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THEMATIC FOCUS:
KOREAN DIASPORAS

Guest editor
Nataša Visočnik Gerželj

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***THEMATIC FOCUS:
KOREAN DIASPORAS***

Chief Editors' Foreword

Ephemeral Homelands: Korean Diasporas and the Quest for Belonging

Jana S. ROŠKER

Editor-in-Chief

The current issue of *Asian Studies* explores the Korean diaspora across Japan, Europe, and North America. Given the journal's primary focus on East Asian cultures and discourses, this is not the first special issue devoted to Korean studies. Such repeated attention is far from coincidental, as South Korea is an increasingly influential player in international relations between Asia and the Euro-American regions.

A decade ago, we published a special issue of *Asian Studies* titled "Korean Tradition in Modern Eastern Asia: Ideas, Myths, and Realities", guest-edited by Chikako Shigemori Bučar (see Shigemori Bučar 2014, 1–3). The issue featured a range of diverse articles, covering topics from Korean national heritage (Ryu 2014; Kingston 2014) and the country's complex relations with Japan (Mecsi 2014; Visočnik 2014), to themes in Korean metaphysics and political philosophy (Rošker 2014; Yoo 2014; Greif and Rošker 2014).

That volume, published in 2014, marked the first step in the Slovenian exploration of Korea, a country previously marginalized and largely overlooked in our studies of East Asian languages and cultures. Today, it is increasingly evident how unfortunate this oversight was, and we now recognize Korea as a hidden gem within the vibrant mosaic of Sinic regions, and have come to appreciate its uniquely rich culture, especially evident in its literature, music, and other arts. This global appreciation reached a milestone a few months ago with the Nobel Prize in Literature being awarded to a Korean author for the first time, highlighting the significance of this nation's cultural contributions on a global scale.

As a notable Korean intellectual, Han Kang explores questions of profound human concern that resonate universally, while illuminating the unique contours of contemporary Korean society. Her position as a female writer further accentuates the overdue recognition of Asian literature and arts, which have long been marginalized—much like the female perspective itself. Through her work, Han Kang bridges these intersecting forms of marginalization, challenging both gendered and cultural biases to reveal the depth, wisdom, beauty and diversity of underrepresented voices.

The present issue includes multiple articles on Korean literature and literary criticism. With its focus on migration and diaspora literature, it offers unique insights into the internal struggles and external challenges faced by Koreans forming new, transculturally shaped identities in unfamiliar environments. These individuals navigate the tensions between adaptation and loyalty to their cultural heritage, between societal norms and feelings of alienation, and between old routines and new aspirations.

In this context, diaspora emerges as a very special place, one situated in the borderlands of uncertainty, neither here nor there. Life in diaspora creates a distinct “in-between” space, blending elements of both the origin and host cultures, languages, and societies.

This unique positioning becomes a fertile ground for exploring human experiences, often defined by the tension between stability and change. Individuals in diaspora navigate complex challenges: reconciling past and present identities, managing feelings of belonging and estrangement, and balancing adaptation with a sense of cultural continuity. This mixed environment brings about a dynamic human experience, simultaneously filled with moments of joy and hardship, anxiety and connection. This duality highlights the resilience required in diaspora life, as people engage deeply with the cultural negotiation and personal transformation inherent in their unique social landscapes.

In other words, diaspora is a unique and very specific place that can serve as a realm where the delicate balance between the universal need for human connection and the assertion of individual identity becomes heightened. This space invites constant negotiation, as individuals are often compelled to both integrate into new social fabrics and maintain unique cultural ties.

The tensions within diaspora life amplify a universal struggle familiar to us all: the drive to belong to a larger community while preserving one’s unique identity and individuality. For those in diaspora, this challenge often becomes more pronounced. Their ongoing negotiation between the two poles at the edges of their “in-between” space not only defines their diasporic experiences of profound social, and often personal, alienation, it also continuously shapes their evolving characters, thereby enriching them.

On the other hand, diasporic life often involves loss and a sense of longing, as people leave behind familiar places, relatives, friends, and cultural practices. This separation introduces grief and nostalgia, feelings rooted in memories of what once was but no longer is part of everyday life. The sorrow of displacement and the yearning for the past co-exist alongside adaptation and growth. These complex emotions resonate in the complex duality of diasporic existence.

The sense of home—this ultimate place of intimate security, warmth, and protection, where we feel safe, nourished, and free from anxiety—is often a stable, immovable source of comfort. But in diaspora, it transforms into a fluid, internal landscape rather than a fixed location. Here, home may not reside in any specific place but rather in a sense of belonging that one creates, adapts, and carries. Many experience home as an inner space where their sense of self, history, and community are recognized, however fragmented or dispersed that may be.

Such an existence and such experiences are profoundly transcultural in their very nature. They show how human beings are able to transcend their original culture, how they are transformed into new, different persons, and how they remain themselves at the same time. This is about a transition from one mode of being to another.

And since our journal *Asian Studies* embraces a transcultural approach, continually exploring these “in-between” spaces of intercultural interaction and the search for new knowledge, this special issue holds unique significance for us. We hope it will resonate with the curious, reflective spirits of our readers, offering them fresh insights into the intrinsic relationship between the universal aspects of our common human experience and the culturally conditioned dimensions of our lives.

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THEMATIC FOCUS:
KOREAN DIASPORAS

Guest Editor's Introduction

The Korean Diaspora Across the World

Nataša VIŠOČNIK GERŽELJ

Guest Editor

The present special issue of *Asian Studies* examines the growth and diversification of the Korean diaspora in recent years, with communities emerging in various parts of the world, particularly in the United States, Canada, Japan, and Australia. This expansion has been driven by factors such as globalization, economic opportunities, and educational pursuits. Researchers have focused on understanding the cultural, social, and economic impacts of these communities in their host countries, as well as their connections to South Korea. In addition to the conventional migratory narratives, recent studies have emphasized the experiences of second-, third-, and even fourth-generation Korean immigrants. These individuals often grapple with multifaceted identities, attempting to reconcile their Korean heritage with the cultural norms of their host countries. Research suggests that these generations play a pivotal role in shaping the future of Korean communities abroad, often engaging in cultural preservation while also integrating into broader societal frameworks.

The majority of the papers in this special issue have been presented at two conferences. Firstly, at the International Conference on Korean Studies in Ljubljana entitled *Korean and Asian Diaspora*, which was held on 14 April 2023. Secondly, at the International Conference on Korean Studies entitled *Korea Unbound—Diaspora Dynamics and Advancements in Korean Studies*, which was held on 16 February 2024¹ at the University of Ljubljana. The articles are arranged into three sections according to the research topic.

The initial section, entitled “Literature and Literary Criticism”, includes five articles that explore Korean identity through the medium of literature. The expression of Korean diaspora identity through literary works is a subject that with a rich and multifaceted nature. It is characterized by an in-depth exploration of themes such as displacement, cultural hybridity, and the quest for a sense of belonging. Writers from the Korean diaspora frequently draw upon their personal experiences of migration, the challenges of navigating multiple cultures, and the intricate processes involved in identity formation. The first section of the publication opens with an examination

1 The two conferences were both supported financially by the Seed Program for Korean Studies, which is administered by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea, and the Korean Studies Promotion Service at the Academy of Korean Studies (AKS-2022-INC-2250001).

by Kang Byoung Yoong of the complex identity issues faced by the protagonist of Chang-Rae Lee's novel *Native Speaker*, who explores these through the lens of Hannah Arendt's concepts of the pariah and the parvenu. The paper then goes on to discuss the protagonist's internal conflict and external societal pressures, offering a comprehensive examination of the Korean American experience and thereby contributing to broader discussions on diaspora, identity, and cultural integration.

The second and third articles in this section explore the literary contributions of Kim Shijong (or Kim Si-jong) (1929–), a significant poet of the Zainichi Korean diaspora, focusing on themes of displacement, identity, and historical trauma. The first text, written by Yang Soonmo, emphasizes Kim's engagement with political and social movements, such as the Jeju April 3rd Incident, the anti-nuclear movement, and the Great East Japan Earthquake, situating his work within a broader global and diasporic literary context. It highlights how his poetry serves as a means of resistance and articulation of minority struggles. The second article, by Kwak Hyoungduck, while also discussing Kim's diasporic identity, takes a more philosophical and critical approach to his use of lyricism. It suggests that his poetry serves as a form of "revenge" on the Japanese language while simultaneously transforming Japanese literature. This perspective raises questions about how the diaspora experience is framed—whether as personal suffering, collective trauma, or artistic creation. Unlike the first paper, which presents Kim's poetry as a bridge across histories and movements, the second warns against reducing his work to mythologized lyrical expressions, emphasizing his deep engagement with the contradictions of diaspora itself. While both contributions recognize Kim's literary significance in the Zainichi Korean experience, the first focuses on his political activism and historical engagement, whereas the second critically examines the complexities of diaspora representation and the risks of romanticizing his work.

The article by Rajesh Kumar also explores the diasporic elements in the work of Yom Sang-seop (1897–1963). His post-liberation novels depict the experiences of Koreans who had migrated to Manchuria and other regions, only to return to a homeland transformed by partition and foreign influence. His works explore themes of displacement, nostalgia, and disillusionment, illustrating the "double diasporic" experience—where returnees find themselves estranged even in their homeland. By focusing on homecoming as both a personal and collective struggle, Yom's narratives challenge the idealized notion of return, revealing the complexities of national identity and the lingering effects of colonial rule.

The last article in this section is by Catalina Stanciu, who examines the representation of Zainichi Koreans and other marginalized identities in Min Jin Lee's novel *Pachinko* (2017), focusing on the intersection of diaspora and vulnerability. By

analysing how vulnerability manifests through transgenerational trauma, displacement, and marginalization, the study explores whether Lee's narrative offers spaces for resistance, empowerment, or solidarity beyond trauma. Drawing on theoretical frameworks of vulnerability and trauma, the paper highlights the dual nature of vulnerability—both as a source of precarity and as a foundation for resilience and communal care. Ultimately, it argues that *Pachinko* redefines vulnerability not merely as a state of weakness but as a catalyst for connection and transformation, bridging the divide between periphery and centre.

The second section, “Individual Narratives and Biographies”, includes three articles. It begins with one by Kim Bogook, whose study examines the life and ideological transformations of Choi Inhwon (1934–?), a North Korean student who studied in Hungary in the 1950s. Tracing his journey through Hungary, Yugoslavia, and Switzerland, the article highlights his involvement in the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, subsequent defection, and eventual return to North Korea in 1960. Choi's shifting political stance—from anti-socialist refugee to a willing repatriate—reflects the complex ideological realignments of North Korean students abroad during the Cold War. Through archival records, this research sheds light on the broader patterns of defection, political supervision, and the role of ideology in shaping North Korean diaspora experiences.

The following article in this section, by Sun Young Yun, examines the Korean diaspora in Austria, focusing on the Korean Literature-Friends-Club, a literary organization founded in 2012 by former Korean nurses who arrived in the 1960s and 1970s. Through their literary works and cultural activities, the club has played a significant role in preserving Korean identity and fostering transnational connections. The research highlights the evolving nature of the Korean community in Austria, which has grown to include various professional and cultural organizations. The findings contribute to the broader study of diaspora communities and transnational identity, demonstrating how literature serves as a medium for self-reflection and cultural continuity. The club's activities bridge the gap between past and present generations, ensuring the sustainability of Korean cultural expression in Austria.

The section concludes with an article by Chikako Shigemori Bučar, who focuses on Slovenian Catholic missionary activity in Korea during the early 20th century, focusing on a picture postcard of Tokwon Abbey. The article explores missionary journals and the role of Father Kanut d'Avernas (1884–1950), a Benedictine of Slovenian descent. The research highlights the Slovenian Missionary Society's printing efforts and the broader religious networks connecting Slovenia and Korea. By analysing archival materials, this study sheds light on the overlooked history of Slovenian missionaries in East Asia and their role in transnational religious identity formation.

The third section, “Diasporic Identity and Community Adaptation”, includes three articles, starting with a paper by Eva Vučkovič’s on the webtoon *Murrrz*, an autobiographical *dailylifetoon* by the Korean-American artist Mary Park. Through narrative analysis, it explores how the artist portrays herself and her immigrant parents, highlighting cultural contrasts and generational differences. Additionally, the study analyses reader interactions in the comments section, revealing how audiences relate to and challenge the author’s depiction of Korean identity. The findings illustrate the role of webtoons in shaping diasporic narratives and fostering cross-cultural dialogue, as readers from diverse backgrounds engage with and reinterpret the artist’s portrayal of Korean and universal experiences.

The article on the cultural adaptation of Korean expatriates residing in Hungary, a growing phenomenon driven by increased economic cooperation between the two countries, is written by Ramona Kovacs. Through in-depth interviews with Korean employees, entrepreneurs, students, and missionaries, the research explores the social transformations they undergo while integrating into Hungarian society. The study highlights the challenges of maintaining traditional customs while adapting to local norms and examines the formation of informal Korean communities. By analysing adaptation strategies and the factors influencing integration, this paper contributes to the broader discourse on diaspora studies and cross-cultural interactions.

Lee Yeong-Mi’s contribution focuses on American Protestant Missionaries in Korea between 1884 and 1942, when approximately 1,000 American Protestant missionaries immigrated to Korea. While driven by religious zeal, their long-term residence was sustained by financial stability provided by mission boards. Rather than living in hardship, they maintained a middle-class American lifestyle, forming self-contained communities with Western amenities and structured family lives. Although they faced challenges under Japanese rule, many remained for decades. This study reframes missionaries as immigrants who sought a better life—both spiritually and socioeconomically—revealing their migration as a blend of religious calling and material security.

This special issue of *Asian Studies* offers a comprehensive exploration of the evolving Korean diaspora, shedding light on its cultural, literary, and historical dimensions across generations and continents. Through diverse scholarly perspectives, these articles deepen our understanding of identity, adaptation, and transnational connections in an ever-globalizing world. Whether you are a researcher, student, or enthusiast of diaspora studies, this volume presents fresh insights into Korean communities worldwide. We thus invite you to engage with these thought-provoking discussions and wish you an enriching and inspiring reading experience!

THEMATIC FOCUS:
KOREAN DIASPORAS

Literature and Literary Criticism

Exploring Identity in Korean Diaspora Fiction: A Character Analysis of Henry Park in Chang-Rae Lee's *Native Speaker*

KANG Byoung Yoong*

Abstract

This study examines the complex identity issues faced by Henry Park, the protagonist of Chang-Rae Lee's novel *Native Speaker*, through the lens of Hannah Arendt's concepts of the pariah and parvenu. By examining Henry's experiences as a 1.5-generation Korean-American immigrant, this analysis elucidates the tensions between cultural assimilation and heritage preservation. The study describes Henry as a "Lesser Stranger", a nuanced identity state situated between complete alienation and full assimilation. Furthermore, the analysis draws parallels with Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* in order to gain further insight into Henry's internal conflict and external societal pressures. In conclusion, this paper offers a comprehensive examination of the Korean-American experience, contributing to broader discussions on diaspora, identity, and cultural integration.

Keywords: Korean-American literature, identity and assimilation, pariah and parvenu, diaspora experience, cultural conflict

Raziskovanje identitete v korejski diasporični fikciji: analiza lika Henryja Parka v romanu *Native Speaker* avtorja Chang-Rae Leeja

Izveleček

Študija se pogloblja v zapletene identitetne boje Henryja Parka, protagonista romana *Native Speaker* avtorja Chang-Rae Leeja, skozi prizmo konceptov parijskega in parvenuja, ki ju je razvila Hannah Arendt. S proučevanjem Henryjevih izkušenj kot 1,5-generacijskega korejsko-ameriškega priseljenca ta analiza poudarja napetosti med kulturno asimilacijo in ohranjanjem dediščine. Študija uvaja pojem Henryja kot »manj tujega« (*Lesser Stranger*), niansirano stanje identitete, ki je postavljeno med popolno odtujenost in popolno asimilacijo. Prav tako vzpostavlja vzporednice s Frantzom Fanonom in njegovim delom *Črna koža, bele maske*, da bi bolje razumeli Henryjev notranji konflikt in zunanje družbene pritiske. Za konec članek ponuja celovito raziskavo korejsko-ameriške izkušnje ter prispeva k širšim razpravam o diaspori, identiteti in kulturni integraciji.

Ključne besede: korejsko-ameriška literatura, identiteta in asimilacija, parij in parvenu, diasporna izkušnja, kulturni konflikt

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Introduction

Diaspora literature is a broad term that encompasses the body of literary works produced by authors who live outside their native lands. These works often reflect on themes of exile, displacement, and the negotiation of cultural identity.

This genre is characterized by its examination of the complexities of identity formation, the sense of belonging, and the struggles of maintaining cultural heritage while assimilating into a new society. It provides a voice for the experiences of immigrant communities, highlighting their challenges and contributions to the multicultural mosaic of their adopted countries. The narratives in question facilitate a more profound comprehension of the immigrant experience and the multifaceted ways in which individuals and communities negotiate their dual identities.

The novel *Native Speaker* by Chang-Rae Lee 이창래, published in 1995, represents a seminal work in the field of Korean-American literature (Lee 1996). It engages with the intricate dynamics of identity, assimilation, and cultural displacement. The narrative is centred on Henry Park, a 1.5-generation Korean-American immigrant who is confronted with the challenge of reconciling his Korean heritage with his American upbringing.

This paper examines Henry's multifaceted identity through the theoretical lenses of Hannah Arendt's concepts of the pariah and parvenu (Arendt 2022), as well as Frantz Fanon's exploration of identity in *Black Skin, White Masks* (Fanon 2008).

The main character of Henry Park exemplifies the complex and often conflicting experiences of immigrants, who must navigate the tensions between cultural assimilation and the preservation of their ancestral heritage. Working as a spy for a political candidate, Henry's professional life mirrors his personal quest for belonging, making him both an insider and an outsider within his community. This duality is central to an understanding of his identity as a "Lesser Stranger", a term introduced in this study to describe an individual who is neither completely alienated nor fully assimilated (Kang 2021).

By examining Henry's internal conflicts and societal pressures, this analysis illuminates the broader Korean-American experience and contributes to discussions on diaspora, identity, and cultural integration. It also situates the novel within the broader context of Korean diaspora fiction, demonstrating its significance within this literary tradition.

