling trend when we found low interest in practical experiences. This discovery underscored the challenges in promoting meaningful engagement with Korean language education, emphasizing the importance of developing strategies to stimulate interest in hands-on learning and career development. A participant shared their frustration, stating, "The language institute often advertises mentoring or tutoring opportunities, but hardly anyone applies, so I do not think many people are interested." This lack of enthusiasm also extended to career development courses. One student described a valuable seminar featuring guest speakers from the field but lamented its rarity and low enrollment due to its limited credit value, saying, "I am taking a career development seminar where guest speakers in Korean language education share their experiences, but opportunities like this are rare, and since the course only offers one credit, most students do not enroll." Through these personal accounts, we began to see the multifaceted challenges facing Korean language education, from institutional limitations to student priorities, all of which contribute to a cycle of low engagement that seems difficult to break. These responses reveal systemic barriers to engagement with

Korean language education, including limited course offerings, misaligned student priorities, and a lack of awareness about practical opportunities for learning. Our findings highlight the need for more robust, credit-worthy courses and experiences that can effectively introduce students to the field of Korean language education.

Our findings reveal that low engagement in Korean language education stems from structural barriers restricting students' ability to connect with the field and envision viable career paths. Key obstacles include limited access to relevant coursework and a lack of engaging extracurricular opportunities. Without authentic, hands-on learning experiences, students struggle to immerse themselves in the Korean language education community and see their potential roles. Furthermore, inadequate awareness of career options leaves many students without clear aspirations or direction. To address these challenges, it is essential to develop targeted, practical programs that provide meaningful exposure to Korean language education. Such initiatives would ignite genuine interest and active participation, enabling students to experience the field firsthand and imagine themselves as future educators. By bridging the gap between academic learning and real-world application, these immersive opportunities can help students form a more concrete and inspiring vision for their future in Korean language education (Lave and Wenger 1991: 35).

The following discussion highlights how the experiential program in Korean language education enriched participants' insights into the complexities of teaching and learning Korean. We assessed perceived learning outcomes using six questions, each rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree."

Table 4. Changes in Understanding of Korean Language Teaching and Learning, Unit: Number of Participants

	Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	I learned how to teach Hangeul.	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (36.4%)	7 (63.6%)
2	I learned how to plan and create Korean language teaching materials.	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (27.3%)	8 (72.7%)

3	I learned how to explain Korean grammar and vocabulary.	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (54.5%)	5 (45.5%)
4	I learned how to design and conduct classroom activities for Korean language instruction.	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (18.2%)	9 (81.8%)
5	I learned how to understand and communicate with people from different cultures.	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	11 (100%)
6	I was able to identify the Korean language content that learners actually need.	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (27.3%)	8 (72.7%)

Source: Authors' survey data (post-survey, 2024).

Our findings revealed overwhelmingly positive results. All participants reported beneficial learning outcomes, with most selecting “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” for each statement. Notably, all eleven participants (100%) “Strongly Agreed” that the program significantly enhanced their intercultural understanding and communication, indicating a substantial boost in intercultural competence. As participants shared their open-ended responses, they provided rich insights into their learning experiences, actively highlighting three key areas where they experienced significant growth. They actively developed skills in creating effective educational materials, which empowered them to design engaging lessons. Additionally, participants gained a deeper understanding of learners' difficulties, allowing them to tailor their teaching strategies more effectively. Furthermore, they actively identified practical Korean expressions for daily use, enhancing their ability to connect theoretical knowledge with real-world applications. These reflections made it clear that participants were not just passive recipients of information but actively engaged in their learning process, transforming their experiences into valuable skills and knowledge (Lave and Wenger 1991: 31).

These results demonstrate the program's success in providing a

comprehensive, hands-on learning experience that bridges theoretical knowledge with practical application. By immersing students in real-world teaching scenarios, we fostered a deeper understanding of the complexities involved in Korean language education and cultivated essential skills for future educators (Zakrajsek and Schuster 2018).

Developing effective educational materials proved to be a transformative experience for participants, fostering growth, reflection, and a deeper understanding of their teaching practices. Our participants actively shared their experiences creating educational materials, weaving a narrative of development and insight. One participant took ownership of their teaching approach, stating, “I incorporated the instructor’s intentions into my materials, moving beyond a set curriculum.” As another educator reflected, this proactive stance resonated with others: “Designing teaching aids prompted deep reflection on content presentation and effective delivery.” The process of creation sparked introspection for many. One participant noted, “Creating my teaching aids led to meaningful reflection on what and how to teach.” Another educator observed that this hands-on approach enabled greater customization: “Making materials myself allowed for closer tailoring to students’ needs.” Through these experiences, participants gained a deeper understanding of the impact of their choices. One educator had a revelation about the broader implications of their work, sharing, “I realized how content prioritization and material design affect student engagement.” These personal accounts painted a vivid picture of educators actively engaging with their craft, constantly refining their approach to better serve their students.

These experiences actively transformed participants from passive learners into dynamic contributors within the Korean language teaching community. As students created their materials, they embarked on a journey of discovery and growth. They gained a keen awareness of how instructional design directly influences learning outcomes, observing firsthand the impact of their choices on student engagement and comprehension. This process deepened their understanding of the teaching process, moving beyond theory to practical application (Oyserman and Terry 2006). They learned to craft practical and engaging materials, recognizing the importance of capturing and maintaining student interest. Moreover, through this hands-on approach, they began to identify and address the specific challenges Korean language learners face, tailoring their materials to overcome

common hurdles. This active engagement in material creation fostered a sense of ownership and professional identity, as participants saw themselves evolving from students into educators, ready to make meaningful contributions to the field of Korean language instruction (Marcus and Nurius 1986; Zakrajsek and Schuster 2018). This hands-on approach fostered a sense of belonging in the teaching community and provided valuable insights into the complexities of Korean language education. Participants' reflections demonstrate the program's success in bridging theoretical knowledge with practical application, preparing them for future roles as effective Korean language educators (Day, et al. 2006).

Through their experiences, participants developed a nuanced understanding of the challenges faced by Korean language learners, revealing a complex interplay of cultural, linguistic, and pedagogical factors. As they engaged in material creation, one participant noted, "Designing materials revealed which concepts needed emphasis and where learners might struggle." This hands-on approach allowed educators to anticipate and address potential difficulties proactively. Direct interaction with students proved equally enlightening. One buddy shared, "Witnessing students' struggles firsthand prompted me to consider more effective teaching methods." This real-time feedback loop encouraged continuous improvement and innovation in teaching strategies. The diversity of learners presented both challenges and opportunities. An enthusiastic participant remarked, "I enjoyed addressing the challenges faced by exchange students by tailoring materials to meet their needs."

This adaptive approach also extended to recognizing linguistic differences, as another observer noted, "I observed how learners from different language backgrounds struggled with various aspects of Korean, such as pronunciation or grammar." Personalization emerged as a key theme in these narratives. Another buddy found that "Tailoring explanations to individual students' difficulties proved a valuable part of the experience." This individualized attention not only addressed immediate challenges but also deepened the educators' understanding of the learning process. Cultural nuances added another layer of complexity to language instruction. An intrigued participant shared, "I found it intriguing to see how students from different cultures faced unique challenges in learning Korean." This cultural awareness enhanced the educators' ability to create inclusive and effective learning

environments. Through these varied experiences, our participants transformed their understanding of language learning challenges, equipping themselves with practical insights to serve their diverse student populations better (Gonzalez-Bravo 2019).

These reflections demonstrate how participants developed empathy and a deeper understanding of the diverse challenges Korean language learners face. By immersing participants in an authentic learning environment, we provided them with opportunities to engage directly with learners, allowing them to develop practical teaching skills in a meaningful context. As they worked to help learners overcome challenges, participants began to see themselves as capable and effective future educators. This hands-on experience fostered the development of positive self-perceptions, reinforcing their potential to succeed as Korean language teachers. Through this hands-on approach, we enhanced participants' teaching skills and fostered a genuine connection to Korean language education. This immersive experience proved instrumental in bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, preparing our students for future roles in Korean language education (Mackay 2019).

Participants emphasized the importance of teaching practical Korean expressions, illustrating how real-world applications can enhance and empower students' learning experience. One student enthusiastically remarked, "We taught expressions learners could immediately use in their daily lives," emphasizing the direct relevance of their lessons. Another participant contrasted this approach with their high school English learning experience, noting that the focus on real-world Korean expressions felt uniquely practical and engaging. The effectiveness of this method became clear as participants observed their students' growing confidence. One educator proudly shared, "We helped learners become more confident in using Korean for basic tasks, such as ordering food or asking for directions." This focus on practical skills resonated deeply with both teachers and students. Another participant reflected on the importance of context, stating, "Teaching context-specific expressions made our lessons more meaningful." One participant observed that the lessons' real-world applicability extended beyond the classroom: "Learners appreciated learning practical tips and phrases directly from Korean speakers and practicing them outside the classroom." This seamless connection between classroom learning and real-life application was particularly impactful.

Participants found great satisfaction in helping learners acquire immediately applicable Korean expressions. This experience highlighted the importance of focusing on real-world communication rather than relying solely on academic language. Our approach made learning more effective for students and reinforced participants' emerging identities as practical, supportive educators - a key component of Possible Selves Theory (Hamman et al., 2010; Markus & Nurius, 1986). Through this process, our participants transformed from mere instructors into facilitators of authentic, meaningful language acquisition, actively shaping their students' ability to navigate Korean-speaking environments with confidence and ease.

The Korean language education experiential program significantly enhanced participants' understanding of Korean language teaching and learning by immersing them in an authentic and interactive environment. This hands-on approach transformed students from passive observers into active practitioners, allowing them to engage deeply with the teaching process. As participants helped learners overcome challenges, they envisioned themselves as capable future educators. This experience fostered emotional fulfillment, as they witnessed the positive impact of their efforts on learners' progress and confidence, reinforcing their aspirations to pursue careers in Korean language education. By bridging theory with practice, the program enhanced teaching skills and sparked a passion for Korean language education among participants, laying a solid foundation for their future careers in this field.