This study addresses several key research questions. It examines the ways in which Chang-Rae Lee's *Native Speaker* portrays the complexities of identity and cultural assimilation for 1.5-generation Korean-American immigrants, and also looks at

the ways in which Hannah Arendt's concepts of the pariah and parvenu can assist in comprehending the character of Henry Park and his dual existence within American society.

This study will examine the contribution that the notion of Henry as a "Lesser Stranger" makes to the discourse on immigrant identity in diaspora literature. It is possible to identify parallels between Henry Park's internal conflicts and the themes explored in Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (Kim 2006, 238). This paper will examine the ways in which *Native Speaker* reflects the broader themes of diaspora literature and the insights it provides into the Korean-American experience. The aim of this paper is to improve our understanding of the lives of immigrants, focusing on the complexities of identity formation and cultural negotiation. It aims to provide insights into the broader human experience of displacement and belonging.

Evolution of the Korean Diaspora Literature in the United States

In order to comprehend the literary works of Chang-Rae Lee, which are part of the literature of the Korean diaspora in the US, it is imperative to understand the earlier literature of this diaspora. This is because the development of Korean diasporic literature is a journey of identity exploration, and these explorations collectively contribute to the formation of a distinct cultural identity.

The first Korean immigrants to the US arrived in Hawaii in 1902, marking the beginning of a significant wave of Korean immigration to the country (Yi 2019, 274). However, it was not until after the Korean War and the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 that significant numbers of Koreans began to settle in the US (Oh 2007, 18). This influx of immigrants led to the emergence of Korean-American literature, initially focusing on the experiences of the first generation of Korean immigrants and their struggle to adapt to a new country while preserving their cultural identity.

The initial cohort of Korean immigrants encountered a multitude of challenges, including racial discrimination, language barriers, and economic difficulties. Their literary works frequently reflected these struggles, portraying the harsh realities of immigrant life and the tension between maintaining one's cultural heritage and assimilating into American society. One of the earliest and most influential works of Korean-American literature is *East Goes West* by Younghill Kang 강용흘, published in 1937. Kang was a Korean-American writer, most renowned for his 1931 novel *The Grass Roof* and its 1937 sequel, the fictionalized memoir *East Goes West*:

The Making of an Oriental Yankee. He also authored an unpublished play, *Murder in the Royal Palace*, which was performed in both the US and Korea. The novel *East Goes West* narrates the experiences of a young Korean man who relocates to America with the ambition of pursuing a career in writing. However, he encounters significant challenges in adapting to the complexities of American society. This work is noteworthy not only for its literary merit but also for its portrayal of the immigrant experience, which served as a foundation for subsequent Korean-American literature (Choe 2006, 107).

Other early works include Richard E. Kim's 김은국 *The Martyred* (1964), which examines the experiences of Korean intellectuals during the Korean War. The novel explores the psychological and moral complexities faced by individuals in times of conflict, reflecting broader themes of loyalty, betrayal, and the search for meaning in the aftermath of war. Furthermore, the novel addresses broader questions pertaining to the war and Korean Christianity. The text considers the relationship between the collective suffering of the public during wartime and the individual factors of faith, hope, confession, and so forth. While the narrative is centred on the twelve murdered ministers, Kim also considers the suffering of the innocent Koreans as a whole, thereby implicitly posing the question of whether the people of Korea are just as much “martyrs” as the murdered men. The novel achieved considerable commercial success, remaining on the *New York Times* Bestseller List for twenty weeks and being translated into ten languages. The work was also nominated for the National Book Award and the Nobel Prize in Literature (Gim 2023, 368).

Elaine Kim's *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings and Their Social Context* (1982) is another foundational text that helped establish Korean-American literature as a distinct field of study. Her work provided a critical analysis and contextualization of the social and historical forces that have shaped the production of Korean-American literature. In the 1980s and 1990s, the Korean-American literary scene began to flourish, with an increasing number of writers publishing their works and exploring a wider range of themes and styles. This period saw the emergence of writers such as Chang-Rae Lee, who published his debut novel, *Native Speaker*, in 1995. This work examines the themes of identity, assimilation, and cultural displacement through the narrative of Henry Park, a Korean-American man who serves as a spy for a political candidate. Lee's lyrical prose and nuanced characterizations introduced a new depth to the exploration of the immigrant experience, emphasizing the internal and external conflicts faced by individuals straddling two cultures.

Other significant works from this period include Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's 차학경 experimental piece *Dictee* (1982), which examines themes of language,

memory, and identity through a fragmented, multi-genre narrative. Cha's innovative approach to narrative challenged traditional forms and offered a profound meditation on the intersections of personal and collective histories (Oh 2007, 51).

Gary Pak's 게리 박 *The Watcher of Waipuna and Other Stories* (1994) also emerged during this period. This work explores the experiences of Korean immigrants in Hawaii and addresses themes of cultural identity, family, and community.

Korean-American literature continued to evolve in the 2000s and 2010s, with an increasing number of writers exploring the experiences of the second and third generations of Korean-Americans, as well as the experiences of adoptees and mixed-race individuals. This period also witnessed a surge in the popularity of Korean pop culture in the US, which served to draw greater attention to Korean-American literature and culture. Notable works from this period include Krys Lee's 크리스 리 *Drifting House* (2012), a collection of stories about Korean immigrants in the US and their descendants. Lee's narratives elucidate the emotional and psychological intricacies of displacement, belonging, and identity across diverse generations and settings.

Another significant work from this period is Min Jin Lee's 이민진 *Pachinko* (2017). The novel encompasses several generations of a Korean family residing in Japan, delving into themes of identity, exile, and resilience. The novel received considerable acclaim for its expansive narrative and its nuanced portrayal of the challenges faced by Koreans in Japan. It highlighted issues of discrimination, cultural preservation, and the enduring quest for a sense of home.

The field of Korean diaspora literature in the US is currently experiencing a period of vibrant and diverse growth, with writers exploring a wide range of themes and styles. Korean-American writers are continuing to expand the boundaries of what Korean diaspora literature can be, offering new insights into the experiences of Koreans in the US through a diverse range of genres, including memoirs, novels, poetry, and graphic novels. Contemporary writers such as Cathy Park Hong 캐시 박 홍 and Alexander Chee 알렌산더 지 are notable examples of this trend. Hong's poetry collection, *Engine Empire* (2012), employs a distinctive combination of lyrical and narrative techniques to explore themes of identity, language, and history. Chee's novels *Edinburgh* (2001) and *The Queen of the Night* (2016) examine the experiences of a mixed-race Korean-American protagonist, examining themes of identity, sexuality, and the complexities of navigating multiple cultural worlds.

Overall, Korean-American literature has evolved from its early focus on the immigrant struggle to a broader exploration of diverse experiences and identities

within the Korean diaspora. This literary tradition continues to reflect the ongoing negotiation of cultural identity, the search for belonging, and the resilience of immigrant communities, contributing to the rich tapestry of American literature (Joo and Lee 2008, 120).

In summary, Korean-American literature has undergone a significant evolution, moving from an initial focus on the immigrant experience to a more expansive exploration of the diverse experiences and identities within the Korean diaspora. This literary tradition persists in reflecting the ongoing negotiation of cultural identity, the search for belonging, and the resilience of immigrant communities, thereby contributing to the rich tapestry of American literature.

The character of Henry, the protagonist of *Native Speaker*, is not the sole creation of Chang-Rae Lee, but instead represents a condensation and an archetype of the development of Korean diaspora literature in the US.

The Literary Contributions of Chang-Rae Lee

Chang-Rae Lee is a seminal figure in Korean-American literature, whose works have significantly advanced the understanding of the immigrant experience and the complexities of cultural identity. As a Korean-American novelist, Lee provides invaluable contributions that offer deep insights into the immigrant experience and the complex dynamics of cultural assimilation and identity negotiation. His literary works are distinguished by their lyrical prose, vivid characterization, and in-depth examination of the Korean-American experience, rendering him a pivotal figure in contemporary American literature.

Chang-Rae Lee was born in South Korea in 1965 and subsequently relocated to the US with his family at the age of three. He was brought up in Westchester County, New York, and attended Phillips Exeter Academy, an elite boarding school in New Hampshire. Lee subsequently pursued a degree in English at Yale University, before subsequently undertaking an MFA in Creative Writing at the University of Oregon. His academic background provided a robust foundation for his literary career, equipping him with the requisite skills to articulate the nuanced experiences of immigrants.

Lee's writing is primarily concerned with the themes of identity, migration, and the immigrant experience. He frequently examines the intricate manner in which individuals negotiate cultural disparities and societal expectations. His debut novel, *Native Speaker* (1995), represents a seminal work that examines the life of Henry Park, a Korean-American man who is attempting to reconcile his cultural identity

while working as a spy for a political candidate. The novel's intricate portrayal of Henry's internal and external conflicts attracted considerable critical acclaim and resulted in the author being awarded the Hemingway Foundation/PEN Award for first novel. *Native Speaker* continues to be regarded as a seminal work in Korean-American literature, celebrated for its insightful exploration of the complex issues surrounding assimilation and cultural displacement (Jeong 2018, 83–95).

In addition to this novel, Lee has also authored several other notable works. In *A Gesture Life* (1999), the author examines the life of a Korean-American man who served in World War II and grapples with the implications of his past actions. This novel, like many of Lee's works, is distinguished by its profound psychological insight and its capacity to elucidate the intricacies of cultural and personal identity. In *Aloft* (2004), which was a finalist for the National Book Award, the author shifts the focus to a suburban American setting, but continues to explore the themes of identity and belonging. His other novels include *The Surrendered* (2010), which examines the consequences of the Korean War, and *On Such a Full Sea* (2014), a dystopian narrative that incorporates speculative fiction with social commentary. His most recent publication, *My Year Abroad* (2021), represents a further advance in his narrative technique, offering a novel perspective on cross-cultural encounters and personal transformation.

Lee's role as a professor of creative writing at Stanford University serves to reinforce his dedication to fostering the growth of new literary voices and to promoting a more profound comprehension of the immigrant experience. He has exerted a significant influence not only on American contemporary literature, but also on Korean literature. All of his novels have been translated into Korean, with *Native Speaker* having been translated on two occasions, which indicates that publishers and editors are striving to enhance the calibre of translations of Lee's works into Korean (Bang 2009).

As well as Korean, Lee's novels have been translated into over 20 other languages, thereby demonstrating their global relevance and appeal. His ability to capture the nuances and complexities of cultural identity, coupled with his powerful storytelling, have established him as a respected and influential figure in contemporary literature.

Chang-Rae Lee's literary oeuvre offers profound insights into the Korean-American experience and the broader themes of migration, identity, and cultural assimilation. His works not only enrich the field of diaspora literature but also provide a compelling lens through which to understand the multifaceted nature of immigrant life. Lee's experience during this period is analogous to that of *Native Speaker's* principal character, Henry. Lee has now achieved considerable literary

and social success, but during the early stages of his immigration he encountered the same linguistic challenges as Henry, and shared the same aspiration to become Americanized through the acquisition of language. At the same time, Lee persisted (and persists) in striving to maintain his Korean identity (Koreanness) through his literary works. The genesis of Lee's quest for identity can be traced back to Henry.

Henry Park: Navigating Identity in *Native Speaker*

The 1995 novel *Native Speaker* by the Korean diaspora author Chang-Rae Lee presents the compelling narrative of Henry Park, a Korean-American man worked for a Korean-American politician in a big city. Henry is a character of considerable complexity and subtlety, whose experiences of identity and belonging are explored in depth throughout the novel.

The narrative structure of the novel can be summarized as follows:

In *Native Speaker*, Chang-Rae Lee examines the concepts of identity, assimilation, and the immigrant experience through the life of Henry Park, a first-generation Korean-American working as an industrial spy in New York City. The personal turmoil experienced by Henry begins with the departure of his wife, Lelia, who leaves him due to his emotional unavailability and secretive nature. This sets the stage for his introspective journey. Professionally, Henry is employed by a clandestine espionage agency and is assigned the task of infiltrating the campaign of John Kwang, a prominent Korean-American politician running for mayor. As Henry becomes increasingly immersed in Kwang's vision for greater political representation and social justice, he experiences a sense of professional and personal conflict. This is due to the fact that he must balance his professional obligations with his growing admiration for Kwang, who becomes a surrogate father figure. The narrative is interspersed with flashbacks to Henry's childhood and his strained relationship with his father, Mr Park, and the profound impact of his mother's early death. The death of Henry's son, Mitt, and the subsequent deterioration of his marriage serve to intensify his internal conflict regarding his cultural identity and sense of alienation. As Henry uncovers information that could be damaging to Kwang and forms genuine relationships within the Korean-American community, his sense of loyalty and belonging become increasingly complex. The novel reaches its climax with a fire at Kwang's campaign headquarters, which precipitates a crisis that forces Henry to confront the moral implications of his actions. In the aftermath, Henry reassesses his identity and position within society, acknowledging his dual status as both an insider and an outsider. In the novel, Lee offers a poignant and

nuanced exploration of the immigrant experience, illuminating the intricate balance between assimilation and cultural identity.

Henry is the son of Korean immigrants who place a high value on education and assimilation. But despite the aspirations of his parents, Henry experiences a sense of alienation from both Korean and American cultures. He is proficient in English, yet he never feels entirely at ease in the American way of life. Furthermore, his linguistic duality mirrors his broader struggle with cultural identity. Furthermore, Henry experiences difficulty in articulating his desires and emotions to those around him, which further complicates his identity.

In his capacity as a spy, Henry is tasked with penetrating the Korean-American community in New York City and gathering intelligence on their political views and activities. As he becomes more deeply immersed in this community, he begins to establish meaningful connections and to question his own sense of loyalty and motivation. His interactions with John Kwang, a Korean-American politician, are particularly transformative. Kwang prompts Henry to reconsider his preconceived notions and encourages him to perceive his community in a new light. Kwang is a successful Korean-American who serves as a role model and father figure to Henry. Henry views Kwang favourably and is keen to learn from him. Kwang is an effective leader, adept at winning people over and garnering their support. Henry thus discerns a contrasting model immigrant in Kwang compared to that presented by his biological father. Nevertheless, Henry ultimately sees that Kwang is also a self-serving individual. In this “fake” manner, Kwang exemplifies one of the means by which the stranger persists. Henry perceives this and learns to survive in his own way.

The novel presents Henry as a character who grapples with profound questions of identity, loyalty, and the concept of home. He endeavours to reconcile his Korean heritage with his American upbringing, seeking a sense of belonging in a society where he feels perpetually on the margins. His journey is characterized by the necessity to make difficult choices regarding the extent to which he should adhere to the expectations and assumptions of external forces, and the extent to which he should prioritize his own identity.

One of the central themes of *Native Speaker* is the complexity of the immigrant experience and the negotiation of cultural differences and expectations. Lee deftly examines the predicament of Henry in this context, caught between two cultures and struggling to find a sense of belonging. The essence of Henry’s identity crisis can be distilled into two fundamental elements. The initial issue concerns language. As a Korean-American, Henry’s objective is to attain comprehensive linguistic proficiency in the English language. This is also the reason why he ignores

his Korean parents, who lack proficiency in English, and wishes for his son to speak perfect English. It is also noteworthy that Henry's wife is a speech therapist. The second factor is Henry's career. Despite his intelligence and academic prowess, Henry does not occupy a prominent position in mainstream society. He is gainfully employed in a stable position, yet the nature of his work is such that he is unable to openly discuss it with others, because he is working as a spy.

These two issues are ultimately addressed at the conclusion of the novel. As he grapples with his identity, Henry's perspectives on language and his profession evolve, prompting him to take action. He is employed by foreign nationals who have limited proficiency in the English language, working in collaboration with his spouse. This indicates that he is driven by a desire to assist individuals who are confronted with similar challenges to those he faces. Furthermore, the novel also addresses the issue of identity, and prompts the reader to consider the nature of identity and the ways in which our experiences and interactions shape it.

Henry Park is surrounded by a cast of characters who each contribute to his exploration of identity and cultural conflict in different ways. His estranged wife, Lelia Park, is a speech therapist from a wealthy Scottish-American East Coast family. The relationship between Henry and Lelia serves to illustrate the cultural and emotional distances that Henry must navigate. The death of their son, Mitt Park, at the age of seven, represents a profound source of grief for the Park family and marks a pivotal point in Henry's emotional journey. John Kwang, a Korean-American politician running for Mayor of New York, becomes a surrogate father figure to Henry. Kwang represents the aspirations and contradictions inherent in the immigrant experience. Another significant figure is Emile Luzan, a Filipino-American therapist whom Henry initially spies on but eventually befriends. Emile assists Henry in his recovery from the trauma of Mitt's death, thereby illustrating the potential for cross-cultural understanding and support. The narrative of loyalty and personal integrity is further complicated by the involvement of Sherrie Chin-Watt, John Kwang's PR assistant, who is having an affair with the politician. Henry's father, Mr Park, a man of high expectations and traditional values, was once an industrial engineer in Korea, and his values have significantly shaped Henry's identity. The early death of Henry's mother from cancer, when he was ten years old, had a profound effect on his emotional development. Dennis Hoagland, Henry's superior in the spy agency, exemplifies the professional pressures and ethical quandaries Henry confronts in his dual role as a spy. The Maid (Ahjuma), a young Korean woman who provided care for Henry during his childhood, represents his connection to his Korean roots. May Kwang, the wife of John Kwang, represents the personal sacrifices and complexities inherent in the institution of immigrant marriages. Furthermore, the narrative

incorporates Sophie, Jack's Italian-American spouse, which adds another layer of cultural diversity. Jack, Henry's closest friend and colleague, is of Greek descent, thereby underscoring the common experiences of immigrants from diverse backgrounds. Janice Pawlowsky, Henry's campaign manager for John Kwang, is adept at navigating the professional landscape of political campaigns. The death of Eduardo Fermin, a Latino man who idolized John Kwang and perished in the fire at Kwang's campaign headquarters, serves to illustrate the themes of idealism and betrayal. Pete Ichibata, a Japanese colleague renowned for his lewd humour and excessive alcohol consumption, exemplifies the multifaceted and occasionally discordant experiences of immigrants. John Kwang Jr., the son of John and May, experiences difficulties at school and serves as a reminder of Henry's own son, Mitt. Peter Kwang, John Jr.'s brother, represents the next generation grappling with their dual heritage. Lelia's parents represent the cultural and generational contrasts within Henry's extended family, while Molly, Lelia's friend and an artist, provides Lelia with support during her separation from Henry.

The characters surrounding Henry are not exclusively American, and all are grappling with their identities. These characters exert a direct and indirect influence on Henry. It is through his relationships with these characters that Henry comes to understand himself.

Among the characters, however, Henry remains the central figure through which the novel's primary themes are explored with regard to the immigrant struggle for identity.

It is noteworthy that there are notable similarities between Henry Park and the author, Chang-Rae Lee. Both are 1.5-generation Korean-American who relocated to the US at an early age and confronted the difficulties of negotiating dual cultural identities. Both Henry and Lee were socialized in environments that emphasized assimilation, yet simultaneously experienced a sense of being perpetual outsiders. Lee's personal experiences undoubtedly inform his vivid portrayal of Henry's struggles with identity, belonging, and cultural loyalty. The autobiographical element lends the novel a sense of authenticity, as Lee draws upon his own insights and experiences to shape Henry's character and narrative journey. As previously stated, Henry's predicament regarding his identity is somewhat resolved by the conclusion of the play. Following the revelation of the negative effects of immigrants like Kwang attempting to assimilate, Henry comes to understand that this is an inadequate solution, and not the only one. He also comes to understand that the lives of immigrants who are not integrated into the dominant culture but who are striving diligently despite the challenges they face are also meaningful. Ultimately, Henry considers his future prospects by assisting those who aspire to

become proficient in the English language. The novel concludes without providing a definitive answer, instead posing a further question. However, it is arguably one of the most significant in the process of identity formation.

Native Speaker is a powerful and nuanced exploration of the Korean-American experience, exploring the intricacies of identity, belonging, and loyalty. Through Henry's journey, Lee sheds light on the immigrant struggle to find a place in a society that often marginalizes them. The novel stands as a poignant reflection on the immigrant experience, offering readers a profound understanding of the challenges and complexities faced by those navigating multiple cultural identities.

To fully understand Henry, the protagonist of *Native Speaker*, it is essential to examine him from multiple perspectives. In this study, I analyse Henry through three different lenses, considering him as a diasporic figure. This approach will provide a comprehensive understanding of his character and the broader themes of identity, belonging and cultural negotiation within the novel.

Identity and Assimilation in *Native Speaker* and *Black Skin, White Masks*

The most effective methodology for analysing Henry is through the lens of Frantz Fanon's theory, which has been widely employed in the field of literary criticism. This is because Fanon's perspective provides a profound framework for understanding the psychological and cultural conflicts experienced by diasporic individuals.

Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* is a seminal work in postcolonial theory, providing a profound exploration of the psychological effects of colonialism and racism on individuals. In this critical text, Fanon argues that colonialism and racism create a pervasive sense of inferiority in people of colour, leading to feelings of self-hatred and a compulsion to assimilate into the dominant culture. He examines how language and cultural norms are employed to reinforce power dynamics and maintain the *status quo*, having a deep psychological impact on the colonized.

Similarly, in *Native Speaker*, Chang-Rae Lee explores the psychological effects of assimilation and the difficulties faced by immigrants in navigating cultural differences and expectations. The protagonist, Henry Park, finds himself caught between two cultures and struggles to find a sense of belonging in either. He constantly negotiates his identity, attempting to reconcile his Korean heritage with his American upbringing. Like Fanon's work, *Native Speaker* raises critical questions about the power dynamics inherent in cultural assimilation and the ways in which individuals are shaped by their experiences (Chang 2021, 137).

Fanon's exploration in *Black Skin, White Masks* is characterized by his use of psychoanalytic theory, and his deep dive into the unconscious mind, illustrating how colonial subjects internalize the inferiority imposed upon them. He examines how black individuals, in particular, adopt the behaviours and attitudes of the colonizers, aspiring to be accepted in a society that marginalizes them. This process often leads to a disconnection from their own cultural roots and a fragmented sense of self.

In *Native Speaker*, Henry Park's life mirrors these themes as he navigates his dual identity. As a Korean-American, Henry tries to assimilate by mastering the English language and adopting American cultural norms, hoping to gain acceptance and success. His fluency in English and his ability to navigate American society often place him at odds with his Korean heritage, creating a persistent internal conflict.

In a colonial context, the ability to speak the language of the dominant country fosters a sense of identification with the dominant culture and a perception of a relatively elevated position within the colonized society. French-speakers in former French colonies experienced this phenomenon, and Henry, the protagonist of *Native Speaker*, finds it empowering to be able to speak English freely. Nevertheless, despite the ability to speak the language, it is impossible for him to become a native speaker. This is the central theme of this novel. Fanon's work also emphasizes the destructive impact of adopting the colonizer's language and culture, arguing that this adoption reinforces the colonized individual's sense of inferiority and perpetuates the power imbalance. In *Native Speaker*, Henry's use of English as a means of dominance, particularly over his Korean parents, highlights this dynamic. His linguistic proficiency becomes both a tool of empowerment and a source of profound internal strife, illustrating the complex interplay among language, power, and identity.

Moreover, both Fanon and Lee employ complex and nuanced writing styles that challenge readers to engage deeply with the issues at hand. Fanon's use of psychoanalytic theory to explore the unconscious effects of colonialism and Lee's lyrical prose and vivid characterizations both serve to highlight the psychological and emotional dimensions of their subjects. While *Black Skin, White Masks* and *Native Speaker* were written in different historical and cultural contexts, they share similar concerns and themes. Both works offer powerful insights into the complexities of identity and the ways in which cultural norms and power dynamics shape our understanding of ourselves and the world around us.

In *Native Speaker*, Henry attempts to conceal his "yellow-skinned" (instead of "black-skinned") identity by adopting the "white mask" of English (language). Specifically, his use of English as a weapon to dominate his Korean parents is

analogous to the behaviour of natives of French colonies who spoke fluent French to gain the favour and acceptance from their colonizers.

By examining Henry's character through the lens of Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, we gain a deeper understanding of the immigrant experience and the profound psychological effects of cultural assimilation. It is particularly noteworthy that the language employed by the dominant power, and the knowledge of that language, becomes a mask through which the dominant power can hide itself.

Both texts illuminate the ongoing struggle for identity and belonging faced by individuals navigating multiple cultural landscapes, offering invaluable perspectives on the human condition in the context of postcolonial and diasporic experiences.

The Concept of the Lesser Stranger in Understanding Henry Park

Another analytical tool for examining Henry Park is the concept of the "Lesser Stranger", a term coined relatively recently (Kang 2021).

Unlike his parents, Henry is not a "perfect stranger/perfect Korean" in America. However, he remains a stranger/not-perfect American, both in appearance and in the trajectory of his life. Therefore, a concept is needed to define his unique position within American society, and thus I propose Lesser Stranger to describe Lee's depiction of a state that is not entirely alienated from a group. While Henry is situated in a "hyphenated condition" (Lee 2018, 122–23), he is closer to the group he has come to and remained in, rather than the group he has left behind. Unlike hyphenated individuals who tend to derive their identity from "us" in the group they left, a Lesser Stranger exhibits more complex tendencies. They retain the self-reflective view of a stranger, but also possess a subjective interest in personal matters. Such individuals tend to draw their identity from the "us" in the group in which they remain. Consequently, the language of a Lesser Stranger is the language of the group they stay in, and the relationships they aim for are directed towards the "us" in the group they remain in. They may even view their previous relationships in the group they left behind from the new perspective of the group they are now in. In other words, the dual issues of language and affiliation (or profession) represent the fundamental elements of Henry's confusion over identity.

To illustrate this concept, consider the "us" in the group over there that one has left—where one is less of a stranger, and thus a Lesser Stranger—and the "us" in the group over here, where one now remains. This helps visualize the Lesser Stranger's position, suspended between two cultural spheres. While it can certainly be argued that Lee himself belongs to the group he remains in—namely,

America—the characters in his novels, particularly those like Henry in his early works, should be read as examples of Lesser Strangers. This concept allows us to better understand the complex nature of the Korean-American experience and the ways in which individuals navigate the tension between their past and present cultural identities.

The notion of the Lesser Stranger is particularly relevant to Henry's experience in *Native Speaker*. Unlike his parents, who are more visibly alienated from American culture, Henry embodies a more nuanced form of estrangement. He is linguistically proficient and culturally attuned to American norms, yet he is constantly reminded of his otherness by both society and his internal struggles. This dual awareness positions Henry in a liminal space, not fully accepted by either his inherited or adopted cultures, but not fully alienated, either.

Moreover, Henry's professional life as a spy further accentuates his Lesser Stranger status. The role of a spy necessitates the concealment of one's identity, yet simultaneously demands a sense of belonging. The concept of a Lesser Stranger encapsulates this duality, highlighting the ongoing negotiation of identity that defines Henry's existence, both professional and private.

By applying the Lesser Stranger framework to Henry's character, we gain deeper insights into the immigrant experience portrayed in *Native Speaker*. This concept sheds light on the intricate dynamics of cultural assimilation and the personal transformations that accompany it. Henry's journey illustrates the broader Korean-American experience, characterized by a continuous balancing act between embracing a new cultural identity and honouring one's roots.

In conclusion, the concept of the Lesser Stranger provides a valuable lens through which to examine Henry's character in *Native Speaker*. It underscores the complexities of identity formation for immigrants who, like Henry, find themselves caught between two worlds. This analytical tool enriches our understanding of the novel and offers a nuanced perspective on the Korean-American experience, emphasizing the multifaceted nature of cultural integration and personal identity.

Arendt's Concepts of the Pariah and Parvenu in Analysing Diasporic Identity

Hannah Arendt produced a substantial corpus of works on the nature of the human being, and is one of the most influential diasporic writers of all time.

Arendt's essay *Rahel Varnhagen: The Life of a Jewish Woman* offers a profound exploration of the life of a Jewish woman living in early 19th-century Berlin. Arendt's

examination focuses on Varnhagen's struggle to navigate the social and cultural barriers imposed by a predominantly Christian society (Arendt 2022).

This essay introduces two pivotal concepts that are central to understanding Varnhagen's predicament: the pariah and parvenu. These concepts not only elucidate the central character's life, but also provide a valuable framework for analysing the complexities of assimilation and identity in other contexts, including Chang-rae Lee's novel *Native Speaker*.

Arendt defines the pariah as an individual who is excluded from society due to their inherent identity. In Varnhagen's case, her Jewishness rendered her a pariah within German society. Despite her efforts to assimilate and conform to the dominant culture's manners and customs, she remained an outsider, never fully accepted. The parvenu, conversely, is someone who attempts to transcend their pariah status by adopting the values and behaviours of the dominant culture. Arendt argues that Varnhagen's attempts to achieve parvenu status were ultimately futile, as she could never completely escape the marginalization rooted in her Jewish identity.

Arendt's exploration of Varnhagen's life is significant for its detailed examination of the experiences of Jewish women in 19th-century German society. Her concepts of the pariah and parvenu offer profound insights into the complexities of assimilation and identity, which continue to resonate in contemporary discussions of marginalized groups and social exclusion (Pitkin 2000, 71).

These theoretical constructs are particularly relevant for analysing the character of Henry Park in *Native Speaker*. Initially, Henry aspires to attain the status of a parvenu, striving for perfect adaptation to become the ideal American. For Henry, achieving this status involves mastering the English language to such an extent that he can be perceived as a native speaker. However, consistent with Arendt's theory, Henry retains a sense of this pariah status despite his efforts to assimilate. He remains an outsider, caught between his Korean heritage and American cultural norms.

Henry's experience encapsulates the tension between the pariah and parvenu that Arendt describes. His character embodies the struggle of many immigrants who, despite their attempts to assimilate, are continually reminded of their outsider status. Henry exists as a Lesser Stranger, navigating a hyphenated identity that places him neither fully within nor completely outside American society. He is not a "perfect stranger" like his parents, who are more visibly alienated from American culture, but he is also not entirely assimilated. This nuanced position makes Henry an archetypal character in diaspora literature, reflecting the complexities of cultural identity and assimilation.

Arendt's twin concepts not only illuminate Henry's character but also offer a valuable framework for understanding other figures in diaspora literature. By exploring Henry's inner self through Arendt's theoretical lens, we can gain deeper insights into the multifaceted nature of identity in the context of migration and assimilation. Arendt's analysis helps articulate the persistent challenges faced by individuals who, like Henry, straddle multiple cultural identities.

Moreover, Henry's professional life as a spy further complicates his identity. His role requires him to seamlessly blend into various cultural settings, using his outsider perspective to gather intelligence. This duality mirrors his personal life, where he is constantly adapting to navigate between his Korean heritage and American societal expectations. The concept of the Lesser Stranger effectively captures this duality, highlighting the ongoing negotiation of identity that defines Henry's existence.

In addition to the social dynamics of assimilation, Arendt's concepts of the pariah and parvenu also emphasize the psychological dimensions of identity. The pariah, forever conscious of their exclusion, develops a self-reflective and often critical perspective on society. The parvenu, on the other hand, internalizes the norms of the dominant culture but is haunted by an inescapable sense of otherness. Henry Park's character illustrates this psychological tension vividly. His attempts to dominate his Korean parents linguistically, using English as a tool of empowerment, reflect his internalized conflict. Despite his proficiency, Henry can never entirely mask his heritage, much like Varnhagen could never escape her Jewish identity.

In conclusion, Arendt's concepts of the pariah and parvenu provide a profound framework for understanding Henry Park's character in *Native Speaker*. These concepts underscore the intricate dynamics of identity formation for immigrants caught between two worlds. This analytical framework enriches our comprehension of the novel and offers a nuanced perspective on the Korean-American experience, emphasizing the complex interplay of cultural integration and personal identity. Through Arendt's lens, we gain a clearer picture of the immigrant struggle, revealing the depth and persistence of issues related to identity in diaspora narratives.

Conclusion

This study examines Chang-Rae Lee's *Native Speaker*, exploring the complex identity struggles of Henry Park. It employs theoretical frameworks from Hannah Arendt's concepts of the pariah and parvenu, as well as Frantz Fanon's exploration

of identity in *Black Skin, White Masks*. By employing these analytical frameworks, we have illuminated the broader Korean-American experience, thereby contributing to ongoing discussions on the topics of diaspora, identity, and cultural integration.

Henry Park, a 1.5-generation Korean-American immigrant, exemplifies the conflicting pressures of cultural assimilation and heritage preservation. His character represents a multifaceted portrayal of the multifaceted experiences of immigrants, straddling two worlds yet fully belonging to neither. The term Lesser Stranger is thus an apt description of Henry's state of being, situated between complete alienation and full assimilation. This nuanced identity is of significant importance in order to gain a deeper understanding of the broader themes that are explored in the novel. Hannah Arendt's analysis of Rahel Varnhagen's life through the lenses of the pariah and parvenu has yielded substantial insights into Henry's character. Initially, Henry sought to attain parvenu status by perfecting his English and adopting American cultural norms. However, he remained haunted by his inherent pariah status, unable to fully escape his Korean heritage. This duality is a central aspect of the immigrant experience, serving to highlight the psychological and societal challenges of assimilation. Frantz Fanon's examination of the psychological consequences of colonialism and racism is analogous to Henry's experiences. Fanon's assertion that adopting the colonizer's language and culture serves to reinforce a sense of inferiority is reflected in Henry's internal conflict. Despite his linguistic proficiency, Henry's use of English becomes both a tool of empowerment and a source of deep internal strife, mirroring the complex interplay among language, power, and identity. The concept of the Lesser Stranger provides a valuable framework for understanding Henry's character. This concept encapsulates the ongoing process of identity formation that defines Henry's existence. He is situated between two cultural and social contexts, that of his Korean heritage and that of American society. Consequently, he occupies a liminal space where he is neither fully accepted nor entirely alienated. This analytical tool enhances our comprehension of the novel and provides a sophisticated insight into the Korean-American experience.

Henry's professional life as a spy further complicates his identity, requiring him to adopt the cultural norms of various settings while maintaining an outsider's perspective. This duality is reflected in his personal life, where he is continually required to adapt in order to reconcile his dual heritage with societal expectations. By employing this analytical framework, the novel *Native Speaker* illuminates the challenges faced by immigrants in establishing a sense of belonging within a society that often marginalizes them.

In this work, Chang-Rae Lee presents a nuanced and intricate portrayal of the Korean-American experience through the character of Henry Park. The complexities and conflicts Henry's experiences as a Lesser Stranger illuminate the challenges that many Korean-Americans confront as they navigate identity, culture, and belonging in the US. By examining Henry's identity as both an outsider and an upstart, we can gain a more profound comprehension of how individuals navigate cultural differences and expectations in a multicultural society. Lee's portrayal of Henry's multifaceted identity, coupled with his examination of the intricate dynamics of cultural assimilation and the search for a sense of belonging, offers readers a poignant and thought-provoking reflection on the Korean-American experience.

This study has addressed several key research questions. It initially examined how Chang-Rae Lee's *Native Speaker* portrays the complexities of identity and cultural assimilation for 1.5-generation Korean-American immigrants, like both the author and the main character in the novel. The novel illuminates the internal and external conflicts experienced by Henry Park as he attempts to reconcile his Korean heritage with his American upbringing. It illustrates the challenges of maintaining cultural identity while striving for acceptance in a new society. The work portrays the protagonist, Henry, grappling with his identity as he experiences situations similar to those of the author, Lee. The novel depicts Henry's interactions with individuals who embody similar characteristics as he attempts to define his own identity. Furthermore, the text illustrates the adaptation of a character in a diasporic situation through the medium of language (in this case, American English).

Secondly, the study examined the ways in which Hannah Arendt's concepts of the pariah and parvenu assist in comprehending the character of Henry Park and his dual existence within American society. Arendt's framework illuminates the challenge Henry faces in reconciling his aspiration for assimilation (parvenu) with his intrinsic outsider status (pariah). This duality is of significant importance in comprehending Henry's internal conflict and the overarching themes of identity and belonging within the novel.

The application of Arendt's and Fanon's theoretical frameworks to the text *Native Speaker*, as presented in this study, has provided a comprehensive understanding of the complex processes of identity formation and cultural negotiation experienced by immigrants. Henry Park's experience exemplifies the broader themes of diaspora literature, demonstrating the multifaceted nature of cultural integration and personal identity. This study enhances our comprehension of the immigrant experience, offering profound insights into the challenges and complexities faced by those navigating multiple cultural landscapes.