6. Discussion and Implications

The results highlight not only the personal transformation of participants but also the broader implications for curriculum design and institutional policy in Korean language teacher education. Participation in the Korean language education experiential program transformed participants' career aspirations, igniting a strong interest in pursuing Korean language education as a professional path and fostering enthusiasm for hands-on teaching experiences. By analyzing survey data alongside qualitative responses, we assessed changes in participants' interest, future plans, and program evaluations.

Table 5. Changes in Career Intentions Toward Korean Language Education, Unit: Number of Participants

	Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	This course sparked my interest in pursuing a career in Korean language education.	0 (0.0%)	1 (9.1%)	2 (18.2%)	4 (36.4%)	4 (36.4%)
2	I would like to continue teaching Korean to foreigners in the future.	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (45.5%)	6 (54.5%)
3	I would recommend this course to other undergraduate students in the Department of Korean Language and Literature.	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (9.1%)	10 (90.9%)
4	I believe more programs like this one should be offered to provide experiential learning opportunities in Korean language education.	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	11 (100%)

Source: Authors' survey data (post-survey, 2024).

The findings revealed significant growth in their aspirations. Many participants expressed increased enthusiasm for a career in Korean language education, with eight out of eleven (72.8%) indicating that the program heightened their interest by selecting “Agree” or “Strongly Agree.” This renewed passion translated into unanimous support for continuing to teach Korean in the future, with five participants (45.5%) choosing “Agree” and six (54.5%) selecting “Strongly Agree.”

Beyond individual career goals, participants strongly endorsed the program itself. Ten participants (90.9%) stated they would “strongly recommend” the program to their peers, while one participant (9.1%)

chose “Agree.” Their feedback also emphasized the need for more opportunities like this experiential program. Every participant (100%) “Strongly Agreed” that similar programs should be offered to support aspiring educators further. These results underscore the program’s transformative impact in shaping participants’ professional aspirations and fostering collective enthusiasm for expanding access to immersive learning experiences in Korean language education.

These individuals actively embraced their roles as future educators and advocates for meaningful language learning opportunities through their participation. The experiential program significantly heightened their interest in Korean language education and motivated them to consider it as a viable career path. This aligns with the principles of envisioning future roles, which suggest that imagining oneself in a desired professional position enhances motivation and commitment. By immersing participants in hands-on teaching experiences, the program allowed them to step into the role of a Korean language educator, helping them form a clearer and more attainable vision of their potential future selves within the field. This process fostered enthusiasm and confidence, laying a strong foundation for their pursuit of careers in Korean language education.

In their open-ended responses, participants shared how the program profoundly transformed their perspectives on the importance and value of Korean language education. One participant reflected on the rewarding nature of the experience, saying, “I found the experience rewarding. It made me realize how valuable it is to give foreigners a positive experience of the Korean language and culture.” Another participant described how the program shifted their understanding of the global significance of Korean language education: “Before this program, I had not fully grasped the extent to which foreigners want to learn Korean. Now, I see the growing global interest in the Korean language and culture.” They continued, “I understand the importance of Korean language education, and it made me reflect on how it needs to evolve to meet the diverse needs of learners.”

These reflections revealed a profound transformation in participants’ understanding of Korean language education. Initially holding a limited and abstract view, they developed a nuanced appreciation of their societal and cultural significance. This shift highlights the value of learning through authentic, real-world experiences. By engaging in practical teaching scenarios, participants

gained a deeper understanding of the field's impact, experiencing firsthand the growing global demand for Korean language skills and recognizing the importance of adaptive, learner-centered approaches. This hands-on experience enhanced their teaching abilities and ignited a passion for the field, underscoring the program's success in cultivating future educators.

Participants also expressed a heightened interest in discovering effective and practical teaching methods to make Korean language education more accessible and engaging. Their reflections illustrated this shift in focus. One participant shared, "I became interested in figuring out how to make Korean language education more enjoyable and less intimidating for foreign learners." Another noted, "The program made me think about how to teach Korean effectively so that students can use it in real-life situations." Others emphasized their curiosity about teaching practical skills, stating, "I am now more curious about how to teach practical Korean conversation skills and explain grammar and pronunciation in a way that's easy to understand."

The cultural dimension of teaching also resonated deeply with participants. One reflected, "Teaching Korean allowed me to experience cultural exchange, which was rewarding. It made me think about designing fun, relaxed lessons introducing Korean culture." These insights demonstrated an evolving commitment to making Korean language education practical and meaningful. Participants highlighted their growing passion for teaching and their recognition of education as a bridge between cultures - an essential realization for future educators in an increasingly interconnected world (Vargas et al. 2024).

The program inspired participants to adopt creative and learner-centered teaching strategies, empowering them to transition from passive observers to confident, active educators. One "buddy" observed, "The program made me think about how to teach Korean effectively so that students can apply it in real-life situations," demonstrating the importance of authentic, contextual learning experiences. As participants designed lessons and addressed learners' needs, they developed a sense of belonging within the professional community of Korean language educators. Another participant reflected on this growth, saying, "I am now more curious about how to teach practical Korean conversation skills and explain grammar and pronunciation in a way that is easy to understand."

The program's success in cultivating future educators became evident as participants strongly desired to continue exploring Korean language education as a potential career path. One buddy concurred, "I am now more motivated to learn about Korean language teaching certification and other requirements for becoming a teacher." Another remarked, "This program sparked my curiosity about the broader world of Korean language education and how I can contribute to it." These reflections highlight how experiential programs effectively inspire students to consider Korean language education a viable career option. According to the "Possible Selves Theory," experiencing the teaching role firsthand allows individuals to envision themselves more vividly in that future, making the career path feel both achievable and meaningful (Hamman, 2010). The program helped participants construct a clearer sense of their potential professional identities by connecting theory to practice. The transformative impact of this experiential learning approach underscores its importance in Korean language education curricula. As the field continues to evolve, innovative methods such as large language models, virtual reality solutions, and metaverse platforms are being explored to enhance language learning experiences. These advancements and hands-on teaching experiences empower students to envision and actively pursue careers in this vital and growing field.

Our study actively examined how undergraduate students in the Department of Korean Language and Literature at Yonsei University perceive and engage with Korean language education. We explored the impact of an experiential Korean language education program on participants' understanding of the field and their career intentions. Our findings revealed that the program positively influenced participants, deepening their knowledge, enhancing their cultural competence, and strengthening their career exploration behaviors. Grounding our approach in "Situated Learning Theory," we transformed participants from passive learners into active practitioners. Through hands-on experiences, students expanded their knowledge beyond the superficial by designing learning materials, planning and managing classroom activities, and supporting Korean language learners. This process allowed participants to assume legitimate peripheral roles, fostering a deeper understanding of effective teaching strategies and the complexities of Korean language education.

The program also actively developed participants' intercultural

competence. Students engaged in meaningful interactions with Korean language learners from diverse cultural backgrounds, promoting intercultural communication skills. We placed them in authentic, culturally diverse contexts, enhancing their ability to adapt teaching methods to meet the specific needs of learners. This experience contributed to increased global awareness, enhanced cultural sensitivity, and the development of skills as culturally responsive educators. By providing these immersive experiences, we enabled participants to gain practical insights into Korean language education and develop crucial skills for future careers in this field.

The hands-on nature of the program allowed students to actively engage with the material, moving beyond theoretical knowledge to practical application. Participants learned about teaching strategies and implemented them in real-world scenarios, receiving immediate feedback and opportunities for reflection. This approach effectively bridges the gap between academic study and professional practice. Students experienced firsthand the challenges and rewards of teaching Korean to diverse learners, allowing them to envision themselves more clearly in future roles as language educators. The program's success in enhancing understanding and developing intercultural competence underscores the value of experiential learning in preparing students for careers in Korean language education.

The program revealed a significant shift in participants' career intentions, transforming initial, superficial interests in Korean language education into more focused, deeper aspirations. However, they actively began envisioning themselves as future educators through the program. The experiential nature of our approach enabled participants to construct more explicit, vivid images of their "future teacher selves," fostering a sense of purpose and motivation to pursue this career path. Participants expressed enthusiasm about continuing to teach Korean and actively sought information about becoming certified Korean language teachers. The program elicited profound feelings of accomplishment and emotional satisfaction among participants as they witnessed their learners' progress. This emotional reward reinforced their evolving possible selves, aligning their envisioned futures with the gratification of supporting learners. Additionally, participants reported significant personal growth, including increased confidence, improved problem-solving skills, and a deeper understanding of the teaching profession. These developments actively contributed to the formation

of their overall professional identity.

Furthermore, our study makes valuable contributions to scholarly research and educational practice. Our research makes significant academic contributions by providing concrete evidence that supports the effectiveness of hands-on learning programs in sparking students' interest and involvement in Korean language education. We have drawn on social theory to deepen our understanding of how real-world experiences shape students' career goals. This is particularly important because, while Korean culture is becoming increasingly popular worldwide and the demand for Korean language teachers is growing, there has been a lack of research on motivating students to pursue this career path. Our study fills this gap by showing how practical, experiential learning can help students develop a strong professional identity and career ambition in Korean language education. Demonstrating the power of learning through hands-on experiences opens new avenues for preparing the next generation of Korean language educators (Hamman et. al. 2010).

Our findings have clear practical implications for universities. We strongly recommend that they incorporate hands-on learning programs into their Korean language education curricula. These programs should provide students with structured opportunities to gain real-world teaching experience, particularly in diverse cultural settings. This approach helps bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world application, allowing students to see how their academic knowledge translates into practical skills. Participating in these experiential programs gives students a clearer vision of themselves as future Korean language educators. This forward-looking perspective nurtures a new generation of motivated and skilled teachers in the field. The impact of our study goes beyond just the students who participated. We hope to inspire other educational institutions to adopt similar hands-on learning approaches. This could create a domino effect, encouraging more students to consider Korean language education as a viable career path. With the worldwide demand for Korean language skills on the rise, our research offers a clear path forward. It shows how to effectively prepare the next generation of educators who will be crucial in meeting this growing global need for Korean language instruction.

Our study provides valuable insights, but we acknowledge several limitations that influence our findings. We implemented an experiential program different from traditional Korean language classes

at language institutes or academic institutions. As a result, our participants' experiences may not fully reflect the realities of standard Korean language teaching environments. Future research should explore how similar programs can effectively integrate into more traditional educational settings. We assessed the program's impact over a single academic semester. While we observed positive changes in participants' perceptions and career intentions, we cannot determine whether these shifts will lead to long-term career commitments. To address this limitation, we recommend conducting longitudinal studies to examine the sustained impact of experiential programs on students' career trajectories. Tracking participants' career choices and professional development over several years post-graduation would provide valuable insights. Additionally, comparing the long-term outcomes of students who participate in experiential programs with those who do not would offer a more comprehensive understanding of the program's effectiveness.

By addressing these limitations, we can better understand how experiential learning programs influence students' career paths in Korean language education. This knowledge will enable universities to design more effective curricula and better prepare students for careers in this rapidly growing field. To expand on the findings of this study, future research should investigate the lasting impact of experiential Korean language education programs on students' career decisions, focusing on whether their envisioned "possible selves" persist over time and translate into actual career commitments. Studying a broader range of students, including those from diverse academic disciplines, would help determine the generalizability of these findings across various educational backgrounds. Analyzing how differences in program structures affect participants' learning outcomes, professional identity development, and career intentions would provide deeper insights into effective preparation methods for the next generation of Korean language educators.

7. Conclusion

By anchoring practical teaching experiences in established educational theory, experiential learning is a dynamic force in preparing skilled,

flexible, and culturally responsive Korean language educators. Experiential learning has emerged as a powerful tool in preparing future educators and language learners, bridging the gap between theory and practice in ways that traditional classroom instruction often cannot achieve. This innovative approach transforms students from passive recipients of knowledge into active contributors, allowing them to develop crucial skills and a strong professional identity through hands-on experiences.

The transformative impact of experiential learning in this study is best understood through its theoretical grounding in two complementary perspectives: “Situated Learning Theory” (Lave and Wenger 1991) and “Possible Selves Theory” (Markus and Nurius 1986). Situated Learning Theory posits that learning is most effective within authentic contexts and communities of practice, emphasizing the importance of contextual immersion for developing professional skills and knowledge. In Korean language teacher education, aspiring educators benefit greatly from engaging in real-world teaching scenarios, facilitating their progression from passive knowledge recipients to active contributors within the professional community.

Through experiential learning, participants engage in what Lave and Wenger describe as “legitimate peripheral participation,” moving from the periphery to the core of the teaching community as they accumulate expertise and confidence (Lave and Wenger 1991). This process enhances language proficiency and fosters cultural understanding, adaptability, and the formation of a professional identity. By participating in authentic teaching experiences, future educators gain firsthand insight into the complexities of classroom dynamics, learner diversity, and the practical challenges of language instruction - elements often absent from traditional, theory-based teacher education programs.

Possible Selves Theory adds a motivational lens, asserting that individuals are driven by their visions of potential future selves. Immersive teaching experiences allow students to concretize their career aspirations, making the path to becoming a Korean language teacher both tangible and personally meaningful. This alignment between self-concept and professional possibility is critical for fostering long-term commitment and engagement in the field. By synthesizing these theoretical perspectives, this study demonstrates how experiential learning programs in Korean language education prepare students for

the complex demands of a multicultural and rapidly evolving educational landscape. The framework enables a nuanced analysis of how practical teaching experiences develop pedagogical skills, promote cultural understanding, and cultivate robust professional identities among aspiring educators. Ultimately, bridging theoretical knowledge with real-world application is essential for aligning teacher preparation with the evolving needs of Korea's increasingly diverse society and the global demand for qualified Korean language instructors.

For aspiring teachers, the journey often begins with excitement mixed with trepidation. Many students initially feel overwhelmed by the prospect of standing in front of a classroom. However, a remarkable transformation occurs as they engage in real teaching scenarios. As one student shared, "Initially, the responsibility of teaching overwhelmed me, but as my engagement increased, I began to identify as a genuine educator." This metamorphosis from nervous novice to confident professional underscores the profound impact of experiential learning on career aspirations and self-perception.

Mentorship is another critical pillar, providing guidance and perspective that textbooks alone cannot offer. One participant reflected, "My mentor helped me understand that teaching is not just about delivering content; it is about creating connections." This highlights the emotional and relational aspects of education that experiential learning brings to the forefront, enriching students' understanding of their future profession.

Experiential learning also demonstrates a powerful impact on language acquisition. Students are thrust into immersive activities, working alongside Korean buddies and engaging in real-world conversations. While initially daunting, these experiences become catalysts for growth, boosting confidence and communication skills in ways that traditional classroom exercises cannot match.

The uniqueness of experiential learning lies in its ability to cater to diverse learning styles and needs, proving particularly transformative for students who often struggle with traditional teaching methods. This approach keeps them consistently engaged and actively participating, as one exchange student with ADHD noted, "I felt consistently engaged, which for me is hard to do." Beyond engagement, experiential learning enhances language skills, fosters cultural competence, and builds adaptability - essential qualities for navigating an interconnected world. Through real-world interactions, students develop a deeper

understanding of different cultures and perspectives, as highlighted by a participant who realized the importance of being “flexible and empathetic” when teaching students from diverse backgrounds.

As students advance through their experiential learning journey, they develop a more profound commitment to their studies and a greater willingness to view mistakes as valuable learning opportunities. Applying their skills in real-world contexts fosters a sense of accomplishment and motivation. One student shared, “I honestly used the expressions I learned frequently, and sometimes I would hear native Koreans use the phrases, which made me feel happy to know I understood what they said.” These experiences create a positive feedback loop, inspiring students to stay engaged and continue learning with enthusiasm.

Ultimately, this study reveals the transformative potential of experiential learning in both teacher preparation and language acquisition, as illuminated by its theoretical foundations. These programs equip students with the skills, confidence, and cultural awareness needed for future professional success by immersing them in authentic, challenging situations. One student aptly concluded, “This experience transformed me – not just as a teacher, but as a person.” This powerful testament highlights the holistic impact of experiential learning, suggesting that its integration into educational curricula could revolutionize how we prepare the next generation of educators and global citizens.

Declaration Statement

This research received no external funding. The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest. Ethical approval was not required for this study. Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study. The authors would like to thank the students enrolled in Survival Korean: Mobile Learning in the Digital Era (KOR2315) for their enthusiasm and participation, as well as the Institute for Higher Education Innovation for their support of this project.

Bibliography

- Ahn, Hyun Seon (안현선), Jeessoo Lee (이지수), and Yuanying Jin. 2024. The effects of multicultural family support services on the longitudinal changes of acculturative stress, peer relations, and school adjustment. In *Frontiers in Psychology*, Vol 14: 1301294.
- Cai, Xiaoyan, Zhiying Li, Jiahui Zhang, Mingmei Peng, Shuai Yang, Xiaoying Tian, Qiaohong Yang, and Fengxia Yan. 2022. Effects of ARCS model-based motivational teaching strategies in community nursing: A mixed-methods intervention study. In *Nurse Education Today*, Vol 117: 105583.
- Choi, Anna (최안나) and Myunggwii Lee (이명귀). 2023. A Study on the Experience as a Mentor of Korean Language Helper - Focusing on the Case of K University-. In *Korean Language And Culture Education Society*. Vol 19(4): 221-245.
- Courtney, McLaren, and Dal-Yong Jin (진달용). 2020. “You Can’t Help But Love Them”: BTS, Transcultural Fandom, and Affective Identities. In *Korea Journal*, Vol 60: 100-127.
- Day, Christopher, Alison Kington, Gordon Stobart, and Pam Sammons. 2006. The personal and professional selves of teachers: Stable and unstable identities. In *British Educational Research Journal*, Vol 32 (4): 601-616.
- Ding, Xingong, and Yujiao Wu. 2023. Determinants of international Korean language promotion: A cross-country analysis. In *Frontiers in Psychology*, Vol 9: e21078.
- Edwin Vargas, Andrés Chiappe, and Julio Durand. 2024. Reshaping education in the era of artificial intelligence: insights from Situated Learning related literature. In *Journal of Social Studies Education Research*, Vol 15 (2): 1-28.
- Gonzalez-Bravo, Jill Elaine. 2019. Investigating the development of possible selves in teacher education: Candidate perceptions of hopes, fears, and strategies. In *The Advocate*, Vol 24 (1): Article 4.
- Hamman, Doug, Kevin Gosselin, Jacqueline Romano, and Rommel Bunuan. 2010. Using possible-selves theory to understand the identity development of new teachers. In *Teaching and Teacher Education*, Vol 26 (7): 1349-1361.
- Henry, Alastair, and Liu Meng. 2023. Can L2 motivation be modelled as a self-system? A critical assessment. In *System*, Vol 119: 103158.
- Han, Sun-Hwa (한선화). 2019. A Study on Test-takers’ Perceptions

- Regarding TOPIK. *The Sociolinguistic Journal of Korea*, 27 (1), 227-248.
- Hiver, Phil. 2013. The interplay of possible language teacher selves in professional development choices. In *Language Teaching Research*, Vol 17 (2): 210-227.
- Jang, NaYoung (장나영), So-Young Park (박소영), and You-Kyung Lee (이유경). 2024. Differences in Career Preparation Behaviors and Teaching Competencies Based on Pre-service Teachers' Motivational Profiles for Choosing the Teaching Profession: A Focus on Expectancy-Value Theory. In *The Journal of Korean Teacher Education*, Vol 41 (3): 111-140.
- Jin, Dal-Yong (진달용). 2023. *Understanding the Korean Wave: Transnational Korean Pop Culture and Digital Technologies*. England: Routledge.
- Kim, Hyun Mee (김현미) and Tae Jun Lah (나태준). 2022. The ambiguous belonging of international students in South Korea's higher education system. In *Korea Journal*, Vol 62 (4): 196-225.
- Kim, Jung-Hee (김정희), Jong-Mi Lim (임종미), and Eun-Man Kim (김은만). 2022. Patient handover education programme based on situated learning theory for nursing students in clinical practice. In *International Journal of Nursing Practice*, Vol 28 (1): e13005.
- Kim, Ji Young (김지영), JaeYeon Jeong (정재연), Dong-II Kim (김동일) and Justin Y Jeon (전용관). (2012). The Study on the Experience of the Adapted Physical Activity Curriculum for University Students Majoring Physical Education. In *Korean Society For The Study Of Physical Education*, Vol 17 (2): 51-64.
- Kim, Suk-Young (김석영). 2023. *Surviving Squid Game: A Guide to K-Drama, Netflix and Global Streaming Wars*. US: Applause Books.
- Kim, Yeon Hee (김연희), Jun Gu (구준), YeongWung Kim (김영웅), HaYoung Yoo (유하영), JiHoo Yoon (윤지후), HyunJi Hwang (황현지), Hyung-Nam Kim (김형남) and GyuJin Kim (김규진). 2024. The Effect of Flow Experience of Contemporary Dance Majors on Career Preparation Behavior and Major Satisfaction. In *Korean Journal of Dance*, Vol 24 (2): 29-39.
- Kubanyiova, Magda. 2009. Possible selves in language teacher development. In *Motivation, Language Identity and the L2 Self*, edited by Zoltán Dörnyei and Ema Ushioda, 314-332. Bristol:

Multilingual Matters.