In conclusion, *Native Speaker* serves as a compelling and insightful work of literature that contributes significantly to our understanding of the complexities and nuances of cultural identity in America's multicultural society. In presenting Henry's story, Chang-Rae Lee offers a poignant reflection on the immigrant experience, contributing significantly to the discourse on identity and belonging in diaspora narratives.

The objective of this study was to present a range of tools for the analysis of Henry as an archetypal figure in diasporic literature. Nevertheless, the further utilization of each analytical tool in order to gain a more profound understanding of the character is a topic that will be addressed in future research.

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The Lyricism of the Diaspora and the Diaspora of Lyricism: The Poetic World of Kim Si-jong, a Korean in Japan

*YANG Soonmo**

Abstract

Often referred to as “East Asia’s greatest poet” by various researchers, Kim Si-jong is renowned as a poet of the Korean diaspora. Born in Busan in 1929 during the Japanese colonization of Korea, Kim Si-jong spoke Japanese as his native language. In 1949, after the liberation of Korea, he was involved in the Jeju Uprising and then fled to Japan amid Cold War tensions and the subsequent division of Korea into North and South. Through his poetry, however, Kim Si-jong exacted his revenge on Japan and the Japanese language. Kim’s poetic revenge gave rise to the creation of a new kind of Japanese literature, transforming the painful experiences of the Korean diaspora into meaningful cultural production. However, by focusing so heavily on these notable aspects of excellence in Kim’s work, there’s a risk of defining the poet and his creations in the very lyrical ways that Kim himself is most cautious of. Whether the painful lives of the people of the diaspora are particularized or universalized, in either case, many have elevated Kim Si-jong to the status of a mythical figure. His life and work become akin to a great biography on a bookshelf. Perhaps in this way we turn a blind eye to his otherness, his “suffering”, and take only the fruits that emerge from it. This is why Kim Si-jong’s work is truly exceptional for readers today. He seems to understand the contradictions of the concept of diaspora, as well as the desires of his readers, and explores new paths that are possible within it. This paper begins by identifying the points of confrontation within the concept of diaspora and the problems it creates, concluding that a singular point of view on diaspora cannot fully define Kim Si-jong’s work. Instead, he uses poetry to confront and attempt to overcome the problems posed by conflicting conceptualizations of diaspora.

Keywords: Kim Si-jong, diaspora, lyricism, lyricism of the diaspora, diaspora of lyricism

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Lirika diaspore in diaspora lirike: pesniški svet Kim Si-jonga, Korejca na Japonskem

Izvleček

Kim Si-jong, ki ga različni raziskovalci in raziskovalke pogosto imenujejo »največji pesnik vzhodne Azije«, slovi kot pesnik korejske diaspore. Rodil se je leta 1929 v Busanu, v času japonske kolonizacije Koreje, njegov materni jezik pa je bila japonščina. Leta 1949, po osvoboditvi Koreje, je sodeloval v vstaji na Jejuju, nato pa med napetostmi hladne vojne in poznejšo delitvijo Koreje na Severno in Južno pobegnil na Japonsko. S svojo poezijo se je Kim Si-jong maščeval Japonski in japonskemu jeziku. Njegovo pesniško maščevanje je spodbudilo nastanek nove vrste japonske književnosti, ki je boleče izkušnje korejske diaspore preoblikovala v smiselno kulturno produkcijo. Vendar pa s tako močnim osredotočanjem na te opazne vidike odličnosti v Kimovem delu obstaja nevarnost, da pesnika in njegove stvaritve opredelimo prav na lirski način, pred katerim je Kim sam najbolj previden. Ne glede na to, ali so boleča življenja ljudi iz diaspore partikularizirana ali univerzalizirana, so v vsakem primeru mnogi povzdignili Kim Si-jonga v status mitske osebnosti. Njegovo življenje in delo sta podobna veliki biografiji na knjižni polici. Morda si na ta način zatiskamo oči pred njegovo drugostjo, njegovim »trpljenjem«, in jemljemo le sadove, ki iz njega izhajajo. Delo Kim Si-jonga je zato za današnje bralstvo resnično izjemno. Zdi se, da razume protislovja koncepta diaspore in tudi želje svojih bralk in bralcev ter raziskuje nove poti, ki so v njej možne. Članek najprej opredeli točke soočenja znotraj koncepta diaspore in težave, ki jih ta ustvarja, ter sklene, da enoznačno stališče o diaspori ne more v celoti opredeliti Kim Si-jongovega dela. Namesto tega se s poezijo sooča s težavami, ki jih povzročajo nasprotujoče si konceptualizacije diaspore, in jih poskuša premagati.

Ključne besede: Kim Si-jong, diaspora, lirika, lirika diaspore, diaspora lirike

Diaspora Poet Kim Si-jong

Often referred to as “East Asia’s greatest poet” by various researchers (Oh 2019, 212; Kwon 2023, 127), Kim Si-jong is renowned as a poet of the Korean diaspora. Born in Busan in 1929 during the Japanese colonization of Korea, Kim Si-jong spoke Japanese as his native language. In 1949, after the liberation of Korea, he was involved in the Jeju Uprising and then fled to Japan as Cold War tensions turned violent on Jeju Island, and the Korea began its process of division into North and South. His life was marked by much emotional pain, and through his poetry Kim Si-jong exacted his revenge on Japan and the Japanese language. He achieved this by “creating new poetic expressions through the rigorous destruction of the sentimentality and lyricism of his own childhood formed in colonial Korea, during his post-liberation literary or ideological awakening” (Kim and Sataka 2020, 112). Consequently, Kim’s poetic revenge gave rise to the creation of new kind of Japanese literature, transforming the painful experiences of the diaspora

into meaningful cultural production. His work not only won many of Japan's prestigious literary awards, but also earned him recognition as a prominent diaspora poet.

There have been several attempts in the Korean literary field to define Kim Si-jong as a diaspora poet, and he is understood as a writer who recalls the memory of and focuses heavily on those who lost their lives to Japanese violence (Cho 2016). His work unravels the inner logic of colonization via his expression of resentment towards Japan (Ko 2008). In other words, he is defined as a poet who faced the suffering of the diaspora squarely and, in doing so, offered an unflinching indictment of diasporic reality. He wrote in the Japanese language while resisting nationalistic Japanese norms (Kim Eung-kyo 2008; Ha 2009), and by his living and working in Japan, especially in the Ikaino area, he was able to create a decolonial space through his work (Nam 2015). Kim Si-jong as a poet not only denounced the suffering of the diaspora, but also overcame it artistically to create something new. Previous studies have shown that Kim Si-jong is an outstanding poet well-suited to exploring the concept of diaspora in its original and current meanings. More than anyone else, Kim has lived through the pain of the diaspora and has turned this experience into a creative work of art.

However, by focusing so heavily on these notable aspects of Kim's work, there's a risk of defining the poet and his creations in the very lyrical ways that Kim himself is most cautious of. The line "Kim Si-jong has lived a very harsh life that people like me cannot imagine" (Kim and Sataka 2020, 173) serves as a reminder that we might have unintentionally portrayed Kim Si-jong as a somewhat divine figure distinct from the rest of society, and that in a rather lyrical way the divine allows us to not only address our immediate problems to some degree, but crucially, to escape from them.

Therefore, as a supplement to the existing research, this article contends that the emphasis should now be on Kim Si-jong as a significant figure in the "future" of Korean diasporic literature. Such a changed focus offers a promising approach to interpret Kim without mythologizing or attempting to specialize or universalize him. Instead, he should be regarded as a poet existing here and now, among us. To elucidate this argument, first the concept of diaspora must be explored.

As is well known, diaspora is a concept that has its origins in Jewish history, with the Greek words *diaspeirein* and "diaspora" being adopted as biblical translations of the Hebrew word "*za'avah*", which translates to "devastation", "plight", and "trembling". And as Kenny (2013, 16) puts it, "the Jewish conception—which decisively influenced all others—was therefore forward-looking,

anticipating eventual redemption, rather than being a simple lament over exile". In other words, the origins of the concept of diaspora are framed by the pain of current ethnic separation and the hope of escape from it, which is why, for example, "Armenians are regarded as one of the paradigmatic diasporas" because, "like the Jews, they experienced genocide in the twentieth century" (ibid., 21).

Today, however, the concept of diaspora has broadened, with one commentator stating that it "has become a global word that fits the global world", and that in the past, "it has been a proper noun, in the Septuagint Bible, and a quasi-proper noun—that is, a closed category—for Armenians, Greeks, Africans, and others. Today it is a common noun. It 'speaks' for itself" (Dufoix 2008, 108). Furthermore, "the person in diaspora, the migrant, the refugee, the intellectual in exile—all were collapsed under the sign of 'hybridity', which rapidly became the most influential model for considering the productive capacity of diasporic existence, including that which manifested itself in literature" (Kabir 2010, 148). The expanded concept of diaspora as it is understood today is also a cornerstone of postcolonial studies, as it destabilizes national and cultural hegemony through the creation of newness (McLeod 2000).

However, the notions of "diaspora as a proper noun" and "diaspora as a common noun"—reflecting the historical origins and contemporary usage of the concept—are not without conflict. As one commentator notes:

If everyone is diasporic, then no one is distinctively so. To the extent that the term now shares meanings with a larger semantic domain that includes words like immigrant, expatriate, refugee, guest worker, exile community, overseas community, ethnic community it loses its discriminating power. The universalization of diaspora, paradoxically, means the disappearance of diaspora. (Brubaker 2015, 121)

Thus, the concept of diaspora is currently under debate and remains unsettled. On one hand, there is an argument for greater precision, urging the use of diaspora as a strict qualifier. On the other hand, some advocate that "it is more important to try to understand what this updating of an ancient term involves" (Dufoix 2008, 106). Amid this ongoing discussion, one commentator has sought a middle ground between classical "home-centrism" and "postmodern" homeland deconstructionism regarding diaspora (Cohen 2009, 133).

To summarize the debate surrounding the concept of diaspora briefly, today we should not be too focused on ethnic suffering when defining diaspora, but neither should we completely forget about it and only emphasize the productivity,

and hybridity, of migrants. More specifically, the suffering of diasporas should not be reduced to “nationalist nation-states”, nor should we forget the violence and discrimination perpetrated by nation-states, including racism. In essence, the concept of diaspora should not remain confined to its roots, yet neither should it be overly preoccupied with the path forward and the future.

We have come to define diaspora as a specific concept, safely insulating ourselves from its pain. When it comes to understanding the concept of diaspora and works created within it, we have, as Stanley Cohen or Ichiro Tomiyama would say, localized the world’s pain as that of the Other, which provides a safe haven (Cohen 2001; Tomiyama 2020). Meanwhile, as we universalize the concept of diaspora we are sentimentalizing suffering and even appropriating its creativity as “liberalism”. In the work of diasporic writers, we empathize with the suffering of the writer and have some compassion for them, but, as Franco Moretti and Frederick Jameson suggest, our interest in the suffering of others is less about empathizing with that suffering and more about how the writer has overcome it or is enduring it (Moretti 1983; Jameson 1984). Consequently, the concept of diaspora finds itself oscillating between two discordant currents, potentially leading to problematic readings of diasporic writers and their works.

Whether the painful lives of the people of the diaspora are particularized or universalized, in either case, many have elevated Kim Si-jong to the status of a mythical figure. By putting him on a pedestal, the distance between our lives and his widens. His life and work become akin to a great biography on a bookshelf. Perhaps we turn a blind eye to his otherness, his suffering, and take only the fruits that emerge from his experience. As a result, we read his poetry according to our own desires, ultimately using it for justification of our own lives.

This is why Kim Si-jong’s work is truly exceptional for readers today. He seems to understand the contradictions of the concept of diaspora, as well as the needs of his readers, and explores new paths that are possible within it. The concept of diaspora is re-cast within the oscillations of two opposing opinions. However, the future of the concept of diaspora will be reborn when these tensions and contradictions are most eloquently and movingly articulated, and I argue that Kim’s poetry can be an important step towards this.

Before we explore his work and poetics, let us first examine the context of his literature, a life that is inseparable from his work, a painful life that is often the target of fetishization.

The Conditions of Kim Si-jong's Literature: Colonial and Cold War Diasporas

Kim Si-jong's literature is closely connected to his life, as his historical experiences and subsequent life were the main conditions for his work. The two main conditions of his literature are colonization and the Cold War.

My consciousness was indeed raised in Japanese. The first language that pressed down on me as a function of consciousness was the language of another country, Japanese. The Japanese language of the colonizer, which I learned under colonial rule before liberation, still poisonously intrudes into my mind. The Japanese language, with its unique emotion, tries to return my sensibility to the Japanese naturalistic aesthetic. [...] Certainly, the liberation of August 15 was a day of separation from the colonizing Japan. However, the Japanese language has remained with me ever since, overlapping with my inevitable life in Japan. Liberation is still an endless process, and it requires a long time to part with the Japanese language that I was forced to learn. In that Japanese language, I write poetry and struggle to settle my thoughts. Indeed, that familiar Japanese is the problem. I have a responsibility to bring out the untarnished lyricism in my own Japanese no matter what, even if it is lying in the middle of miscellaneous properties. To liberate myself from the Japanese language that is entangled in my upbringing. My poetry was born out of this conflict with the Japanese language. (Kim 2007, 9–10)

Liberated from Japanese colonization and forbidden to speak Japanese, Kim Si-jong “had no mother tongue”. His only language was the Jeju Island dialect, which was “barely intelligible and very far from the standard language” (Kim 2008, 101). Moreover, as a boy in a Japanese colony, Kim Si-jong was a loyal “imperial subject” whose “only salvation was to become thoroughly Japanese” (Kim 2017, 57). After liberation, Kim Si-jong “began to learn Korean from the very basic ‘*ga-na-da*’ with a mindset of scratching the wall with my fingernails”. But even then, he confesses, “my thinking choices and value judgments do not come from the Korean language, but are outgrowths from the roots of Japanese” (Kim 2008, 102).

Kim Si-jong's Japanese is a fundamental condition that causes him suffering. From his childhood, which was filled with the Japanese language, and especially from the beautiful literature written in Japanese during that time, Kim says he can never be fully liberated from its linguistic pull. It's important to note that the Japanese language is not simply a matter of “familiarity”, as seen in lines like “[it]

tries to return my sensibility to the Japanese naturalistic aesthetic” and the “Japanese language has remained with me ever since, overlapping with my inevitable life in Japan”. What Kim refers to is the language of “Japanese sentimentalism”, a language that creates “a kind of intoxication” (Kim 2017, 54).

In short, the lyrical literature in Japanese that blossomed during the wartime years and fascist era is deeply embedded in Kim’s childhood. It resonates with a very ancient, “aesthetic” (Takayama 2018, 138) and perverted desire, as expressed in the imperial subjects who give their lives to the emperor. The realization of this perverted desire is something that seems so sinister to us today, but it is also something that has been passed down throughout human history. Therefore, Kim confronts the Japanese language itself. More precisely, Kim confronts the Japanese language beyond its mere familiarity, and confronts its intoxicating lyricism and perverted desires. The specific aspects of this confrontation will be explored in more detail in the next chapter.

Forced to flee to Japan for his participation in the Jeju Uprising Kim Si-jong was forced to hide his connection to it. As evidenced by his father’s last words to him, “Even if you die, don’t die within my sight. Your mother feels the same way.” For him, hiding away in Japan was his last resort for survival, and he could not afford to expose his identity. He was afraid that if his identity was discovered, he would be sent to the Omura camp and then repatriated to his home country to be executed. This anxiety remained with him throughout his life in Japan. He even joined the Japanese Communist Party as a way to overcome his self-hatred for fleeing his country at a pivotal moment, and the anxiety that came with settling in Japan, thereby developing his literary activities as part of an organized movement. (Ha 2020, 76–77)

Another major event that shaped Kim Si-jong’s literature was the Cold War and the division of Korea into North and South. After liberation, Kim Si-jong joined the Namro Party and engaged in communist activities on Jeju Island, but on April 3, he ran away to Japan after his father disowned him. If his identity were revealed in Japan he would have been sent to an internment camp and repatriated, so he kept his origins a secret and spent many years in and around Osaka, where he was active in the Korean community.

Nevertheless, Kim joined the Japanese Communist Party out of sense of guilt for having escaped and survived, and out of anxiety about his life in Japan, and began to write propaganda literature for it. His activities in the Communist Party and the Jōchongryōn continued under conditions that were “barely enough to keep

him from starving to death”, and were so painful that those who knew him expected that he would suffer an early death (Kim 2022, 277).

In 1959, a citizens’ return programme was organized, with the aim of sending people to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK). However, Kim Si-jong was unable to return to either the South or North. Returning to the South would have meant certain death in a country with a strongly anti-communist government, and returning to the North would have led to an unknown future, separated from his hometown and parents, and a life of conformity under the increasingly autocratic North Korean government.

Unable to come to terms with the reality of the Cold War and division of Korea, Kim Si-jong came into conflict with the activities of the Japanese Communist Party and the Jōchongryōn, which were working closely with the North Korean government. Kim could not avoid being criticized as a “cosmopolitan nihilist” when he saw “a picture of General Kim Il Sung looking down from a white horse” and felt that it was “identical to the pictures of Emperor Showa that flooded the world during the Great East Asian War” (Kim 2022, 277). Kim Si-jong was diasporicized by the realities of the Cold War and division of Korea, and his inability to come to terms with those realities further marginalized him. His literature was profoundly influenced by this experience.

I am a person who is here by circumstance. I’m always looking at my country from the perspective of being here and having no choice but to live here. There are generations of Koreans who are born in and live their whole lives in Japan, so how do they relate to their homeland? That’s how I expressed it in the early 1960s, living living-in-Japan [...] Living living-in-Japan is not merely living in Japan. It is always going beyond the boundaries of Japan, and going in and out of those boundaries. Life is not limited to Japan, but moves in and out of the boundaries that often block us, and that is the idea I always have when I write. (Kim 2019b, 288)

Unable to return to his homeland and ostracized by the Communist Party, Kim Si-jong continued to live a diasporic life and write diasporic poetry, both physically and ideologically. Notably, it was during his stay in Japan that Kim developed the theme of living living-in-Japan or re-living living-in-Japan, which is a thoroughly marginal attitude and identity, and an expression of his determination to live his life as such. This is a significant attitude that does not fall prey to the centre-periphery binary or a hierarchy of authenticity that form around identity in diasporic contexts. Meanwhile, the theme of living living-in-Japan is also applied to his method of poetic writing, as Kim freely crosses historical and ideological

boundaries in his literature. He may have been criticized as a “cosmopolitan nihilist” by some, but by thoroughly observing the life of the diaspora from an early age he expressed his life in the form of diasporic literature.