- Lave, Jean, and Étienne Wenger. 1991. *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. England: Cambridge University Press.
- Lee, Kilryoung (이길영). 2018. Pre-service English teachers' motivation for entering English education department and its change in college. In *The Korea English Education Society*. Vol 17 (2): 113-136.
- Lee, Min, Geetha Govindasamy and Soo-Keen Tan. 2025. Korean Multiculturalism and the Emergence of Foreign Brides in South Korea. In *International Journal of East Asian Studies*, Vol 14 (1): 114.
- Lee, Song (이송). 2023. L'enseignement du français comme «enseignement extrascolaire» dans le système de crédits du lycée: Etude de cas intitulé «Cours de langue et de culture françaises». In *Societe Coreenne d'Enseignement de Langue et Litterature Francaises*, Vol 82: 75-102.
- Mackay, Jessica. 2019. An ideal second language self intervention: Development of possible selves in an English as a Foreign Language classroom context. In *System*, Vol 81: 39-53.
- Markus, Hazel, and Paula. Nurius. 1986. Possible selves. In *American Psychologist*, Vol 41 (9): 954-969.
- Nan, Mei-Mingxue. 2023. *Squid Game: The Hall of Screens in the Age of Platform Cosmopolitanism*, In *Global Storytelling: Journal of Digital and Moving Images*, Vol 3 (1): 7.
- Natalia Lusin, Terri Peterson, Christine Sulewski, and Rizwana Zafer. 2023. Enrollments in languages other than English in US institutions of higher education, fall 2021. Modern Language Association of America.
- Oh, Juil (오주일) and Daeyul Jeong (정대울). 2019. Influence of Education Program Quality of Flow and Performances in the Customized Job Training Course. In *Journal of Employment and Career*, Vol 9(3), 25-44.
- Oyserman, Daphna, Deborah Bybee, and Kathy Terry. 2006. Possible selves and academic outcomes: How and when possible selves impel action. In *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol 91 (1): 188-204.
- Park, Hye-Sung (박혜성), Amanda Simon, and Paluku Kazimoto. 2021. University students' perceptions of Korean Wave and its impact on their views of Korea and Korean culture. In *HUMAN BEHAVIOR, DEVELOPMENT and SOCIETY*, Vol 22 (1): 1-24.

- Pyun, Miran (편미란), Lu Fang, and Yunjin Pi. 2024. The Relationship Between K-Pop Fandom Activities on Social Media Platform and Cultural Openness: Attitudes Toward the K-Wave as a Mediator. In *Asian Communication Research*, Vol. 21 (3): 346-365.
- Sato, Masatoshi. 2020. Generating a Roadmap for Possible Selves via a Vision Intervention: Alignment of Second Language Motivation and Classroom Behavior. In *TESOL Quarterly*, Vol. 54 (3): 427-457.
- Seo, Kyung-Hye (서경혜) and Seon Ok Park (박선옥). 2019. Mentoring international students by pre-service Korean language teachers. In *Proceedings of the 28th Fall Conference of the International Network for Korean Language and Culture*. 188-193.
- So, Yeon-Hee (소연희). 2022. Structure Relationship between Career Motivation, Major Class Engagement, and Career Preparation Behavior: Multi-Group Analysis of Students in College Students of Engineering and College of Education. In *The Journal of Career Education Research*, Vol. 35 (2), 23-41.
- Song, Hanna (송한나). 2013. Influences of university student's self-leadership on career preparation behaviors and mediating effects of the self-efficacy. Master's thesis, Chung-Ang University Graduate School.
- Wang, Hye-Sook (왕혜숙), and Kelly Keenan. 2024. Investigating Korean Language Learning Motivations: Trend and Implications. In *The Korean Language in America*, Vol. 27 (2): 152-181.
- Zhang, Lu, and Yan Ma. 2023. A study of the impact of project-based learning on student learning outcomes: A meta-analysis study. In *Frontiers in Psychology*, Vol. 14: 1202728.
- Zakrajsek, Andrea Gossett, and Elizabeth Schuster. 2018. Situated Learning and Interprofessional Education: An Educational Strategy Using an Apprenticeship Model to Develop Research Skills for Practice. In *Health & Interprofessional Practice and Education*, Vol. 3 (3): 1-12.
- Yoo, Theodore-Jun. 2020. *The Koreas: The Birth of Two Nations Divided*. Oakland: University of California Press.

International Journal of Korean Humanities and Social Sciences
vol. 11/2025

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14746/kr.2025.11.10>

THE BRAIN AS MYTH: CINEMATIC REPRESENTATIONS AND MYTHIC REPRODUCTION IN THE KOREAN SCIENCE FICTION FILM *JUNG_E*

SOOJIN LEE, Professor

Inha University

100 Inha-ro, Michuhol-gu, Incheon, Republic of Korea

jinara@inha.ac.kr

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-2250-721X>

NARA YOON, Invited professor

Inha University

100 Inha-ro, Michuhol-gu, Incheon, Republic of Korea

221172@inha.ac.kr

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-5337-8626>

Abstract: Science fiction films emerge from contemporary developments in science and technology, creating narratives through the integration of humanistic imagination. They also serve as essential bridges for understanding the scientific concerns and aspirations of each era. Since the 2010s, the Korean film industry has witnessed a rise in the production of SF works that engage with issues such as artificial intelligence, robotics, aerospace technology, and genetic engineering. However, these films have not achieved notable success with neither audiences nor critics, despite their growing number. The cause of

this phenomenon lies in the attitude of many Korean filmmakers, who often display limited interest in scientific and technological domains. As a result, they fail to meaningfully explore the complex relationship between evolving technological environments and human existence. Director Yeon Sang-ho's *Jung_E* exemplifies this problematic tendency. *Jung_E* incorporates advanced technologies such as AI and robotics, yet these elements remain largely decorative – they do not constitute the core of the narrative. This superficial engagement with science and technology leads to fundamental misrepresentations; for instance, the film's flawed portrayal of memory and intelligence becomes embedded in its cinematic representations of AI.

To investigate this issue, this article draws on Roland Barthes's theory of mythology as its analytical framework. It further adopts an interdisciplinary approach that integrates insights from the natural sciences with semiotic analysis. Through this methodology, the study demonstrates how Korean SF films weaken their artistic potential by sidelining scientific thinking and adhering to mythologized views of science and technology.

Keywords: Sci-Fi, AI, Robot, Jung_E, Yeon Sang-ho, Barthes, Mythology

신화로서의 두뇌: 한국 SF 영화 <정이>에 나타난 영화적 재현과 신화의 재생산

초록: SF 영화는 동시대 과학기술을 출발점으로 삼아 인문학적 상상력을 결합함으로써 시대의 과학적 관심사를 이해하는 중요한 매개체로 기능한다. 한국 영화계에서도 2010년대 이후 인공지능, 로봇공학, 항공우주 기술, 유전학 등 시대적 화두를 다루는 SF 작품의 제작이 활발해졌다. 그러나 제작 편수에 비해 대중과 평단에서 모두 성공하는 확률은 현저히 낮다. 이러한 현상의 근본적인 원인은 한국 영화계가 대체로 과학기술 분야에 대한 심도 있는 탐구나 기술 환경과 인간 존재의 관계에 대한 인문학적 사유에 익숙하지 않기 때문이다.

연상호 감독의 <정이> 역시 이 경향에서 벗어나지 않는다. 감독 스스로 영화의 핵심 주제를 모녀 간의 사랑으로, 과학기술을 부차적 요소로 규정했기 때문이다. <정이>는 AI와 로봇공학 등의 첨단 기술을 다루면서도, 이를 서사의 중심이 아닌 표면적인 장치로만 활용한다. 이러한 과학기술의 피상적 재현은 단순한 영화적 한계를 드러내는 일에 그치지 않는다. 기억과 지능에 대한 근본적 오해를 영화적 재현 방식에 투사함으로써 신화적 사고를 재생산하는 문제를 내포한다.

본 연구는 이러한 문제의식을 바탕으로 롤랑 바르트의 신화론을 방법론적 틀로 삼아, 자연과학과 기호학의 학제적 접근을 시도한다. 이를 통해 한국 SF 영화가 과학적 사고를 부차화하고 신화화된 관점을 고수함으로써 어떻게 작품의 예술적·철학적 잠재력을 약화시키는지 밝히고자 한다.

주제어: 사이언스픽션, 인공지능, 로봇, 정이, 연상호, 바르트, 신화론

1. Introduction: Science Fiction's Role in Constructing Techno-scientific Discourses

We are living in an era fundamentally driven by artificial intelligence transforming our cultural, technological, and artistic environments. This technology began developing seriously in the 1950s, when scientists became fascinated by how humans think, use language, and engage in intellectual activities. They studied the brain as the organ that governs these cognitive abilities. While neuroscience seeks to understand the brain's operational principles, artificial intelligence aims to replicate cognitive processes through technological means. Although these fields may appear highly complex to non-specialists, they reflect contemporary society's fundamental desire to understand humanity through techno-scientific knowledge.

Science fiction often engages with science and technology, drawing significant attention at a given time. *A Trip to the Moon* (*Le Voyage dans la Lune*, 1902), considered the first science fiction film, depicts technologies developed in the late 19th century, such as cannons, gun barrels, and metalworking. *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), regarded as a masterpiece of science fiction, explores themes of space exploration and artificial intelligence, technologies that began to emerge in the 1950s. *The Matrix* (1999), released at the end of the 20th century, reflects the rapid development of information technology during the 1990s. Beyond these representative examples, a broader examination of science fiction films – those that achieved box office success in their respective eras, became subjects of critical or academic discourse, or marked turning points in cinematic history – reveals a consistent pattern: technologies prominent in their time are given central narrative focus. In this context, as of 2025, the core technologies explored in global science fiction cinema include brain engineering, artificial intelligence, information technology, robotics, bioengineering, space exploration, and environmental engineering.

In the case of Korea, if we narrow the scope to works where science and technology play more active roles beyond merely serving

as superficial story settings or spatiotemporal backgrounds, the timeline can go back to the early 2010s. During this period, several notable works exemplify this kind of science fiction. *The Heavenly Creature* (directed by Kim Jee-woon 김지운, 2012), the second segment of the omnibus film *Doomsday Book*, explores themes of artificial intelligence and robotics. *Okja* (directed by Bong Joon-ho 봉준호, 2017) addresses the consequences of genetic engineering, while *The Witch: Part 1. The Subversion* (2018) and *The Witch: Part 2. The Other One* (2022), both directed by Park Hoon-jung, focus on enhancement drugs and biologically augmented humans. In the 2020s, Korean SF content became more prominent, with films and series such as *Space Sweepers* (directed by Jo Sung-hee 조성희, 2021), which centers on space debris and exploration; *Seobok* (directed by Lee Yong-joo 이용주, 2021), which depicts human cloning; and *The Silent Sea* (directed by Choi Hang-yong 최항용, 2021), which examines the implications of extraterrestrial life and lunar exploration. The television series *L.U.C.A.: The Beginning* (directed by Kim Heung-seon 김흥선, 2021) also contributes to this wave, with its narrative focused on genetic modification.

More recent examples include *Jung_E* (directed by Yeon Sang-ho 연상호, 2023), which revisits the themes of artificial intelligence and robotics; *Wonderland* (directed by Kim Tae-yong 김태용, 2024), which envisions a virtual world sustained by AI; and *Mickey 17* (directed by Bong Joon-ho 봉준호, 2025), which engages with the theme of human cloning in a futuristic context.

Despite the increasing number of Korean SF films, relatively few works engage in *speculative*¹ reflection that explore fundamental questions about humanity, human–nonhuman relationships, and our future.

This tendency is explicitly revealed in interviews with directors Yeon Sang-ho and Bong Joon-ho, both of whom have created multiple science fiction films. Rather than foregrounding scientific or technological elements, both directors emphasize character-driven narratives. Yeon Sang-ho, for instance, describes his focus as being on

¹ The term *speculative* originates from an expression used by American science fiction writer Robert A. Heinlein. French science fiction critic Hervé-Pierre Lambert has defined the characteristics of French science fiction as speculative in nature. In this article, we adopt Lambert's criteria and categorize such works as speculative science fiction. (Hervé-Pierre Lambert, 2009: 22–23)

“the relationship between a mother and daughter trapped in an existential hell due to the mother’s final moments”², while Bong Joon-ho highlights “the story of an ordinary, powerless, and in some ways pitiful young man”³ as the core of his filmic vision.

As narrative focus shifts toward socio-political issues, personal relationships or individual emotional experiences, scientific and technological elements are often relegated to a secondary role. As a result, science and technology are not approached with the necessary analytical depth or conceptual rigor. In Yeon Sang-ho’s *Jung_E*, for example, the protagonist is portrayed as an artificial intelligence robot generated through cloning and ostensibly capable of uploading consciousness as digital data. However, the foundational assumptions and hypothetical mechanisms behind such a being – particularly the means by which consciousness could be digitized and transferred – are left unexplored and unsubstantiated. Since these elements serve primarily as devices for narrative worldbuilding rather than objects of speculative inquiry, depictions of science and technology frequently rely on familiar visual conventions borrowed from older works.

Scenes built upon well-established conventions offer the benefit of facilitating audience comprehension and narrative accessibility. However, such accumulated clichés can reduce the level of intellectual engagement required for critical interpretation, allowing viewers to process the content with minimal cognitive effort within familiar narrative patterns. This tendency risks oversimplification and may hinder deeper reflection on the scientific and philosophical dimensions of the work. Through an analysis of the Korean SF film *Jung_E*, this article seeks to examine the limitations of conventional representations (a sort of *cliché*) of science and technology in film and to illuminate how such conventions shape, constrain, or distort our understanding of the future and the human condition.

² Chu Seung-hyeon. “Interview with Yeon Sang-ho: Melodrama Film? It Was Originally Planned as SF in Classical Melodrama Format.” *The Seoul Economic Daily*, January 21, 2023. <https://signalm.sedaily.com/NewsView/29KK6R5U5X/GL01> (accessed January 21, 2023).

³ Oh Bo-ram, and Park Won-hee. “Bong Joon-ho Press Conference: Human-Scented SF, Containing Political Satire.” *Yonhap News Agency*, January 20, 2025. <https://www.yna.co.kr/view/AKR20250120068951005> (accessed January 20, 2025).

2. Korean Science Fiction Film *Jung_E*

2.1. Filmographies of Director Yeon Sang-ho and Sociopolitical Films

Jung_E, the focus of this study, represents the fourth feature film by director Yeon Sang-ho. Prior to the release of his first live-action film, *Train to Busan*, in 2016, Yeon had devoted his career to animation. His animated works consistently exhibit a deep engagement with societal issues, particularly those relevant to contemporary South Korean society.

Yeon's two major animated films clearly show his concern with social problems. *The King of Pigs* (2011) examines how collective violence – both physical and emotional – occurs in high school. It focuses on how a group of students collectively bullies an individual and how the school administration turns a blind eye to it. *The Fake* (2013) tells the story of a fraudulent religious group in a small town. The film demonstrates how such groups can manipulate people psychologically and cause harm, including emotional manipulation and sexual abuse.

This topic has been reinterpreted in various TV series. The issue of collective violence remains a major concern in Korean society and has been explored in numerous series such as *Save Me* (2017), *D.P.* (2021), *Hellbound* (2021), *The King of Pigs* (2022), *The Glory* (2022), among others. However, it is important to note that collective violence is not a problem unique to South Korea. This societal issue reflects a broader issue in contemporary global society. It is likely this universal relevance that contributed to the international box office success and critical acclaim of Yeon Sang-ho's first live-action film, *Train to Busan*.

“Yeon's *Train to Busan* follows in the same spirit as his previous animated works”. (Lee Soojin 이수진, 2019: 126) As the first Korean zombie film to achieve both domestic and international acclaim, it addresses ethical dimensions of human relationships and familial loyalty. Set in a dystopian world facing systemic collapse due to a zombie outbreak, the narrative emphasizes humanist themes within an apocalyptic context.

The spread of the deadly virus is attributed to experimental research conducted by profit-driven corporations. In the face of this public health crisis, governmental authorities are portrayed as incapable of protecting citizens or maintaining order. The train – serving as a metaphor for contemporary society – brings together a cross-section of human archetypes: a pragmatic businessman, an individualistic executive, a devoted father, a courageous husband, a perceptive pregnant woman, a self-sacrificing grandmother, an energetic teenager, and a young girl embodying innocence.

As the undead assault intensifies, the passengers must fight for survival in complete isolation. However, the greater challenge lies not in the external threat but in the internal moral dilemmas faced by the survivors. Confronted with life-and-death decisions, the group fractures into two camps: one motivated by self-interest and survival instinct, the other guided by altruism and collective solidarity. Ultimately, the sacrifice of the father ensures the survival of a child and a pregnant woman. The film thus elevates familial love as a fundamental value that must be preserved, even in the direst of circumstances.

2.2. Plot Analysis and Narrative Elements of *Jung_E* (2023)

Following *Train to Busan*, the melodramatic theme of familial love has been reinforced through *Psychokinesis* (released in 2018) and *Peninsula* (released in 2020). This theme also figures prominently in *Jung_E*, in which Yeon Sang-ho foregrounds the mother-daughter relationship. Whereas Yeon's earlier works employ dystopia as a spatiotemporal framework to allegorically represent the darker facets of contemporary South Korean society, the dystopian setting in *Jung_E* unfortunately devolves into a generic science fiction trope, lacking speculative depth.

Sociopolitical science fiction traditionally portrays dystopian futures as representations of dysfunctional societies – counterpoints to utopia, or even as inverted utopias. “Dystopia is one-sidedly critical, in the sense that it offers nothing positive, no better world”. (Éric Dufour 2011: 208) *Jung_E* unfolds within a dystopian universe shaped by extreme climate change and environmental collapse, rendering Earth uninhabitable and prompting humanity's migration to space-based

refuges. This vision of the future, however, mirrors numerous other science fiction narratives and extends across genres including action, adventure, and superhero films. As such, it represents a well-worn narrative convention lacking in originality or critical nuance.

In *Jung_E*, humanity has established approximately 80 space refuges over several decades. When one of these refuges declares independence as an autonomous nation, it sparks a war that has lasted for over 40 years. In an effort to end the prolonged conflict, a military company develops an advanced AI based on the brain of legendary soldier Jung-e Yoon. The goal is to transplant this AI into mass-produced combat robots through a project called *Jung_E*.

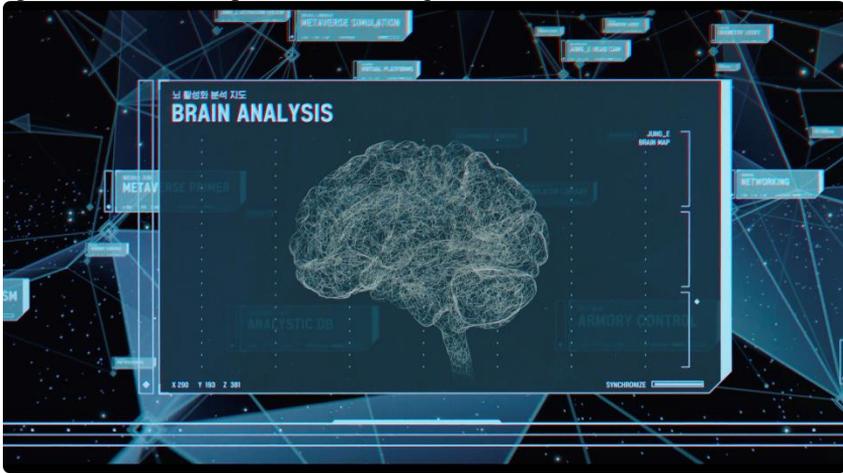
The scientist leading the AI research is Seo-hyun, Jung-e's daughter. She analyzes a cloned 3D brain map of her mother, who had fallen into a vegetative state prior to her death.