Kim Si-jong formalized living living-in-Japan as “a volitional way of life that give consciousness to the living existence of Koreans in Japan and raises it to the prospect of national reconciliation” (Kim and Sataka 2020, 169), and through his literature he has observed and condemned the suffering and impossibility of his position as a diasporic marginalized person, and has created new hope within it. His life and literature as such a person allowed him to imagine aspects of hope that could not exist at the time due to the Cold War, but could one day still come into being. And these literary productions could be realized in the unique community in which the poet lived.

If I had lived not in Ikaino, a collective settlement of my compatriots, but in a nice neighborhood of Tokyo, or somewhere similar in temperament in Kyushu, I wonder how I would have reached this age, the end of my journey through life in Japan. Even if I had continued to write poetry, I might have written poems that seemed to have Japanese tastes, and if I had lived in Tokyo, I might have written poems full of emotion in the Japanese language that made me who I am as an imperial boy, without any care in Tokyo. [...] I think I was also chosen to come to Ikaino because it was a place full of local dialects, where customs that had disappeared even in my home country were still passed down like golden threads, and I, who had lost my homeland, gained an indefatigable vitality by way of its stubborn transmission. (Kim 2019b, 156–57)

Unable to return home, Kim Si-jong dreamed of a “Joseon” that could not fully exist within the realities of the Cold War and division, but could perhaps exist within Japan, and specifically in Ikaino, a neighbourhood in Osaka that was once a major settlement for Koreans in Japan, albeit a marginalized one with inhabitants who were subject to discrimination. Ikaino ceased to exist in 1973 when it was incorporated into the city of Osaka. Kim Si-jong imagined a new Joseon there that would overcome the Cold War and Korea’s division, and thus saw Ikaino as “a land of boundaries, where a person who has been exiled from their homeland encounters a land or landscape that has meaning enough to renew their ideas at a certain time of life” (Kim 2019b, 162). And as the diasporic people of Ikaino coexisted in the same space despite the effects of the Cold War, Kim offered a rare glimpse of thought and poetic formulation that would not be found in post-Cold War North or South Korea. His vision of Ikaino was thus a whole new world that

frees us to some extent from the centre-periphery binary and authenticity hierarchy that inevitably becomes enmeshed in any diasporic environment.

In this way, Kim confronted the lingering historical realities of colonialism, the Cold War, and the division of Korea, engaged in struggle with them, and wrote poetry both influenced by and confronting these realities. This rare and new world created by the poet's diasporic life along with his works is interesting in that what we find in the poet's world goes beyond a basic reflection of these conditions, and what is new in his world is the fact that his transgression of boundaries does not use literature only as a means but also as an end in itself. This is because while the poet's work is produced in a diasporic environment, amid confrontation with it (the lyricism of the diaspora), he also makes the lyricism of the work thus produced an object of boundary crossing once again, giving birth to a new lyricism—the diaspora of lyricism.

The Lyricism of the Diaspora and the Diaspora of Lyricism

When he is insulted because he is a Korean, he thinks of returning the insult, but the structure of his thinking is Japanese, and therefore the greatest source of his oppression is within himself. [...] What legitimacy would Kim Hee-ro have achieved in Japanese society by having a Japanese language that he could not use without deceiving himself? Would Japanese society have accepted his anguish as 'language' and saved him? Do we have a precedent for the existence of Koreanness as a 'language'? [...] His concealed Koreanness, never given words, culminated in a violent verbal expression of his desire to escape Japan. [...] In retrospect, the Kim Hee-ro case was nothing more than a matter of the so-called language of a trapped person. Kim Hee-ro's fear that he could only get his words out in the face of exploding dynamite. His fear, uttered in stilted Japanese; is it the shakiness of Japanese or the pain of Korean? I wondered if I had words in the first place. My heavily regulated and coerced Japanese may be where my revenge against the Japan of the past rests, but it is also a 'language' that belongs to no one, that may be absorbed without a trace at any moment, in harmony with the Japanese language that shapes the ordinary lives of Japanese people. (Kim 2017, 64–67)

In February 1968, the Kim Hee-ro Incident took the nation by storm. Two yakuza debt-collectors called Kim Hee-ro a "*Josenjin*, dirty pig", and Kim Hee-ro shot and "killed them with a rifle, fled with dynamite and live ammunition, took the

guests of the Fujimi Ryokan hostage, confronted the police, and was arrested four days later” (Kim 2017, 55). This incident spurred the repressed and marginalized Koreans living in Japan to erupt in violence. Kim Si-jong confesses that the language of his poetry and Kim Hee-ro’s terrorism are virtually indistinguishable. For Kim Si-jong, Kim Hee-ro’s act was a cry of diasporic autonomy that broke through the Japanese nation-state’s rhetoric of “harmony” with the Japanese language, and showed that he had absorbed the language effortlessly, just like ordinary Japanese people.

The modern nation-state of Japan did not accept Kim Hee-ro’s use of Japanese, his sharpened ethnic identity, and his Koreanness was made hidden because it was not legitimate. His actions were a violent expression of language reflecting his desire to break from the confines of a Japan that rendered him voiceless. Therefore, Kim Si-jong, someone who both confronts and uses the Japanese language, sees Kim Hee-ro’s violent, self-destructive expression as the same kind of expression as his poetry. To exist in a modern nation-state that discriminates against the non-Japanese and non-Japanese cultures, such as diasporic peoples and languages, is to never be fully subjected to its rule. It is in this way that Kim Si-jong’s poetry, like Kim Hee-ro’s violence, is an explosion of diasporic frustration and injustice.

Especially if you speak Japanese, you can’t help but face the history of how people who wrote poetry with gentle sentiments became the first to sing their praises when the war began. Poets stood on the side of the nation and on the extremist side of the Imperial Japanese Army. I’m a person who writes poetry, so I know that history, and I don’t think using Japanese should be an extension of that sentiment. Sentiment is always swept away by the great current, and it is often called from one side and answered from the other. Therefore, I think I should be obsessed with using words that won’t always get swept away. [...] In tanka poems, nature becomes a mystical thing. I came to Japan and had no choice but to write my poetry in Japanese, so the thing I’ve distanced myself from the most is a certain language in praise of the changing seasons. It’s a synthesis of sensibilities; you align yourself with an already created system of sensibilities. It becomes fashionable because it’s something everyone has in common. You lose the spirit of criticism. (Kim 2020, 39–51)

The resonance of Kim’s poetry with the violence of Kim Hee-ro allows him to be seen as a typical diasporic poet. However, there is a point in Kim Si-jong’s poetry that requires closer attention. He specifically struggles with the emotional aspect of lyricism. In fact, at the end of the colonial period, when Koreans were being

called to fight for Japan in World War II, Kim experienced that the poets who were interested in sweet, sentimental poetry were the same ones who jumped straight onto the war bandwagon. Lyrical sentiment is subject to the whims of the “great current” of the day, and is often found reverberating in the nationalist echo chamber. There is no place in such lyricism for the diaspora, and no place for Koreans in Japan.

Kim Si-jong, for example, characterizes lyricism as a way of conceptualizing, saying that “lyricism or sentiment, in itself, is an individual’s bodily rhythm, a stirring of emotions, so it has nothing to do with others. Nevertheless, if it is a predestined harmonious totalization, if it is a rhythm of aesthetics that has become an individual’s mental order that has been coloured without being conscious of anyone, it should be called a thought” (Kim 2018, 205). As the “rhythm of aesthetics”, lyricism exists in our unconscious and most naturally moves through our thoughts. As a diasporic poet, Kim engages in a struggle against this sinister form of lyrical thought-control. However, this struggle with lyricism is not only connected to the colonial experience, but also to the experience of the Cold War and the division of Korea.

What graceful revenge it is to be able to teach my country’s language with a smile on my face! But in reality, it was my smiling face that was my downfall. [...] A Korean in Japan should be someone in the position to view their country as a whole, the North and the South together, in the same field of vision, but in reality, the meaning of living living-in-Japan is to designate Japan as a safe zone. It is a somewhere the Korean can distance himself from the fate of his country. Here is a life of subordination; we cannot return to a country that is not unified. [...] There is no reason that Koreans in Japan, whether in the North or the South, cannot return to their country if they return in alignment with a political creed. However, since most cannot go back, shouldn’t we consider it inevitable that we remain in Japan? [...] The Koreans in Japan provide powerful evidence to the healing of the division. [...] Living in Japan is neither a debt nor a negative; it is a way of life that cultivates what is absent in Korea. [...] How do we create awareness that we should not ostracize the Other out of difference, but connect based on these differences. To me, this is the only way to ‘unification’. (Kim 2017, 266–69)

Kim had the opportunity to teach the Korean language under the auspices of Japan’s public education system, but he confesses that the experience was not that of exacting revenge against Japan and the Japanese language, but felt it ultimately

to be a slap in the face. Since “in reality, the meaning of living living-in-Japan is to designate Japan as a safe zone. It is a somewhere the Korean can distance himself from the fate of his country. Here is a life of subordination; we cannot return to a country that is not unified”. As he taught Korean, he was forced to reflect on the position of Koreans and the Korean language in Japan in the context of the Cold War and the division of Korea.

Kim believed that Koreans in Japan should utilize their position to view Korea as a whole. In reality, however, they were unable to develop such a new outlook, and to a certain extent, Koreans considered Japan as a safe haven where they could distance themselves from the fate of their homeland. This positioned Koreans in Japan in a certain level of subordination, subject to the condition of Korea’s reunification.

Therefore, as a Korean in Japan, Kim felt compelled to do what he could within the context of the Cold War and the division of Korea. He wanted to invent the figure of a Korean in Japan that proves the ability to bridge the gap between the divided Koreas, specifically from the position of being in another country. Living in Japan is thus not necessarily negative, as it allows for ways of living that cultivate what is absent in Korea, and more specifically, the understanding that rather than ostracizing those with differing backgrounds, it can help foster better connections.

‘Ikaino Poems’ is a poetry collection that attempts to reveal the existence of the Korean people in Japan who live in villages and are scattered by the centrifuge of the huge economic organization we call Japan. This collection marks the beginning of the second half of my life, because it is the first time since I became a resident of Japan that I was able to separate myself from the norms and regulations of the organization and the motherland, and to see again the meaning and vision of living living-in-Japan. [...] What is contained in it is a lyricism of ideas and thoughts that flow consistently through each era, including the people’s happiness and misfortune, and the times mixed with them. [...] The poet bears the responsibility of portraying the existence, life, and mind of that which is unspeakable. In the words of Paul Celan, ‘poetry dreams of the Other. Poetry is a dialog with the Other’. (Kim 2019b, 161–62)

Kim Si-jong’s poetry is an attempt to creatively reappropriate diasporic life, exemplified by the aforementioned *Ikaino Poetry Collection*. Ikaino is a place where “the original image of the Korean people in Japan, the rough ‘Joseon’ itself, exists

in settlements here and there”, and “even the old ways of life that have disappeared even in the homeland are still passed down here as precious national heritage” (ibid., 151–52). In this particular space, Kim creates a “lyricism of thoughts and ideas that consistently flow through each generation of the diaspora, including all of its happiness and misery”. The poet, like Francis Poulenc, dreams of the Other with whom there is dialogue.

It is worth noting that at the heart of the poet’s work is a confrontation with lyricism. The “consciousness of being different and therefore connected” is one function of traditional lyrical poetry. The problem is that conventional lyrical poetry unites while neutralizing all differences. This is the same mechanism that moved the “imperial subjects”, leaving Kim Si-jong no choice but to confront this expression of lyricism. By saying “poetry dreams of the Other, and poetry is a dialogue with the Other”, the place of that “Other” could be lyrical poetry itself, and Kim Si-jong has opened a dialogue with that entity—that is, with lyrical poetry—in earnest.

Much of what is called lyrical poetry has been based on the praise of nature. Here, ‘nature’ is a projection of one’s own feelings. The rhythm of lyrical poetry usually refers to the emotions that flow from it, and there is no gap between lyricism and emotion. Emotion is lyricism. This collection of poems is also based on the four seasons of spring, summer, fall, and winter, so naturally ‘nature’ seems to be a theme, but I have long since moved on from the purity that entrusts the subtleties of the heart to nature, at least. The old Japanese language and its tonal lyricism, which turned me from a colonial boy into an ardent ‘imperial boy’ is karma that weighs on my soul as long as I live. I would be grateful if you could tell me whether I have properly departed from Japanese lyricism. (Kim 2019a, 91)

Kim’s relentless fight for his own style of lyricism is summarized in his most recent collection of poems, *The Lost Seasons* (2019a). For Kim, seasons are “the synthesis of sensibility”, and it is easy for us to “align ourselves with a ready-made system of sensibility” (Kim 2017, 51). By positing the concept of “lost seasons” against the four seasons as a system of governing sensibility, Kim engages in a head-on confrontation with lyricism. The artist himself asks the reader to confirm if he has managed to separate himself from Japanese lyricism, confronting the assumptions that have rooted themselves in his mind since his childhood as an “imperial boy”. And that specific confrontation manifests itself in the seasons, in the confrontation with nature.

In the context of Korean lyrical poetry [...] what is excluded is ‘discord with reality’ and the other stipulation that replaces it is ‘assimilation with nature’. At first glance, there is a logical connection between the two. Reality usually refers to human reality, and alienation from human reality or disillusionment with it can lead to an affinity with nature. And this idea is not unique to Korean poetry, but is familiar to Western lyrical poetry as well. [...] In Western literature, which provided the model for lyrical poetry, nature was also a medium for moving toward another reality, but there seems to be one decisive difference. In Korean poetry, assimilation with nature requires a sort of conversion; a complete immersion of the self in nature. (Jeong 2015, 215)

“Nature has always been an apocryphal object for humans” and “never an object to be worshipped” (Kim 2018, 203), but lyrical poetry imagines nature as a mysterious object and entrusts it to help solve its own problems. The mythical and mysterious object of nature serves as a metaphor or symbol, solving and consoling the problems of each individual to a certain extent. Although lyricism, which was born in early German Romanticism, was a decisive method of coexistence with the unfamiliar that centered on encounters with the Other and was a core concept in modern art, it gradually moved towards the recovery of self-identity and immersed itself in the subjectivity of the “self” and the objects (such as nature) that could help it recover. This trend coincides precisely with the decline of Romanticism as an artistic movement and the rise of Modernism, “a more radical pursuit of the ideals of Romanticism” (Taylor 1989).

In confronting Japanese lyricism, Kim Si-jong does so from precisely the same position as Modernism. What is interesting is that his confrontation is not an “anti-lyricism” but instead uses lyricism to confront itself. *The Lost Seasons* seeks to subvert the existing lyricism and create a new framework born from the violent experience of the diaspora, which cannot be subdued by the existing seasonal sentiment and lyrical poetry. Kim’s work is a diasporic reappropriation of nature’s most lyrical symbol—the seasons. In this we find that the cycle of seasons does not bring us a sense of stability and hope, but rather a cycle of lost seasons that repeatedly remind us of our despair.

The voices
That must call out, silently
They rise from the earth in this season.

The longer I ponder it, the murkier my vision,
I must close my eyes and
Silently yearn in this season.

There are no names that my mouth can form,
My heart holds them secretly,
And I mourn them in this season.

Do not hope for anything; bury it,
You wait so long that it all dries up,
There is drought in this season.

Memories fade until they disappear,
Beads of sweat, sweltering heat,
War and bloodshed in this season.

In summer the seasons begin.
All colors colliding, in an exploding,
White-halation in this season.

"Summer", full text (Kim 2019a, 16–17, translated by Anna Joy Toombs)

At this point, we can confidently say that Kim Si-jong has gone beyond "diasporic lyricism" and has shown us a "diaspora of lyricism". Kim's poetry is created from diasporic life through colonization, the Cold War, and the division of Korea. It confronts conventional lyricism as excluding minority experiences such as Koreans in the diaspora. Such a confrontation has led to the birth of a different kind of lyricism, one that criticizes the weaknesses of existing lyricism.

Identification as a Diaspora Poet

To Kim Si-jong's question of whether he has managed to separate himself from Japanese lyricism, we would say the answer is "yes". His life is a testament to this, as he has steadfastly continued his confrontation with lyricism despite his suffering in the diaspora. Whether this confrontation is possible or not is the central

question posed to readers. We should not attempt to answer it for him, but rather reply to his question with a question. If he has spent his entire life battling Japanese lyricism, for what reason does he need validation from readers?

The word ‘Ikaino’ reminds me of a distant land somewhere on the boundary of the world, and it is also a place of refuge for those who have left their homeland and have nowhere else to turn. More than that, it is also the land of retrospection, which I have been drawn to since I came to Japan. (Kim 2019b, 154)

Living alone in Japan, with no one to talk to, makes me sentimental. No matter how hard I try, I can’t help but think of my parents, my hometown, and Jeju Island, and I get caught up in the feelings of nostalgia. (Kim 2022, 247)

The Lost Seasons offers the reader a different kind of lyricism. There is no sign of a return to self-identity, and the reader is not left with any idealistic hope in nature after reading Kim’s poetry. However, this does not mean he has departed from lyricism entirely. His poems remain quite lyrical, often reading as a torrent of emotions. As the above quotes show, Kim tends to be sentimental, relying on places like the home of the heart rather than the sharp edge of the diaspora that exists on the border. Sentences like these are all too typical of lyrical sentiments.

The poet’s lyrical side is found again and again in his work, for example in the poem, “The Village” from *The Lost Seasons* we find the voice of the speaker enduring a silence deeper than the darkness of the village everyone has left, and in the poem “In the Rain” we find the voice of the speaker soaked with rain from waiting like a chair left outside. These are precisely the voices of lyricism, where sentiment loses its otherness and descends into subjectivity.

Of course, such feelings do not flow into nature or disappear through its mysterious resilience, but the reader experiences, even if the poet does not, that the pain he feels is somehow replaced by a certain beauty. This is because the poet, who has endured and struggled with the pain of diasporic life, can become a “mysterious object” for the reader, taking the place of nature. Humans are after all just another example of nature at work (Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy 1978). Life in the diaspora is painful, but it has not broken Kim Si-jong, and his poetry remains beautiful. The reader cannot help but mystify the poet, and in fetishizing the poet the reader focuses on the aesthetics of pain, accepting it along with the poet’s torment in an act of sublimation.