Figure 1. Mechanical brain cloned from Jung-e's brain



Source: Scene from *Jung_E* at 14 minutes and 42 seconds

Figure 2. 3D brain map of the robot Jung_E



Source: Scene from *Jung_E* at 15 minutes 37 seconds

Each part of the 3D brain map is activated during training simulations. These simulations are virtual programs that reproduce, in 3D form, the final battle in which Jung-e was defeated by enemy robots. To overcome the critical moment when the AI-equipped robot named Jung_E (modeled after the human Jung-e) is struck by a decisive shotgun blast, Seo-hyun continues her research by repeatedly running the simulations.

Table 1. Analysis of sequences and key events in the film *Jung_E*

Sequence n ° 1	00:00- 06:35	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting overview of the future society in the film • Defeat of elite soldier Jung-e in battle against mechanical soldiers
Sequence n ° 2	06:36- 10:09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Execution of AI robot training simulations • Introduction of scientist Seo-hyun, Jung-e’s daughter
Sequence n ° 3	10:10- 17:58	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiation of the <i>Jung_E</i> project
Sequence n ° 4	17:59- 26:20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revelation that Jung-e enlisted as a mercenary to fund treatment for Seo-hyun’s rare childhood disease
Sequence n ° 5	26:21- 35:14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flashback to the day of Seo-hyun’s medical surgery and Jung-e’s departure to the battlefield • Jung-e’s consent to brain cloning after sustaining fatal

Soojin LEE and Nara YOON: The Brain as Myth...

		<p>injuries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seo-hyun's current terminal diagnosis with an estimated three months to live
Sequence n ° 6	35:15- 41:41	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progression of training simulations • First activation of an unidentified brain zone and temporary enhancement of combat capability
Sequence n ° 7	41:42- 52:44	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • War ends and the <i>Jung_E</i> project is terminated
Sequence n ° 8	52:45- 59:41	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research director persists despite project cancellation • Repetitive simulation rehearsals continue to fail
Sequence n ° 9	59:42- 69:40	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seo-hyun directly supervises the simulation • Second activation of the unidentified brain zone • Flashback to the day of medical surgery
Sequence n ° 10	69:41- 75:54	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seo-hyun in the simulation chamber • Final training simulation fails completely • All simulation's system is shut down
Sequence n ° 11	75:55- 84:28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Jung_E</i> robot escapes from the facility • Combat occurs between <i>Jung_E</i> robot and opposing multiple robots • Seo-hyun intervenes, enabling successful joint escape
Sequence n ° 12	84:29- 90:40	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final battle between <i>Jung_E</i> robot and the research director • Seo-hyun's intervention results in her critical injury
Sequence n ° 13	90:41- 93:48	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flashback to a joyful moment between mother and daughter • Seo-hyun's death and <i>Jung_E</i> robot's successful escape

Source: Authors' own elaboration

During the simulation involving the eighteenth *Jung_E* robot, a specific area of the brain becomes activated unlike in previous attempts. After conducting several tests, Seo-hyun discovers that this particular brain region responds when memories related to the original *Jung-e*'s daughter are stimulated. In the end, Seo-hyun sacrifices herself to *liberate* the robot, which contains the mechanical brain preserving her mother's memories.

3. Symbolic Role of Brain Data Visualization in *Jung_E*

In this chapter, we analyze scenes from *Jung_E* that illustrate the film's conception of memory, learning, and artificial intelligence. This analysis centers on the film's underlying hypothesis: that memory and cognitive functions are localized within distinct and isolated brain regions. These regions, which are assumed to store information, knowledge, and memory, are portrayed as functioning independently without interconnection. This conceptualization aligns with a reductionist paradigm in neuroscience, in which specific cognitive functions are strictly associated with discrete anatomical areas of the brain.

According to this logic, *Jung_E* posits that artificial intelligence can be created by replicating the data stored within individual brain regions. While contemporary neuroscience increasingly challenges such reductionist views – emphasizing the brain's networked and dynamic nature – some science fiction films, including *Jung_E*, continue to rely on this outdated framework and its stereotypical representations.

Brain data visualization appears frequently in *Jung_E*. From the opening through thirteenth sequence, such visualizations feature prominently – particularly in depicting brain mapping, extracting data from the protagonist's experiences and memories, and illustrating the learning and training processes essential to finalizing the AI. These visualizations serve as one of the most effective audiovisual tools for conveying cinematic information to viewers.

Data visualization involves the graphical representation of information in a visually comprehensible manner without relying on language and text. It employs diagrams, histograms, tables, graphs, and other visual elements to illustrate complex data and concepts. This approach emphasizes simplification transforming numerical and textual data into visual signs for more intuitive understanding.

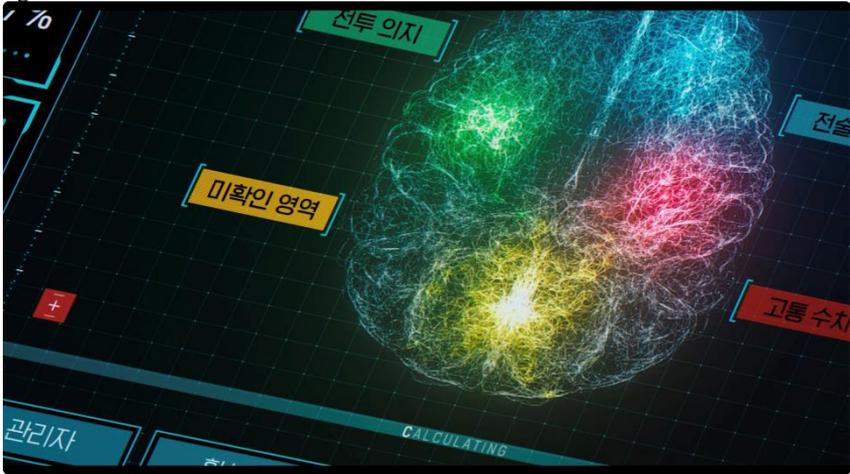
The interactive data visualization in *Jung_E* enables users to understand and manipulate data on the monitor through simple gestures. This method facilitates intuitive understanding by transforming numerical datasets into accessible visual formats.

The data visualization in *Jung_E* was specifically designed during production to reflect this purpose. In this context, constructed

signs are open to interpretation because the *narrating instance*⁴ deliberately controls how information is presented visually. Therefore, such visualizations cannot be considered neutral or faithful representations of reality. While these visual elements often coincide with live-action sequences and convey redundant information, they sometimes imply meaning more subtly.

Data visualization complexity varies by target audience. Children's films require explicit, easily understandable displays, while expert documentaries can employ more sophisticated forms. Creating such visualizations necessarily involves selective representation – choosing certain data to include while omitting others.

Figure 3. Brain data visualization



Source: Scene from *Jung_E* at 70 minutes 32 seconds

In *Jung_E*, researchers control the simulation via a panel interface linked to the robot's central processor and mechanical components. The panel displays brain data through simplified visual

⁴ As a film semiologist, Christian Metz proposed the term *narrating instance* (*instance racontante* in French) as a substitute for the concept of subject, a notion he considered excessively anthropocentric. Although he occasionally referred to the concept of the *great imagist* (*grand imagier* in French) developed by Albert Laffay, Metz favored the notion of *narrating instance* in developing his theory. C. Metz, *L'énonciation impersonnelle ou le site du film*, Paris: Klincksieck, 1991. For the concept of the *great imagist*, see the following work: A. Laffay (1964): "Le récit, le monde et le cinéma", dans *Logique du cinéma*, Paris: Masson, 51-90.

representations.

The brain map displayed on the control screen resembles human neural network representations used in neuroscience. This visualization particularly evokes *tractography*⁵, a three-dimensional modeling technique that visualizes nerve fiber bundles based on diffusion magnetic resonance imaging (dMRI) data.

Current scientific understanding shows that the brain comprises a complex network of interconnected neurons forming structural circuits that transmit nerve impulses. Microscopically, synapses connect individual neurons, while macroscopically, white matter bundles enable connectivity between brain regions. For studying these structural connections, tractography and dMRI are essential technologies – the only non-invasive methods allowing visual reconstruction of white matter pathways in living subjects.⁶

This approach enables researchers to map the brain's connectivity network without surgical intervention. The technique visualizes structural connections between brain regions using specific color-coding systems.

Jung_E employs color-coded brain data visualization that parallels tractography methodologies. The film assigns specific colors to different functional areas: green for combat instinct, red for pain-related regions, blue for tactical zones, and yellow for an initially unidentified area but later revealed to correspond to memory or maternal love. This color-codes differentiation is reinforced through verbal commentary.

While these simplified visual signs resemble the organization of nerve fiber tracts – inspired by scientific methods, the representation significantly adapts and distorts them. It is precisely at this point that the *mythological inflection* described by Barthes becomes apparent: “Myth hides nothing and displays nothing: it distorts. Myth is neither a

⁵ “Tractography, a computational reconstruction method based on diffusion-weighted magnetic resonance imaging (DWI), attempts to reveal the trajectories of white matter pathways in vivo and to infer the underlying structural connectome of the human brain”. (Maier-Hein, K.H., Neher, P.F., Houde, J.C. et al. 2017: 2)

⁶ “A key element in understanding healthy and impaired brain structure and function is the analysis of its neural pathways, the white matter (WM). Over the last decades, the development of diffusion-weighted magnetic resonance imaging (dMRI) has revolutionized our ability to study WM in vivo. By probing the movement of water molecules, dMRI provides information about the microstructure, integrity, and connectivity of WM tracts.” (Neher, P., Hirjak, D. & Maier-Hein, K.H. 2024: 1)

lie nor a confession – it is an inflection”. (Barthes 1957: 202)

Barthes explains myth as a *secondary semiological system*. (Barthes 1957: 187) Every sign consists of a signifier and a signified. This primary level operates independently of myth. Myth arises at the second level, where the sign from the first system functions as a new signifier. This signifier is directly linked to a new signified, forming a new sign within the secondary system. In other words, the complete sign of the first semiological chain becomes “the first term or partial term of the enlarged system that it builds. It is as if the myth shifted the formal system of the first significations by one notch”. (Barthes 1957: 187) In this way, the two semiological systems are layered within each other. The signifier of myth has a dual nature, which makes it ambiguous. “It is both meaning and form, full on one side, empty on the other.” (Barthes 1957: 190) While it retains its initial meaning, it simultaneously becomes an empty vessel ready to accommodate new conceptual content.