Through his willpower and struggle, Kim Si-jong, now an elderly man who has directly experienced East Asian modern and contemporary history ‘barefoot’ before us, asks us to view his life of suffering without mythologizing it. But is it possible? His real-life story approaches us with true authenticity in conjunction with his poetry, even as his voice echoes the attitude of constant self-reflection. Can the average reader endure such humility without mythologizing the poet? (Yang 2020, 345)

When accepting the lyrical beauty of Kim’s poetry as a mysterious object, the suffering of the diaspora is effectively erased. In short, we may have been reading Kim Si-jong’s anti-lyrical poetry in the most lyrical of ways.

However, it is worth noting that Kim has been battling lyricism his entire life. He is aware that humans cannot easily escape the trap of lyricism. And it is worth remembering that Kim Si-jong is not a warrior, but is a reflective poet in touch with human fragility. As we have seen, he found perverse lyricism in the Japanese language and the compromises it requires, and he once confessed that he struggled to separate himself from its limitations.

So we do not need to say that Kim Si-jong’s battle against lyricism was a successful one, because this has never been his aim. He uses lyricism to fight fire with fire. He does not take the path of the distant and alienated modernists, but approaches his poetry from the perspective of an ordinary person.

I had to stop because I was embarrassed, but I wanted to call it “Kim Si-jong’s Lyrical Poetry Collection”. Much of what is called lyrical poetry has been based on the praise of nature. Here, ‘nature’ is a projection of one’s own feelings. The rhythm of ‘lyrical’ poetry usually refers to the emotions that flow from it, and there is no gap between lyricism and emotion. Emotion is lyricism. This collection of poems is also based on the four seasons of spring, summer, fall, and winter, so naturally ‘nature’ seems to be a theme, but I have long since moved on from the purity that entrusts the subtleties of the heart to nature, at least. The old Japanese language and its tonal lyricism, which turned me from a colonial boy into an ardent ‘imperial boy’, is karma that weighs on my mind as long as I live. I would be grateful if you could tell me whether I have properly departed from Japanese lyricism. [...] I grew up with a great deal of influence from modern Japanese lyric poetry, so my interest in the four seasons was as intense as anyone’s. The seasons and nature have become the basis for validating the quality of my lyrics. It is also to hand over the

task of answering this question to the reader now, with a fearful heart.
(Kim 2019a, 92–93)

Taking these words into consideration, while we may feel that the poet's emotional expression in *The Lost Seasons* is excessive, and we may sense a lyrical aesthetic centered on the mysterious object of the poet, we should also note that Kim Si-jong is just like any other person, engaging in self-reflection by representing the people who were killed by the violence of the diaspora as proverbial lost seasons. Kim disciplines himself by repeatedly naming and remembering the dead and expressing the guilt he feels for surviving. He feels he must justify his survival, and his lyricism forces him to forget that death is an impossibility.

Where he and we the readers differ, however, is that Kim's confrontation is a fight against the impossible, and while he may struggle to establish himself as an honest poet, he admits a clear defeat. Poets are not superheroes, and Kim Si-jong is giving us lyrical pleasure by showing us a "victory" over diasporic suffering on the one hand, but he is also showing us something beyond lyricism by showing us eternal "defeat" on the other. Kim admits that he grew up "with a great deal of influence from modern Japanese lyric poetry", and furthermore uses it as "a basis for validating the quality of [his] poetry" (Kim 2019a, 93). The point at which he contemplated paradoxically titling a collection of poems that confronts lyricism *Kim Si-jong's Lyrical Poetry Collection* is not merely a joke, but a testament to a confrontation that he will never conclude. Thus, the poet confesses in the book's introduction that he is handing "over the task of answering this question to the reader now, with a fearful heart".

Sunlight tears through the branches.
The naked hills freeze,
As the excavator sticks it neck out,
Baring its teeth, it pushes against the wind.
Discarded trees, pushed to the edge of a cliff,
Should at least rot and return to the earth,
Rather than be uprooted and reduced to smoke,
Should fall and be buried in this land,
Nothing to wait for, I step, step:
Go, do not wait for spring to sprout,
Be like the seed riding the wind,
The wearied trees urge me.

One day, sprouts will shoot, shoot up,
The mushrooms will thrive,
And I will sit at my table, deliberating, hesitating.
The starved,
Emaciated ghosts will descend.
Then the merciless killing will begin again,
From the early days of spring it repeats.
Perhaps indifference is a blessing,
As the streets grow suddenly colorful.
The trees lining the streets flower fruitlessly,
And the wind still flutters in their branches,
The time for waiting has already ended,
The dead smile from the shadows,
You must leap! No matter what,
Dear seed,
This is your only, impossible,
Chance.

"Leap", in *The Lost Seasons* (Kim 2019, 55–56, translated by Anna Joy Toombs)

It would be wrong for Kim Si-jong and us, his readers, to escape from lyricism entirely, but it would be wrong for us to remain there forever. We need an endless, life-threatening escape, but such an effort is impossible for us ordinary people. Kim offers us the sweet fruit while only experiencing a little bit of the toil. It is a lyrical pleasure, but a dangerous one. One must not stop at this escapism but must take the next step.

First, we must also recognize that Kim's poetry understands the reader's position. Kim Si-jong, like us, is forced to live by "starved, emaciated ghosts". Both we and the poet have no choice but to sprout, settle down, and live with the knowledge that the dead occupy the "shade". The life of those who have survived is being sentimentalized through such lyrical poetry.

Kim Si-jong sees the situation differently from the rest, recognizing his defeat in the face of the reality he lives in and its lyrical pleasures. In the midst of this defeat, he cries, "You must leap!", acknowledging that there is a chance of escaping, somewhere, even if this task is impossible. By having survived, Kim is like a seed that has sprouted, but yearns to fly towards somewhere that may no longer exist. Even if it is an impossible struggle, he is prepared to lose anew, over and over again. And his poetry, conscious of its own defeat, attempts the same task again and again, as if a modern-day Sisyphus.

If the descent is thus sometimes preformed in sorrow, it can also take place in joy. This word is not too much. Again I fancy Sisyphus returning toward his rock, and the sorrow was in the beginning. When the images of earth cling too tightly to memory, when the call of happiness becomes too insistent, it happens that melancholy arises in man's heart: this is the rock's victory, this is the rock itself. The boundless grief is too heavy to bear ... But crushing truths perish from being acknowledged. Thus, Oedipus at the outset obeys fate without knowing it. But from the moment he knows, his tragedy begins. Yet at the same moment, blind and desperate, he realizes that the only bond linking him to the world is the cool hand of a girl. Then a tremendous remark rings out: 'Despite so many ordeals, my advanced age and the nobility of my soul make me conclude that all is well.' Sophocles' Oedipus, like Dostoevsky's Kirilov, thus gives the recipe for the absurd victory. Ancient wisdom confirms modern heroism. [...] 'I conclude that all is well,' says Oedipus, and that remark is sacred. It echoes in the wild and limited universe of man. It teaches that all is not, has not been, exhausted. It drives out of this world a god who had come into it with dissatisfaction and a preference for futile suffering. It makes of fate a human matter, which must be settled among men. All Sisyphus' silent joy is contained therein. His fate belongs to him. His rock is a thing. Likewise, the absurd man, when he contemplates his torment, silences all the idols. In the universe suddenly restored to its silence, the myriad wondering little voices of the earth rise up. Unconscious, secret calls, invitations from all the faces, they are the necessary reverse and price of victory. There is no sun without shadow, and it is essential to know the night. The absurd man says yes and his efforts will henceforth be unceasing. (Camus 1991, 24)

Going back to the issue of diaspora, Kim Si-jong's lyricism voices the hope of Koreans to escape from suffering. The diasporic response to lyricism can be seen in Kim's confrontation of typical Japanese lyricism, and creatively reappropriates diasporic pain. His poetry, however, does not fit neatly into either the "lyricism of the diaspora" or "diaspora of lyricism". He is aware of the dangers of the former while acknowledging the impossibility of the latter.

What Kim demonstrates is the endless challenges and failures of achieving his pursuit of a diaspora of lyricism. He remains in the in-between. He is neither situated in the diasporic past nor the present. The average reader with minimal sympathy for the suffering of the Korean diaspora is confronted through his poetry with the violence of their everyday lives. The general reader also finds a tragic hero

in Kim's endless, conscious failures. In this way, Kim's poetry convinces readers of the experience of the Korean diasporic community in an increasingly universalized world.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the diasporic poet Kim Si-jong, who suffered the pain of diasporic life, turning his experience into a creative expression via his literary works. Kim Si-jong is a poet of the diaspora in both in the original and more modern concepts of the term, which correspond to his origins and his place in the context of contemporary history.

Kim Si-jong continued to approach his writing from the perspective of a diasporic poet, based on his experience of Japanese colonization and the Cold War. Kim's colonial experience began with the most basic linguistic problem of the loss of his native language and his internalization of the emotional structure of a narcissistic Japanese lyricism. His experience of being immersed in Japanese lyricism coloured his unconscious mind which led to aesthetic poetry that is naturally moving. On the other hand, he is also a refugee, having escaped to Japan as a young man and communist activist, never to return to Korea. Unable to return to his divided homeland, Kim Si-jong adopted a philosophy of living living-in-Japan that framed his awareness of being part of the Korean diaspora. Residing in Ikaino led him to see it as a safe haven for a "Joseon-ness" that ceased to exist upon the division of the Koreas at the start of the Cold War. Ikaino created a space for unique creative endeavours by the Korean people in Japan in such a way that does not exist in North or South Korea, nor in other parts of Japan.

Kim Si-jong's work addresses diasporic life by internalizing and expressing these conditions. Kim's poetry is an explosion of the heartbreak and injustice of the diaspora that cannot be ignored. There is a particular lyricism of thought that forms a consistent thread through each era of the Korean diaspora, which includes all the happiness and misery of the diaspora, based on his experiences in Ikaino. He dreams of the Other and conducts a dialogue with it to create a "lyricism of the diaspora". Conversely, his poetry confronts lyricism to struggle directly with its emotional system. This specific struggle is manifested in his confrontation with nature, as seen, for example, in *The Lost Seasons*, in which Kim reappropriates lyricism so that the cycle of seasons does not evoke a sense of stability and hope in us, but rather the cycle of lost seasons repeatedly reminds us of despair. This is, in turn, a "diaspora of lyricism".

Kim Si-jong's unique style, what has been called in this paper both the "lyricism of the diaspora" and "diaspora of lyricism", identifies him as a diasporic poet in both the specific and universalized definitions. However, there is a strong argument that this is not the essence of Kim Si-jong's writing. The essence of his work is to mediate the conflicting space between these two definitions. In his confrontation with lyricism, general readers find themselves in a paradoxical relationship with his poetry, creating a mysterious object from his life of suffering. Moreover, Kim Si-jong is aware of the inevitability of such a reading. Even in his poetry collections, many lyrical structures exist, and indeed cannot be avoided. This leads to a final realization that Kim's effort to cultivate both the lyricism of the diaspora and diaspora of lyricism is a continual failure. But in this failure, he succeeds in the struggle. This is nothing less than a manifestation of the tragic hero of Sisyphus for our modern times.

Readers find solace in the lyricism of Kim Si-jong's poetry, but in the end we also see the failure of his efforts to escape it. From this tragedy we gain a tragic freedom (Gadamer, Schelling). Kim does not get caught up in the suffering of the diaspora, nor does his poetry call attention to its creativity. We thus cautiously look to the future of the concept of diaspora set against the backdrop of his lifelong struggle and its failures. As a diasporic poet, Kim Si-jong, offers familiar lyrical poetry, the diaspora in its common definition, but he also heroically shoulders a lifetime of pain, revealing the harsh world of diasporic realities. His continual attempts and failures help readers to discover that diaspora cannot be reduced to either end of the spectrum of its definitions.

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Zainichi as an Exile: The Diaspora Literary World of the Poet Kim Shijong

*KWAK Hyoungduck**

Abstract

This study explores the diasporic journey and literary contributions of Kim Shijong, a significant figure in Zainichi Korean literature. Born during the Japanese colonial era and having participated in the Jeju April 3rd Incident, Kim sought asylum in Japan, where he lived under another name and engaged in various social and political movements. His poetry, written in Japanese, reflects the complex interplay of personal trauma, historical tragedies, and the ongoing struggles of the Korean diaspora. The analysis explores Kim's literary works, examining how his experiences with the Jeju April 3rd Incident, the anti-nuclear movement, and the Great East Japan Earthquake are interwoven with broader themes of displacement, identity, and resistance. By situating Kim Shijong's works within the context of world literature and diaspora studies, this paper highlights the poet's efforts to confront and articulate the multifaceted realities of his time, extending his influence beyond national boundaries and contributing to a deeper understanding of Korean and global literary landscapes.

Keywords: Kim Shijong, Zainichi Korean literature, the Jeju April 3rd Incident, diaspora literature, Great East Japan Earthquake, historical trauma, minority literature

Zainichi kot izgnanec: literarni svet diaspore pesnika Kim Shijonga

Izvilleček

Ta študija raziskuje diasporično pot in literarne prispevke Kim Shijonga, pomembne osebnosti korejske literature Zainichi. Kim se je rodil v času japonske kolonialne dobe in sodeloval v incidentu na Jejuju 3. aprila, zato je zaprosil za azil na Japonskem, kjer je živel pod drugim imenom ter sodeloval v različnih družbenih in političnih gibanjih. Njegova poezija, napisana v japonščini, odraža zapleteno prepletanje osebnih travm, zgodovinskih tragedij in nenehnih bojov korejske diaspore. Analiza obravnava Kimova literarna dela in proučuje, kako se njegove izkušnje z incidentom na Jejuju 3. aprila, protijedrskim gibanjem in velikim vzhodnojaponskim potresom prepletajo s širšimi temami razseljenosti, identitete in upora. Z umestitvijo del Kima Shijonga v kontekst svetovne književnosti in študij diaspore ta članek izpostavlja pesnikova prizadevanja,

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da bi se soočil z večplastno resničnostjo svojega časa in jo ubesedil, s čimer njegov vpliv presega nacionalne meje ter prispeva h globljemu razumevanju korejskih in svetovnih literarnih pokrajin.

Ključne besede: Kim Shijong, korejska literatura Zainichi, incident na Jejuju 3. aprila, literatura diaspore, veliki vzhodnojaponski potres, zgodovinska travma, manjšinska literatura

Preface¹

Diaspora literature is at the very centre of modern world literature. The modern history of the Korean people, who left the country of their birth by the millions, has given rise to Zainichi Korean literature in Japan, Chinese Korean literature in China, Korean American literature in the United States, and immigrant literature in South America. Zainichi (在日), meaning “resident in Japan”, refers to individuals of foreign origin living in Japan, particularly Koreans. Zainichi Korean literature, created by writers who rejected the division of Korea and effectively lived in a state of political exile, expresses a particularly sharp social consciousness among Korean diaspora literature. Another significant difference between Zainichi Korean literature and Japanese literature since the modern era is the notion of asylum, which is absent in the latter. It is said that the desire to escape stems from a lack of freedom (Kato 2010, 247), but the asylum of Zainichi Korean writers in Japan stemmed from a historical tragedy that cannot be explained in isolation.

Kim Shijong (b. 1929) is a poet who symbolizes the diaspora literature of the Korean people, which arose from the history of Japanese imperial rule. His poetry emerged through the heart of the layered historical tragedies of the Korean people in the modern era. These layers include the Japanese colonial period, the Jeju April 3rd Incident, the Korean War and subsequent division of the peninsula, Cold War conflicts, oppression by the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan (Chongryon), then ethnic discrimination and hate speech in Japanese society. After seeking asylum in Japan, Kim continuously engaged with social issues, addressing Cold War conflicts and minority discrimination in his host country, and more recently, the aftermath of the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011. As Oh Sejong state in the commentary to *Map of the Reverse Side*, in his poetry Kim created “a vast cognitive and ideological space that listens to the cries of the entire lost history, connecting each of them” (Oh in Kim 2024, 225). When we turn back

1 This work has received linguistic assistance from the ChatGPT-4 model and various AI translation tools. I affirm that all new ideas presented in this paper are solely my own.

time to the Jeju 4.3 Incident, the tragic nature of Kim Shijong's story leads to a comparison with Paul Celan, a Jewish poet. Both men were minorities and members of a diaspora who lived in foreign lands, writing in a language that was not their mother tongue—Kim in Japanese and Celan in German. Celan is often regarded as a poet who employs “the Jewish German language” (Bollack 2017, 47), while Kim is seen as a poet who composed in the Japanese language of Koreans. While Paul Celan survived a Jewish concentration camp, Kim Shijong survived by fighting as a member of the South Korean Workers' Party during the Jeju April 3rd Incident and then seeking asylum in Japan. This shared experience of living through events marked by mass killings shaped the complex and enigmatic nature of their poetry, which arises from the labyrinth of layered historical tragedies. Both poets, placed in tragic situations, not only missed their parents' last moments despite being only children, but also received the news of their parents' deaths through letters, adding another layer of personal tragedy. Evaluations of Paul Celan's poetry, which describe it as embodying the truth or as an act of “stand[ing] on one's head” (Celan 2010, 120–21) through the violent history of humanity, also extend to evaluations of Kim Shijong's work due to these similarities.

Although belated, Kim's poetry has been extensively translated into Korean over the past decade. Works such as *Borderline Poems* (translated in 2008), *Nigata* ([1970] 2014a), *Gwangju Poems* ([1983] 2014b), *Horizon* ([1955] 2018), *Lost Seasons* ([2010] 2019b), *Ikaino Poems* ([1979] 2019c), *Japanese Topography* ([1957] 2022a), and *Map of the Reverse Side* ([2018] 2024) have all been translated, and thus raised his profile as a diasporic poet in his homeland. Furthermore, essay collections such as *Living in Korea and Japan* ([2015] translated in 2016) and *Zainichi in the Cracks* ([1986] 2017) have facilitated a comprehensive exploration of Kim's literary contributions within the Korean-language sphere. In Japan, the Fujihara-Shoten publishing company has released a 12-volume collection of Kim Shijong's work, starting in 2018.