To illustrate this mechanism, consider how the film *Jung_E* employs brain data visualization as mythical sign. The image of a neural bundle rendered in various colors symbolizes cognitive acquisition through experience.

For instance, the green-colored bundle, representing the combat instinct, becomes the mythical signifier that transforms abstract neural processes into controllable, quantifiable objects within the secondary system. This secondary system – where the myth operates – is tied to the film’s narrative. Initially, the green bundle appears as simple image, but as the story unfolds, it transforms into a mediating interface for controlling the AI robot.

At this secondary stage, researchers manipulate this colored region with simple gestures. The act of adjusting the data visualization on the control panel – such as moving an icon up or down, left or right – suffices to control the AI’s functions completely. With just a few adjustments, the robot begins to fight intensely, or experience intensified pain.

Through this process of visually simplifying the complex neural networks of the human brain and imbuing them with mythical meaning, the film suggests that human cognition, sensory perception, and motor coordination can be quantified, visualized, calculated, and easily manipulated.

This representation promotes a misleading notion of direct

correspondence between behavior and specific brain regions, implying a reductive view of how the brain operates – a view that myth naturalizes as common sense. As the events and narrative actions develop, “a whole new story is implanted in the myth”. (Barthes 1957: 191)

In truth, what is invested in the concept is less the real itself than a certain knowledge of the real; in the transition from meaning to form, the image loses knowledge: so that it may better receive the knowledge of the concept. However, the knowledge contained in the mythical concept is a confused one, composed of soft and unlimited associations. It is important to emphasize this open-ended nature of the concept. [...] In this sense, we can say that the fundamental characteristic of the mythical concept is its capacity to be appropriated (*approprié* in French). (Barthes 1957: 192)

In short, the brain data visualization scenes in *Jung_E* can be interpreted as a myth reflecting fundamental assumptions about human intelligence. While they seem to depict scientific methodologies, these images deliberately blur the boundaries between human cognition and artificial intelligence. As a result, the spectator becomes unconsciously absorbed into the persuasive framework of these ostensibly techno-scientific representations.

4. Myth of Learning and Memory and Its Demystification

The narrative framework of *Jung_E* demonstrates how each segment of the three-dimensional brain map activates during training simulations. These simulations reproduce the virtual environment of the final confrontation between the human Jung-e and a robotic unit – a battle that proved fatal.

The film presents multiple sequences of iterative training sessions, all of which end in failure. These repeated exercises constitute an experimental protocol designed to optimize combat capabilities, with each iteration beginning moments before Jung-e’s death and focusing on three key parameters: combat instinct, pain perception, and tactical approach. The training process is repeated through systematic adjustments to the numerical values of these three parameters. When

the robot Jung_E fails against the opposing unit, the simulation terminates immediately, and the artificial neural processor is systematically destroyed irrespective of the processor's performance or potential.

These fictional processes create a regressive loop in which fixed parameters and a static neural configuration inevitably leads to the termination of the robot Jung_E. Within this framework, no learning occurs. In contrast, real-life contexts typically prompt behavioral modifications when individuals encounter recurring problematic situations. Diverse experiences enable the development of varied cognitive patterns, while the re-evaluation of past experiences proves crucial for generating differentiated responses. This principle, grounded in phenomenological and experiential knowledge, has been validated through neuroscientific research.

However, the narrative construction of *Jung_E* demonstrates a fundamental misunderstanding of basic neuroscientific and cognitive principles, as well as elementary human behavioral mechanisms. The film's portrayal of static, non-adaptive neural processing contradicts established research on neuroplasticity and learning, revealing the creators' limited engagement with contemporary cognitive science.

Until the early 20th century, neuroscience and cognitive science research was dominated by *localizationist* theories that assigned specific functions to distinct brain regions – an approach mirrored in *Jung_E*'s segmented brain mapping concept. However, beginning in the 1960s, advances in neuroscience led to the scientific recognition of *brain plasticity*⁷ and the emergence of connectionist models. This paradigm shift reconceptualized brain structure and cognitive activity as components of dynamic, interconnected networks rather than isolated, functionally-specific regions. Unlike the static

⁷ The concept of *brain plasticity* – also known as *neuroplasticity* or *synaptic plasticity* – emerged in the late 19th century. It refers to the brain's ability to modify its structure and functions in response to internal or external stimuli. This is not a temporary state but rather an intrinsic and enduring property of the healthy brain throughout the lifespan. *Synaptic plasticity* allows the brain to adapt to environmental changes, facilitates learning, and supports recovery from brain injuries. Spanish neuroanatomist Santiago Ramón y Cajal (1852–1934) was the first to define the neuron as the fundamental cellular and physiological unit of the nervous system. His work significantly influenced early theories on synapses, synaptic transmission, and synaptic plasticity. (Santiago Ramon y Cajal 1894: 444–468)

compartmentalization implicit in *Jung_E*, connectionist⁸ approaches recognize that cognitive functions emerge from distributed neural activity capable of adaptation and reorganization.

Connectionist models have fundamentally transformed neuroscience by shifting focus from localized brain functions to distributed neural networks.⁹ This paradigmatic shift coincided with advances in cognitive science during the 1990s, when computational approaches increasingly emphasized network-based processing and adaptive learning mechanisms.

In *Jung_E*, scientific experimentation is reduced to the repetitive execution of training simulations. Here, experimentation is depicted as nothing more than interacting with oversimplified graphics. In contrast, real-world information technology research involves the careful design of complex parameters, technical implementation, and iterative adjustments based on feedback data.

While the quality of a science fiction film is not necessarily determined by its adherence to scientific and technological accuracy, the central issue with *Jung_E* lies in the mythologizing effect created by this oversimplification. The film reflects neither a basic understanding of neuroscience, cognitive science, and computer technology, nor a humanistic perspective that takes human complexity seriously. Had the storytelling engaged more rigorously with the

⁸ Neurobiologist Eric Kandel (1929-) elucidated, through his studies on *Aplysia*, the cellular mechanisms of memory and learning. He demonstrated that in cognitive processes, the strengthening of new synapses or their creation, interneuronal connections, play a more decisive role than the neurons themselves. Subsequently, he focused on clarifying the complex and fundamental mechanisms underlying this process. In 2000, he received the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine with Arvid Carlsson (1923-2018) and Paul Greengard (1925-2019). Their work founded the *connectionist* conception of neuroscience. <https://planet-vie.ens.fr/thematiques/animaux/systeme-nerveux-et-systeme-hormonal/la-plasticite-cerebrale> (accessed July 20, 2025).

⁹ A prominent example is the *Human Connectome Project*, launched on July 1, 2010, which builds upon decades of neural mapping research beginning with *Caenorhabditis elegans* connectome studies initiated in 1986. The project's fundamental objective is to create comprehensive maps of the structural and functional networks underlying human brain connectivity, thereby illuminating the mechanisms of neural information processing and integration. Between 2009 and 2014, researchers collected data from more than 1,200 healthy adult participants using advanced neuroimaging technologies, including functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) and diffusion MRI (dMRI). This extensive dataset has been made freely accessible to the global neuroscience research community through the project's online platform. <https://humanconnectome.org/>

processes of human learning and cognition, it would not have reduced such intricate mechanisms to these simplistic representations.

Jung_E uses visual signs that evoke science and technology, thereby presenting AI and robotics research in an experimental setting that appears superficially credible. This narrative framing places the story and its meaning within the mythological system. Furthermore, the oversimplified representation inevitably leads to reductive perception and understanding. Ultimately, the film's portrayal of AI research is reduced to experiments conducted on cloned versions of a human being, governed by a few supposedly controllable parameters. (Notably, the robot *Jung_E* is visually identical to the human *Jung-e*, and both are portrayed by the same actress.)

The same logic applies to how obstacles are overcome in AI research within the film. The turning point is portrayed as the accidental discovery of a previously unidentified brain region that is intrinsically linked to the human *Jung-e*'s memories of her daughter. Conversations with her sick daughter, affectionate gestures, final gifts, and other emotional moments are invoked to enable the robot *Jung-E* to achieve higher levels of combat efficiency and performance.

From this, we can infer the narrative logic that the film establishes: there exists a specific brain region where memories of her daughter are stored; stimulating this region activates maternal love; maternal love generates a desire to see her daughter again; this desire transforms into a will to survive in battle; and this will ultimately leads to tactical optimization in combat against other robots.

This narrative development illustrates how the film, by prioritizing its melodramatic dimension, neglects any deeper or speculative engagement with the complexities of human memory.

The view that human learning and cognitive activity depend on neural network interconnections also applies to memory. Recent research has moved away from the earlier assumption that specific memories are stored in isolated brain regions – for example, fear memories in the amygdala or spatial memories in the hippocampus. Individual memories are now understood to be distributed across multiple brain regions, with researchers successfully mapping the complex neural networks that demonstrate how memories span various interconnected areas throughout the brain.¹⁰

¹⁰ “The concept that a memory is stored not just in a single engram cell ensemble but

In *Jung_E*, the solution lies in the accidental discovery of a brain region associated with motherhood. A specific area of the brain is shown to contain memories of the protagonist's daughter, memories that serve as the source of maternal love. Emotion, then, emerges as the ultimate solution to all challenges. All the iterative trial-and-error processes involved in the data-driven training simulations – initially framed as scientific experimentation – are ultimately rendered meaningless.

This development compels us to examine the narrative hypothesis of *Jung_E* explored in this article: that a memory, or even a cognitive ability, is localized within a distinct brain region, operating in isolation. According to this hypothesis, discrete areas of the brain store individual units of information, knowledge, learning, or memory without any interconnection.

The key to overcoming the obstacles in developing the AI robot was hidden from the beginning and only needed to be unlocked by discovering this previously unidentified brain region. This secret region is portrayed as containing total knowledge or the mystical essence of mother-daughter love – reminiscent of Roland Barthes's critique in *Mythology* of how Einstein's brain was mystified as a symbol of innate genius.

Paradoxically, the more human genius materialized in Einstein's brain, the more the product of his intellect took on a magical condition, reincarnating the old esoteric image of a science all enclosed in a few letters. There is a secret unique to the universe, and this secret is contained in a word; the universe becomes a safe, and humanity seeks the right combination to unlock it. Einstein almost found it – such is the

in learning-induced enduring changes in multiple functionally connected neuronal ensembles was suggested by Richard Semon (“unified engram complex”) and Donald Hebb (“neurons that fire together wire together”). The experimental evidence for this concept came from an observation that gene expression is altered by experience in widespread, behaviorally- defined neural circuits, multiunit recording experiments that identified distributed brain regions involved in memory formation, and an analysis of engram cells from multiple hippocampal subfields and the amygdala, which has since been supported by activity mapping studies. [...] The distributed nature of engram cell ensembles of a specific memory has led to the suggestion that the memory engram within an individual brain region may contribute a subset of the overall memory information. [...] In conclusion, this study provides evidence supporting the concept that a memory is stored in a functionally connected engram ensembles' complex distributed broadly across the brain, consistent with Semon's unified engram complex hypothesis.” (Roy, D.S., Park, Y.G., Kim, M.E. et al. 2022: 13)

myth of Einstein. It contains all the great Gnostic themes: the unity of nature, the ideal of a fundamental reduction of the world, the opening power of the word, the ancestral struggle between a secret and a word, and the idea that total knowledge must be discovered at once like a lock that suddenly opens after a thousand fruitless attempts. (Barthes 1957: 86)

The specific example of mythologizing Einstein's brain as an organ symbolizing human intellectual abilities illustrates a key point: the understanding of intelligence presented in *Jung_E*, despite its release in 2023, is still rooted in 1950s thinking.

At that time, people believed that knowledge was stored in Einstein's brain. The narrative of *Jung_E* follows the same logic. The power to enhance human abilities is mysterious and hidden somewhere in the brain. To discover it, one need not rely on scientific methods or rigorous experimentation, but simply find the right key in the right place. In the film, that key is the love of a mother and daughter.

Given this narrative development, the audience is spared from considering what it truly means to create an AI robot. Love solves everything. The introduction of AI and simulation experiments becomes insignificant. As stated at the beginning of this article, science and technology remain mere accessories.

5. Conclusion

In this article, we analyzed a science fiction film from a semiotic perspective, focusing on two key areas: representative scenes related to science and technology, and the causal relationships driving narrative development. In particular, we interpreted the brain data visualization scene in *Jung_E* through the lens of Roland Barthes's theory of mythology. In doing so, we aimed to highlight the problematic nature of perpetuating clichés without regard for contemporary scientific advancements. Such an approach can foster misconceptions among viewers who may rely solely on films for their understanding of science. To counter this, we referenced fundamental assumptions and established findings from recent research in cognitive science and neuroscience, albeit to a limited extent. This methodology represents an example of interdisciplinary research bridging semiotics and the natural

sciences.

While science fiction is a genre that thrives on imaginative freedom, it should not resort to entirely unfounded fantasies. Strictly speaking, fantasy is a genre with its own unique features. Rather, science fiction serves as a medium through which scientific and technological discourse can cross the boundaries of laboratories and reach broader audiences. To create original and compelling science fiction, such works must be grounded in genuine engagement with science and technology, which form its foundation and point of departure.

Given the current state of the popular culture industry, the number of high-quality Korean science fiction films remains relatively low compared to the overall production volume. Critics often cite melodramatic tones, an overemphasis on romance, and derivative narratives as key shortcomings. We believe these criticisms likely stem from the genre's insufficient engagement with scientific and technological themes. Through this article, we hope to contribute to the positive development of Korean science fiction by encouraging a more thoughtful integration of scientific themes.

Conflict of interest statement: The authora have no conflict of interest to disclose.

Bibliography

- Barthes, Roland. 1957. *Mythologies*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil.
- Chu, Seung-hyeon (추승연). Interview with Yeon Sang-ho (연상호): 'Melodrama Film? It Was Originally Planned as SF in Classical Melodrama Format'. In *The Seoul Economic Daily*, <https://sedaily.com/NewsView/29KK6R5U5X> (accessed January 21, 2023).
- Dufour, Éric. 2011. *Le cinéma de science-fiction*. Paris: Armand Colin.
- Laffay, Albert. 1964. *Logique du cinéma*. Paris: Masson.
- Lambert, Hervé-Pierre. 2009. La version française de l'imaginaire posthumain. In *Revue de langue et littérature françaises*, Vol. 28: 19-38.
- Lee, Soojin (이수진). 2019. *CinémAction Le cinéma de science-fiction*

- post-11 septembre*, Athis-de-l'Orne: Charles Corle.
- Maier-Hein, Klaus, Peter F. Neher, Jean-Christophe Houde, Marc-Alexandre Côté, Eleftherios Garyfallidis, Jidan Zhong, Maxime Chamberland, Fang-Cheng Yeh, Ying-Chia Lin, Qing Ji, Wilburn E. Reddick, John O. Glass, David Qixiang Chen, Yuanjing Feng, Chengfeng Gao, Ye Wu, Jieyan Ma, Renjie He, Qiang Li, Carl-Fredrik Westin, Samuel Deslauriers-Gauthier, J. Omar Ocegueda González, Michael Paquette, Samuel St-Jean, Gabriel Girard, François Rheault, Jasmeen Sidhu, Chantal M.W. Tax, Fenghua Guo, Hamed Y. Mesri, Dávid Szabolcs, Martijn Froeling, Anneriet M. Heemskerk, Alexander Leemans, Arnaud Boré, Basile Pinsard, Christophe Bedetti, Matthieu Desrosiers, Simona Brambati, Julien Doyon, Alessia Sarica, Roberta Vasta, Antonio Cerasa, Aldo Quattrone, Jason Yeatman, Ali R. Khan, Wes Hodges, Simon Alexander, David Romascano, Muhamed Barakovic, Anna Auria, Oscar Esteban, Alia Lemkaddem, Jean-Philippe Thiran, H. Ertan Cetingul, Benjamin L. Odry, Boris Mailhe, Mariappan S. Nadar, Fabrizio Pizzagalli, Gautam Prasad, Julio E. Villalon-Reina, Justin Galvis, Paul M. Thompson, Francisco De Santiago Requejo, Pedro Luque Laguna, Luis Miguel Lacerda, Rachel Barrett, Flavio Dell'Acqua, Marco Catani, Laurent Petit, Emmanuel Caruyer, Alessandro Daducci, Tim B. Dyrby, Tim Holland-Letz, Claus C. Hilgetag, Bram Stieltjes, and Maxime Descoteaux. 2017. The challenge of mapping the human connectome based on diffusion tractography. In *Nature Communications*, Vol. 8: 1–13.
- Metz, Christian. 1991. *L'énonciation impersonnelle ou le site du film*. Paris: Klincksieck.
- Neher, Peter, Dusan Hirjak, and Klaus Maier-Hein. 2024. Radiomic tractometry reveals tract-specific imaging biomarkers in white matter. In *Nature Communications*. Vol. 15: 1-12.
- Oh, Bo-ram (오보람), and Won-hee Park (박원희). Bong Joon-ho Press Conference: Human-Scented SF, Containing Political Satire. In *Yonhap News Agency*, <https://www.yna.co.kr/view/AKR20250120068951005> (accessed January 20, 2025).
- Park, Young-Gyun (박영근), Dheeraj S. Roy, Minyoung Kim (김민영), Ying Zhang, Sachie K. Ogawa, Nicholas DiNapoli, Xinyi Gu, Jae H. Cho, Heejin Choi (최희진), Lee Kamensky, Jared Martin, Olivia Mosto, Tomomi Aida, Kwanghun Chung (정광훈), and Susumu Tonegawa. 2022. Brain-wide mapping reveals that engrams for a single memory are distributed across multiple brain regions. In *Nature Communications*, Vol. 13: 1–17.
- Ramon Y Cajal, Santiago. 1894. La Fine Structure des Centres Nerveux, In *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London*, Vol. 55: 444–468.

List of reviewers

Han, Rae-Hee, Soongsil University
Choi, Seo-Yoon, Gwangju Institute of Science and Technology (GIST)
Koo, Ja-Joon, Yonsei University
Yoo, Seung-Jin, Yonsei University
Kim, Ho, Seoul National University
Lee, Min-Jung, Seoul National University
Kim, Hyang, Hoseo University
Park, Hyun-Ik, Korea University
Kim, Jia, Wonkwang University
Kim, Yo-Seop, Sungkyunkwan University
Kagemoto, Tsuyoshi, Ritsumeikan University (Japan)
Berthelie, Benoit, The University of Sydney (Australia)
Ko, Jae-Bong, Inha University
Kim, Ryung, Korea National Open University
Han, Hye-Rin, Gachon University
Lu, Ling, Nanjing University (China)
Park, Dong-Eok, Soongsil University
Shin, Dong-Jae, Chuncheon National University of Education
Kang, Byung-Yung, University of Ljubljana (Slovenia)
Lee, Dan-Bi, Yonsei University

심사위원들

한래희, 송실대학교
최서윤, 광주과학기술원
구자준, 연세대학교
유승진, 연세대학교
김호, 서울대학교
이민정, 서울대학교
김향, 호서대학교
박현익, 고려대학교
김지아, 원광대학교
김요섭, 성균관대학교
Kagemoto, Tsuyoshi, 리츠메이칸대학교
Berthelie, Benoit, 시드니대학교
고재봉, 인하대학교
김릉, 한국방송통신대학교
한혜린, 가천대학교
Lu, Ling, 남경대학교
박동익, 송실대학교
신동재, 춘천교육대학교
강병용, 류블라나대학교
이단비, 연세대학교