While some of his poems related to anti-nuclear sentiments have been translated into English, not a single collection of his poems or essays has been published in this language yet. The primary obstacle lies in their perceived complexity, or as Cathrine Ryu puts it: “To my knowledge, there are very few of Kim Shijong's poetic works available in English. His poetry is renowned for its legendary difficulty and depth” (Ryu 2020, 35). His utilization of non-standard Japanese, akin to a creole language, disrupts Japan's collective memory as a nation-state. This challenge transcends Japan and extends to Korea as well. Indeed, Kim's poetry, which endeavoured to confront layered historical tragedies and diasporic suffering while seeking alternative narratives, is not easily understood in Korea. This complexity, exacerbated by the division of his homeland and the legacy of the Cold War, is

anticipated to evolve into a deeper understanding when (and if) tensions ease on the Korean peninsula and throughout East Asia.

Meanwhile, Han Kang, a contemporary female author from South Korea, was selected as the winner of the 2024 Nobel Prize in Literature. Han Kang is the 18th Nobel Prize laureate from Asia and the first woman to receive this honour. The Nobel Committee cited her “intense poetic prose that confronts historical traumas and exposes the fragility of human life” as the reason for her selection. The “historical traumas” highlighted by the selection committee relate to Korean women in *The Vegetarian* (Han 2007), the Gwangju Uprising in *A Boy Comes* (Han 2014), and the historical tragedy of the Jeju April 3rd Incident (Jeju 4.3) in *We Do Not Part* (Han 2021). This last novel, Han Kang’s most recent work, unfolds the long struggle of the Jeju 4.3 survivors over more than half a century from the perspective of a female protagonist, navigating between reality and unreality. Despite differences in generational and creative languages, this reflects the literary world pursued by the Zainichi authors Kim Sokpum and Kim Shijong since the 1950s. This paper aims to examine the literary world of Kim Shijong, who persistently expressed in poetry from the 1950s onward what Han Kang pursued in the works that won her the Nobel Prize in Literature: “confronts historical traumas and exposes the fragility of human life” (The Nobel Prize 2024). Starting from his exile and three names, this study will specifically explore his identity as a struggling diaspora artist and the overlapping contexts of the Great East Japan Earthquake and the Jeju 4.3 Incident.

Exile After the Jeju 4.3 and Three Names

The poet Kim Shijong was born in 1929 in Busan during the Japanese colonial era and grew up on Jeju Island. At the time, he fervently embraced the imperial language of Japanese as a passionate supporter of the Japanese Empire, rejecting his native Korean language and culture. As he described in his poetry and reminiscences, he, once an “Imperial Youth”, referred to the moment when Korea was liberated from Japan as the memory of a summer when the sky was turned upside down. Holding such a view, he inevitably found himself in conflict with his father—who sought to preserve the Korean language, thoughts, and culture during his childhood—and subconsciously looked down upon the Korean language and culture.

When the Second Sino-Japanese War began, young Kim Shijong unquestioningly believed in the eventual victory of the Japanese, and mourned deeply on the country’s defeat in World War II. After Korea’s liberation he struggled with the Korean language, although as he began to recognize his identity as a Korean he earnestly started studying it, feeling as though he were scratching at a wall.

Amidst these developments, on March 1, 1947, while observing a procession of poets who participated in the Jeju Island March commemorating the March 1st Movement, police fired shots into the crowd, igniting the fuse for the subsequent tragic events of the Jeju 4.3 Incident. At that time the people on Jeju faced severe challenges, such as unemployment, shortages of necessities, the outbreak of cholera, severe famine exacerbated by failed rice policies, and the transformation of Japanese police into military authorities. These social issues fuelled public anger to breaking point.

In such circumstances, Kim Shijong, as a member of the South Korean Workers' Party, participated in the 4.3 Uprising that began in 1948. By late May 1948, he was wanted for questioning with regard to attempted arson on the Central Post Office, and subsequently went into hiding with his family's assistance. In early June 1949, he managed to escape to Japan, seeking asylum and risking his life. Reflecting on his emotions during this period, Kim Shijong wrote the following in his poem "Laugh":

With a heart burdened by prayers I can only offer,
The unclean sin that has become a weight
Crouches within.
Alone, in the deep sorrow's darkness of my mother,
Who mourns my father, I kneel.
Because I, lined up in hiding, endured
The unjust moans of my stepfather's death,
I maintain silence.
Simultaneously led to confirmation by him,
His face distorted, breath cut short in a brutal image,
I close my eyes and gnash my lips.

(Kim Shijong 2022; all translations of Kim's works into English in this article were done by the author)

Kim's exile to Japan was an indelible sin, on that saw him leaving behind his family and comrades, and the burden of guilt for seeking asylum persisted for over half a century, and still remains. The image of his uncle, who was killed during the Jeju 4.3 Incident, and the sight of his parents' passing, which he could not witness due to his exile, haunted him throughout his life. He expressed such feelings in *The Summer of Fossils* by saying, "Somewhere in the heap of dirt, are my father and mother resting with their dirt-covered bones?" (Kim 2019a, 263), conveying the anguish of an exile who was unable to witness his parents' final moments.

Kim Shijong lived under another name after participating in the Jeju 4.3 Incident as a member of the South Korean Workers' Party (the Namro Party) and fleeing to Japan in 1949. He settled in Ikaino, Osaka, a place established by immigrants from Jeju Island and later settled by Koreans during the colonial period. This place is also the setting of Min Jin Lee's novel *Pachinko* (an adaptation of which premiered on Apple TV+ in 2022), where the character of Seonja follows her husband Isaac to start a kimchi business. In 1953, Kim founded the literary journal *Jindallae* (*Azalea*), enduring difficult times due to conflicts with the Chongryon, although this did not stop his activities.

Because he did not go through formal immigration channels, Kim Shijong became an illegal immigrant in Japan, and thus adopted a new name, 林大造. This name, written in Chinese characters, is read as Hayashi Daizo in Japanese, but it becomes Yim Daejo when read in Korean. At this point a strange inversion occurs. Kim Shijong's real name becomes his pen name, and he used 林大造 in order to avoid deportation. In other words, he lost his real name and, in the process, gained three names: Hayashi Daizo, Yim Daejo, and Kim Shijong. Tragically, like Paul Celan, Kim Shijong learned of his father's death through a letter written by his mother. After his exile, he never saw his parents alive again. It was not until 1998, almost half a century after leaving his homeland exile, that he was able to visit the grave of his late parents.

Following the establishment of institutional democracy in South Korea after the June 10th Democracy Movement in 1987, and with the advent of a democratic government, it became possible for Kim Shijong to temporarily enter the country under special arrangements after Kim Dae-jung, an emblematic figure in South Korea's democratization struggle, assumed the presidency. He visited Jeju Island, where his parents were buried, for the first time since May 1949. He was nearly 70 years old in the late 1990s, and returned to his homeland without his real name, but with someone else's: Yim Daejo. That moment of return is symbolic of the historical tragedy of the Korean diaspora in Japan. And more recently, well into his 90s, the poet, using his real name, relocated his parents' grave and inscribed the following on it:

I will never leave my father and mother again. I await the day we can be together. I have always hoped and prayed for this. To me, it is truly an eternal place where this world and the next meet. By the one called Bau(stone), Kim Shijong, December 2023.

Like all diasporas, Kim Shijong's was not of his own making, yet his exile, spanning nearly half a century, tragically prevented his return to his homeland.

Moreover, the memories and sense of indebtedness from the Jeju 4.3 Incident haunted him throughout his lifetime. Jeju 4.3 was a trauma that Kim kept deep within his heart. He did not speak easily about it because it was a tragedy that was impossible to convey, causing “the pain of being stabbed when recalled” (Kim Seong Nae 2023, 348). This is later expressed in a symbolic conversation with Kim Sokpom, *Why Have You Continued to Write? Why Were You Silent* in 2007, in which Kim Shijong gives the following reasons for why he did not write about Jeju 4.3 directly:

I could not write at all. I’ve been trying to escape from that memory. I didn’t write anything related to the 4.3. The fugitive consciousness became a burden. [...] Language is completely powerless in the face of overwhelming facts. Language comes out literally and is rarely made into words while memories erupt hot like a lump of fire. If memory is like a strand of thread, you can pull it around and roll it up, but if you try to come up with it, it will be lumped and slumped up and become speechless. I experienced 4.3 directly. As I was in debt to the trauma, my mind moved in reverse. What I was able to with the work of memory was to write poems of Gwangju instead of Cheju 4.3. Through *The Collection of Gwangju Poems* (1983), I could look at the pain of 4.3 at the bottom of my thoughts, confronting the event. (Kim Seong Nae 2023, 349)

The quote above clearly demonstrates that the poet suffered an immense tragedy that he could not express directly. A slaughtered body is often used to symbolize the almost 30,000 victims of Jeju 4.3, but Kim redefines the victims as “an ugly body too rotten to approach” (Kim 2018b, 441). The reason he could not easily write about the Jeju 4.3 Incident was twofold. First, he was a member of the Namro Party at the time of the uprising but had fled to Japan, which made it difficult for him to speak openly about it because the South Korean government had long labelled the Jeju 4.3 Uprising as a communist rebellion until democratization, and right-wing factions still saw it as such at the time. Second, he had illegally entered Japan and lived under a false identity, and feared that admitting his experiences could lead to deportation. The poet reflects on these circumstances as follows:

Until just seven years ago, I couldn’t bring myself to tell even my wife about my connection to the Jeju 4.3 Incident. Up until then, there were about two reasons I kept my mouth shut. First, I was concerned that revealing my membership in the southern faction would undermine the legitimacy of the ‘people’s uprising’ that was the Jeju April 3rd Incident.

[...] And there is one more reason. The cowardice of self-protection obsessed with living in Japan acted. My confession is a confession of illegal immigration. If I were forcibly repatriated to Korea, my life would have ended in a Korean military dictatorship that had lasted nearly thirty years. (Kim 2016, 5–6)

The guilt of seeking asylum in Japan haunted Kim Shijong throughout his life, rooted in the despair of never being able to return to his homeland and the fear of repercussions not only for himself, but also for his family and relatives when he spoke about the Jeju 4.3 Incident in Japan. However, this does not mean that Kim spent his time in Japan in despair and sorrow. Instead, he actively engaged as a member of the Communist Party to prevent his homeland's division and vigorously pursued his varied literary activities. His determination was evident in his first poetry collection, *Horizon* (1955). In the translator's afterword for the translated edition of this work, Kim's situation is described as follows:

Reflecting on the experiences of the young man, one might expect him to be lamenting his tragic circumstances in front of the vast ocean. However, the young man's gaze towards the horizon is not from the back. The horizon he sees in the distance is not a symbol of despair but a reality that needs transformation. Therefore, throughout the translation of the poetry collection, I did not see the sorrowful back of a young man but rather his determined face, eyes wide open, and arms waving as he confronted the challenges ahead. It is not the horizon that cannot be reached, but the horizon of 'the place where he stands' that the young man strives to open. He dreams of a new historical horizon, not the obstructed and divided horizon of the Cold War reality. (Kim 2018a, 234)

After witnessing numerous deaths and corpses during the Jeju 4.3 Incident and barely surviving through exile, the poet quickly embarked on the path of struggle for real transformation upon arriving in Japan. The historical circumstances of the Korean Peninsula compelled him not to succumb to sadness but to engage actively. With the outbreak of the Korean War and the division of the Korean community in Japan, and amidst Japan's changing role as a rear military base transforming into a "base nation", the lives of those on in the homeland were at stake, prompting intense debates. Despite his sadness over the tragedy of Jeju 4.3, Kim embarked on a struggle against reality, beginning with the disclosure of his real name in place of a pseudonym.

Diaspora in Struggle

The evaluations of Kim Shijong's poetry can be broadly divided into two categories. One approach seeks to read his work as a genre of Zainichi literature based on the subjectivity of Zainichi people, while the second focuses on his exile or refugee experience in Japan after the Jeju 4.3 Incident, interpreting it as diaspora literature. While it is not possible to list all the extensive prior research on Kim Shijong, the former can be represented by the pioneering study of Isogai Jiro, and the latter by the research of Hosomi Kazuyuki. Additionally, the works of Oh Sejong and Lee Jinkyong, which delve deeply into the ideological and philosophical significance of Kim Shijong's poetry, as well as the studies by Lee Hanjeong and Kim Dongyoon, which focus on the linguistic characteristics of his poetry and the Jeju 4.3 Incident, are also noteworthy. Recently, in South Korea, there has been a growing focus on the literary world of Zainichi people, starting with Kim Hwanki, as a form of literature by overseas Koreans. This can be seen as an attempt to draw the Korean diaspora created by modernity into the category of Korean literature. Furthermore, since the 2000s there have been attempts by scholars like Kim Jaeyong and Ko Myeongcheol to connect Zainichi literature with non-Western world literature, while criticizing Eurocentrism. Except for Isogai's work mentioned above, most of the prior studies were conducted after the 2000s.

However, a commonality among the above studies is that Kim Shijong's diaspora literature, despite bearing trauma, engages in a high level of aesthetic practice while confronting historical tragedies. His diaspora began with his status as a Zainichi. The term "Zainichi" does not merely signify residence but rather the existential predicament of being a discriminated minority in Japan. In this context, Kim Shijong discovered the concept of "living as a Zainichi". This was not simply an existential struggle but rather a fundamental issue of being part of a diaspora who has lost the possibility of returning to their homeland.

Not only the generations born and raised in Japan nurture the existence of 'Zainichi', but I, who was sent back to Japan, also cultivate the existence of 'Zainichi'. I realize that this is certainly my 'Zainichi'. The proposition of 'living as a Zainichi' which investigates the meaning of residing in Japan and the existential possibilities as a Zainichi Korean, thus settled within me. (Kim 2016, 234)

Although his status as a Zainichi stemmed from exile, the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 rapidly escalated the situation. While Kim expressed the anguish of his existence, he also found solace in the fact that he no longer faced the danger

of being killed. For him, Japan was a safe place, albeit one that inspired feelings of guilt, and even while in exile his heart was always with his family in Jeju. Encouraged by activists from the League of Koreans in Japan, a Zainichi Korean organization, he joined the Japanese Communist Party at the end of January 1951, using it as a base for his activities against the Korean War. At that time, Japan served as a rear military base for the Americans, as well as a production base for weapons and ammunition for the US Army.

Kim Shijong participated in the demonstration during the Suita Incident on June 24-25, 1952, which is chronicled in his epic poetry collection *Nigata* from 1970. "At the front and end of the demonstration line / When we were one group," recalls the Suita Incident demonstration, while the lines "Staying in Japan, an accomplice to the war / Hoping only for a shelter where one can be at peace / What can I do with the ugliness of this internal organ!" (Kim 2014a) starkly examine his guilt while living as a Zainichi.

One of the things Kim was passionate about around this time was activities related to ethnic education in post-war Japan. Following Japan's defeat in World War II, Koreans rejoiced in their liberation, and amidst this joy they established ethnic schools across the country to teach Korean language and culture, which had been forbidden under Japanese colonial rule. By 1946, there were over 500 such schools nationwide, educating around 60,000 students. Surprised by this enthusiasm, the General Headquarters of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (GHQ) ordered that Zainichi Koreans should also adhere to Japan's education laws, and attempted to forcibly close ethnic schools that did not comply with this, something that led to the Hanshin Education Incident in 1948. Kim Shijong's involvement in the movement to save Nakanishi Korean Elementary School began three years later, in 1951. When the school was surrounded by riot police in 1952 and forcibly closed, he took on the role of a fifth-grade homeroom teacher, teaching Korean language to Korean students. Later, Kim Shijong recalled that time as follows:

In April 1952, the rebuilt Nakano Chosen Elementary School opened amidst tight security with Osaka Prefecture police surrounding the school. There was tension, but the opening ceremony felt like a long-awaited festival, full of brightness and cheer. Of course, we also sang 'Song of the People's Struggle', which was sung at protests and rallies. This song was set to music by Im Hwa, a poet of the Chosen Proletarian Art Alliance (KAPF), which was oppressed as a communist anti-Japanese organization. The song became a banned song, as Im Hwa was executed as a spy. This song became one of the reasons why I started questioning the North Korean regime's republic. (Kim 2016, 250)

During this period, as North Korea's influence gradually grew in the cultural and educational spheres of the Korean diaspora in Japan, Kim felt a strong sense of opposition. This became evident when he took the lead in founding the journal of the Osaka Korean Poets Group, *Azalea*, in 1953, which began to directly clash with North Korea's cultural policies. With the establishment of the Chongryon in 1955, these conflicts intensified. By 1957, Kim Shijong's poems and criticisms, as published in *Azalea*, started receiving direct criticism. Once an ardent supporter of North Korea, Kim began risking his life to confront and struggle against the policies of idolization and ideological repression under Kim Il Sung's regime. One major point of contention raised by the Chongryon was that Kim Shijong wrote in Japanese, rather than in his native Korean language. This criticism went beyond mere words and began to threaten Kim Shijong's self-expression and even his very life.

In October 1958, due to conflicts with the Chongryon, *Azalea* ceased publication after its 20th issue. However, the threats against Kim Shijong did not end with the closure of the journal but continued with his attempts to publish his poetry collection. Around 1960, Kim completed manuscripts for *Nigata* (1970), a collection of long poems, and *Japanese Topology II* (2022c), but due to the Chongryon's oppression he could not publish a single volume throughout the 1960s, and lived practically in a state of paralysis. In July 1964, he was expelled from the Chongryon for refusing to support the "Unification Experiment", which condemned Soviet "revisionism" and promoted Kim Il Sung's idea of *Juche*, or total self-reliance. Even in exile, Kim Shijong's diaspora took on a more complex and darker form under internal ethnic repression. In this sense, there was no homeland to which Kim could return during this period. South Korea groaned under military dictatorship, where the Jeju 4.3 Incident was a taboo subject, and North Korea, leveraging the Chongryon, was intensifying its ideological control over Koreans in Japan.

As a result of facing ideological and linguistic oppression (the forced use of the Korean language) from the Chongryon, Kim Shijong had to endure a dark period after 1955. This led to economic difficulties that made it impossible for him to stand fully within the Zainichi community, and his creative and publishing activities became increasingly restricted. In this context, Kim Shijong began to completely lose trust in North Korea and started to perceive the Zainichi community as "the people left behind". In other words, the Zainichi were inherently limited by their inability to secure a complete nationality, leaving them in a state of being stranded in a foreign country, regardless of their own will.

At that time, Kim Shijong resolved to live as part of the diaspora in Japan, unable to align himself with either the North or South Korean regimes. This was the most

realistic choice he could make as a “Korean” in a state of diaspora and refugeehood, a person who was unwelcome in either South or North Korea. This represented a shift from his previous pursuit of a violent “revolution” to accepting the condition of being a refugee and living as a Zainichi. His change in direction also sparked the “Memory of the Displaced” debate, which criticized his decision to live an independent life as a Zainichi, rather than following North Korean policies.

Kim desire to live a proactive life as a Zainichi is clearly evident in his first poetry collection, *Horizon*, from 1955 (2018a). In this, he embraces the pain of the failed revolution (the Jeju 4.3 Incident) while attempting to open a new horizon for himself and resist the divisions entrenched by the Korean War.

“There is no horizon where you cannot go. / That place where you stand is the horizon.” (Kim 2018a, 11) These two lines from “The Prologue” feel less like poetic expressions and more like a declaration. They convey a determination to pursue revolution from the very place one stands. While resisting the entrenched division and Cold War solidified by the Korean War, Kim sought a path as an independent Zainichi, opposing North Korea’s coercive and dogmatic literary guidance. This is also why “The Prologue” can be read as a manifesto highlighting the life and literature of the young Kim.

When the first edition of *Horizon* published in 1955 that poet Kim Shijong kept is opened, a vertically handwritten phrase can be found, added by the poet himself, recording the night after the book was published.

To my beloved father and mother,
I released a collection of poems that you two can’t read.
You two who will bless this collection of poems more than anyone else
in the world.

Shijong, who grew up immature
Dedicate this book to my parents from foreign country.

December 11, 1955, “Night”

The passage Kim wrote after the publication of *Horizon* explores the time when he had to think of the faces of the dead and the longing for his hometown that he can never return to. The night is a time of dreaming of a new horizon, crushed in the daytime in Japan, and also a time of longing and pain with regard to facing one’s hometown and the dead. For young Kim Shijong, Japan’s night was a time that contained both the harsh reality of his confined existence and the painful

possibility of exposing the reality of the Korean Peninsula, caught in the flames of war. The poet thus opened the night of Japan and tried to continue the broken path of history again.

Of course, Kim Shijong's 1950s cannot be solely explained by his determination and desire for revolution. Behind this lie sadness, anger, and a deep yearning for Jeju Island and his parents. The lines "The crying eyes / the sand / I can't stand it anymore / The earth was deprived of air / I couldn't make a voice / Under the yellow sun / I became a mummy / The earth was cold / Even my parents forgot me" (from "Nightmare" in *Horizon* (Kim 2018a)) illustrate the poet's resolute determination, anger, and sorrow, all seamlessly interwoven.

For Kim Shijong, who had nowhere to return, the catalyst for change came from the Gwangju Democratization Movement in South Korea, which in May 1980 shattered the ideological confrontation and repression of the Cold War era, leading to the June 10th Uprising in 1987. With the fall of the military dictatorship after this event, South Korean society began to allow freedom of thought and expression. This transformation also brought significant changes in the treatment of Zainichi Koreans, who had been treated as spies for North Korea in Japan. After the Gwangju Democratization Movement, Kim Shijong described Korea as "a place overwhelmed by incredibly astounding, illegal, and absurd events" (Kim 2017, 318), criticizing the severe human rights abuses that occurred under the military dictatorship.

Indeed, under Park Chunghee, the "Espionage Incident of Foreign Students Staying in Japan" occurred repeatedly, in which Zainichi Korean students were suspected of being spies for North Korea. This led to intense resentment within the Zainichi Korean community toward South Korea. Kim Shijong's assessment of Korea as a society "overwhelmed by illegal and absurd events" was not only directed at Koreans in South Korea but also at the ruthless repression of overseas Koreans in the diaspora.

This began to change significantly with the advent of a democratic government, particularly with the inauguration of Kim Daejung—a symbolic figure in the South Korean democratization movement—as president. Subsequently, almost half a century after having left it, Kim Shijong was able to visit his homeland again. Following this, his assessment of South Korea changed dramatically. As he wrote about this trip:

Visiting my parents' gravesites became possible, and paying respect is my filial duty as their son. With the limit of four visits allowed through a temporary passport, even the Korean Consulate General in Osaka kindly

helped me acquire a new household registration and South Korean nationality. Over thirty years of struggle by the people in the democratization struggle has subsided, allowing me to become one of the people who realized democratic politics in South Korea. (Kim 2016, 271)

Kim thus expressed deep gratitude heart for obtaining “South Korean nationality”, a genuine national identity that had otherwise only maintained symbolic meaning since 1949. That moment when the diaspora, which had no place to return to, became a diaspora with a place to return, is the key to changing Kim Shijong’s negative perspective of Korea.

Overlap between the Jeju April 3rd Incident and Fukushima Nuclear Disaster

In Kim Shijong’s poetry, the Jeju 4.3 Incident did not directly appear for a long time, and in fact its direct expression emerged only recently. Instead, he struggled to “escape from those memories” (Kim 2017, 156), which were terrifying. Consequently, the incident appears indirectly and symbolically rather than directly. Indeed, is often noted that Kim Shijong—who experienced the massacre—did not write about it, while Kim Sokpom—who did not experience it—has written much on the subject, such as the epic seven-volume novel volume *Kazanto* (*Volcanic Island*). However, if you look more closely at his early tetralogy of poetic works, Jeju 4.3 is breathing between the lines or metaphorically. In an interview with the poet, Kim Shijong said the following about Jeju 4.3 and his work:

Japanese Topography is a collection of poems in the same context as *Nigata*. In this collection there is a poem with a reference Jeju 4.3 that cannot be seen on the surface, called ‘My Sex and My Life’, and the same is true for ‘Weeding’. (Unpublished interview with Kim Shijong, interviewed by Kwak Hyounduck, July 13, 2022.)

The poet uses these two poems from *Japanese Topography* (Kim 2022a) as an example of hidden references to Jeju 4.3, but they can also be found elsewhere. In his debut collection, *Horizon*, Kim mentions the Jeju 4.3 Incident for the first time. His terrible experience is presented indirectly because the tragedy occurred less than ten years bore.

In the final lines of the poem “Law of Disposal”, included in *Horizon*, Kim writes, “I have known / funerals like this before / The burned body was clearly blackened and charred / The era vanished, having taken its own life while still alive” (Kim

2018a, 39). It is difficult to conceive of this poem without considering its relation to the Jeju 3.4 Incident, even if the “funeral” or “burnt corpse” that appears in it does not specifically allude to the incident. After that, poems that are evocative of the incident start to appear more regularly. Let’s start by examining “Weeding”, which the poet stated was related to the Jeju 4.3.

Is there
a sickle?
Nonsense!
The vigorous, lush summer grass
does not yield to that extent
Indeed, to save effort
there is a way
to eradicate
in such
a hygienic manner
First pour gasoline
Then
set it on fire
a little distance away
aim a hose
with a shoulder-mounted sprayer.

(Kim 2022a, 21)

The “gasoline” in this poem evokes the scorched-earth tactics the military and police used to suppress the Jeju 4.3 Incident, while the “summer grass” refers to the resistance forces being eradicated by the gasoline thus linking the massacre that occurred to the poet’s deep-seated trauma. In the same poetry collection, “My Sex and My Life” presents an even more direct depiction of a massacre.

From the wound on the severed penis
that’s right. I saw my lover’s first menstruation, which I shouldn’t have seen.
Fresh from the gas chamber
between Anne’s flushed thighs, low-lying fog.
Stained on fallen pants
dissolved in Jeju’s
lukewarm seasonal wind.

(Kim 2022a, 167)

These lines in the poem describe the brother-in-law having his penis severed by a soldier's Japanese sword, followed by imagery evoking Anne Frank experiencing her first menstruation in the gas chamber at the Auschwitz. The deaths of both the brother-in-law and Anne Frank share the commonality of being part of much larger massacre. The Jeju 4.3 Incident appears even more explicitly in the long poem collection *Nigata*, published right after *Japanese Topography*.

When the jeep
groaned low
along the main road
my past
relentlessly burrowed
through the soil maze
from the day I wept
digging a trench
behind the rear fence
into the thickness of the earth
my mother ultimately
lost her only son
In my past
there was no path.

(Kim 2014a, 23)

Bound in rows
restrained
the multitude in white
were endlessly devoured
by landing crafts
with gaping mouths.

(Kim 2014a, 97)

The Jeju 4.3 Incident appears throughout this poetry collection, with the above quotes being representative. The first expresses the poet's experience of hiding in his uncle's potato storage hole after nearly losing his life participating in the uprising. The second depicts the scene before the execution by drowning of people involved in the event. From his poetry collection *Horizon*, where Kim Shijong begins to reveal the Jeju 4.3 Incident metaphorically, to *Japanese Topography* and

Nigata, he increasingly concretizes his memories of the massacre. In this sense, it is evident that Kim did not merely perceive the memories of the incident as a trauma to be buried in the depths of memory, but rather, though indirectly, he sought to express it throughout his poetry, even if only as “gloomy shadows” (Kim 2017, 121). As Kwon Seongwoo points out, these are “fragments of memory and recollection naturally evoked in the process of describing other historical memories and wounds” (Kwon 2023, 21), but they are not merely hidden symbolic forms. Even as “fragments of memory and recollection”, these metaphors link the Jeju 4.3 Incident to the Jewish Holocaust and extend to denouncing American hypocrisy after World War II. In this regard, the Jeju Incident was not merely a source of unspeakable despair for the poet, but an ongoing event that expanded the horizons of historical imagination and allowed confrontation with current tragedies. The phrase “living in Japan as Zainichi”, which Kim Shijong began using in the 1950s, meant living through the Jeju 4.3 Incident in exile in Japan with no place to return to. The poet did not merely despair over the deep wounds and tragedies of the massacre, but embraced them deeply within himself, striving to face and live through the present as much as possible.

In Kim Shijong’s early tetralogy, the Jeju 4.3 Incident is also connected to the anti-nuclear and hydrogen bomb movements. Kim Shijong’s anger was directed towards the United States, which was driving the world into the terror of nuclear war, and Japan, which was contributing to the permanent division of the Korean Peninsula. As a poet living in Japan, he aimed to intervene not only in the realities of Korea, but also in those of Japan. This is explained as a “‘Third World’ global perspective” (Kim 2018a, 229), as Oh Sejong points out in the Korean edition of *Horizon*.

The related poems are concentrated in Part 1, “Song of One Who Earnestly Desires the Night”, of *Horizon*. Poems such as “On the Death of Saito Ginsaku”, which brought to light the Matsukawa Incident (a train derailment caused by the US military in 1950), “Austerity Life”, which satirizes the Yoshida Shigeru Cabinet, and “Camera”, which addresses the regressive reality of life in Japan, all express Kim Shijong’s desire to change the reality of his host country. In “Camera” he calls on the Japanese people to join the ranks of revolutionary change, saying, “People of Japan / the camera is rolling / those who cannot shout, write subtitles / if you have a fear / if you have suffering / hang placards on your chests!” (Kim 2018a, 86).

One of the significant themes in Kim Shijong’s first poetry collection, *Horizon*, is the anti-nuclear movement. He actively participated in anti-nuclear demonstrations, writing and reciting poems for the cause. In the early 1950s, the US took a

contradictory step in President Eisenhower's pursuit of "Atoms for Peace" by continuing to test hydrogen bombs. Meanwhile, on March 1, 1954, the Japanese Daigo Fukuryū Maru tuna fishing boat was exposed to radiation during an American hydrogen bomb test near Bikini Atoll. This ignited the anti-nuclear movement in Japan, and films such as Honda Ishiro's *Gojira* (*Godzilla*) (1954) and Akira Kurosawa's *Record of Survival* (1955) were inspired by this. Kim Shijong's first volume of poetry was also published at this time. "The Southern Island—Unknown Death" (1955.3), "Knowledge" (1955.9), "Tombstones" (1955.9), and "Child and the Moon" (1955.8) are all included in *Horizon* and are representative of his anti-nuclear poems, which were recited at sites of protest. When Ernest John, the first American nuclear-capable surface-to-surface rocket entered Japan, the poet warned of the escalating nuclear threat. Regarding hydrogen bomb experiments in the US, Kim wrote in "Knowledge": "To know a handful of ashes / it is not enough to make a man into sliced pieces of meat / after slaughtering 300,000 men in Hiroshima and Nagasaki." The lines "It's not the first death. / It's one person following Hiroshima and Nagasaki", from "Tombstone", clearly reveal the tragedy of nuclear weapons.

The context of Kim Shijong's anti-nuclear poems from the 1950s is revived in his 2024 [2018] collection *Map of the Reverse Side*, which addresses the Great East Japan Earthquake. On his way to Tokyo in 2011 to receive the Takami Jun Award for his collection *Lost Season*, Kim encountered the devastating earthquake and tsunami that also struck Japan. This collection captures the shock and fear of this event, as well as the society's response to the Fukushima nuclear disaster. It is a collection written by a poet who, 60 years earlier, had written and recited anti-nuclear poems at protests. This collection can be compared to the responses of figures like Oe Kenzaburo, who, in the wake of Fukushima, wept and took responsibility as post-war Japanese democrats. Moreover, this collection is filled with images that echo the tragedy of Jeju 4.3. The poem "Faraway Mourning" in *Map of the Reverse Side* is representative of this:

Bodies entwined, drifting logs
 flowed down from the stagnant bottom.
 Bodies so far gone as to be unidentifiable
 corpses no longer human.
 The aftermath of the typhoon's rampage through the night brought wind
 and rain
 people held their breath, praying for the return of their missing family
 members.
 [...] When the times writhe in agony / people mourn the dead with
 mysterious death.

By mourning, they suddenly turn death into a gravestone.
The corpse gradually empties out.
Who is the dead, and to whose death am I / clasping my hands?
(Kim 2024, 23–24)

Phrases like “corpses no longer human” and “emptying out” illustrate the similarities between the two events. In this sense, Kim Shijong’s poetic world is deeply embedded with the tragedy and suffering of the Jeju 4.3 Incident while actively confronting and addressing the immediate realities of his time.

The Diasporic Existence

The literature of Kim Shijong can be characterized by trauma and aesthetic practice in response to the historical tragedy and existential anguish he experienced while living as a Zainichi. His works encapsulate not only his identity as a Korean living in Japan but also the diasporic life he led, having lost his homeland. For Kim, the term Zainichi represented not merely his place of residence but an existential challenge as a discriminated minority. After 1955, Kim faced repression from the Chongryon, which blocked the publication of his poetry collections. He endured ideological persecution and linguistic oppression, leading to a publishing ban that lasted for over a decade. In the context of the Korean War and the ensuing division of the peninsular, Kim’s diasporic experience grew even more complex and bleak, leaving him without a true homeland in either Japan or one of the Koreas. His literary journey can be seen not only as a reflection of the ontological anguish of a Zainichi Korean, but also as a record of the struggle and resistance of a diasporic poet who was lost between the North and South.

In the case of Kim Shijong, living in as part of the diaspora meant that he had to live under another name, while using his real name as his pen name. His real name is Kim Shijong 金時鍾, and his other names are Hayashi Daizo 林大造 in Japan and Yim Daejo when he acquires Korean nationality. In other words, for Kim Shijong, diaspora was the way to “live life” against the division of North and South Korea by trying to erase his real name and existence, and living his life as another person. The reason why he was denied his existence and had to live in Japan was largely because of Jeju 4.3, which took place after Japanese rule had ended in Korea. If the South and the North had unified after the Japanese occupation, forming a single country, Kim Shijong’s asylum and diaspora would have ended as an experience of short-lived pain, and he would have been able to share his

parents' last hours. The Cold War and the division of the Korean Peninsula can be said to be a tragedy of history that created numerous Korean diasporas, including Kim Shijong's. During World War II, Kim Shijong, an imperial subject who believed in Japan's victory, returned to the world of Korean language and opened his eyes to national consciousness. It is certainly an irony of history that he then had to flee to Japan and live in the Japanese-language world again while participating in Jeju 4.3 as a member of the Namro Party, which refused to be divided in the process of creating a state between the two Koreas after the liberation. Osaka Ikaino, an asylum, is a place where many people from Jeju Island would call their second home, but the divisions between Zainichi Koreans caused serious conflict in Ikaino soon after the Korean War broke out. Therefore, the site of Kim's diaspora became yet another location where conflict and disaster caused by the division of the two Koreas would ferment.

In Kim Shijong's poetry, the Jeju 4.3 Incident was not directly addressed for a long time, and only recently began to emerge more clearly. He has struggled to escape the horrifying memories of the event, which is why the incident is only expressed indirectly and symbolically in his work. This event, as it appears in his early tetralogy, is also connected to his involvement in the anti-nuclear movement. His poetry can be interpreted as a response not only to the mass killings of the time but also to the fear of nuclear war led by the United States and the issue of Korea's division. Kim's engagement extended beyond the Korean Peninsula, as he also sought to intervene in Japanese society, reflecting his "Third World" worldview. Ultimately, Kim Shijong's poetry does not approach the Jeju 4.3 Incident solely as trauma or in a victim-centred narrative. Instead, through highly refined poetic language and aesthetics, he internalizes his deep wounds, faces the tragedy, and strives to overcome it. His poetry embodies the very characteristics of world literature that the Nobel Committee highlighted when awarding Han Kang the Nobel Prize, as it "confronts historical traumas and exposes the fragility of human life".

Returning to world literature and diaspora, the Harvard University professor David Damrosch defined the former "as an elliptical refraction of all national literature" (Damrosch 2003, 281) in *What is World Literature?* Damrosch is mindful of the influence of one national literature on other regions and peoples. Take, for example, Korean diaspora literature, particularly Zainichi Korean literature, which is difficult to classify as national literature. Instead, it is more of a "minority literature", as defined by Deleuze and Guattari. Zainichi Korean literature in Japan expands the definition of diaspora literature beyond Damrosch's definition by refracting not only Japanese national literature, but also historical perception. Ikezawa Natsuki, while compiling the World Literature Collection in Japan, defined

it as “something that moves towards a broader horizon after building up its own place” (Ikezawa 2008, 158). When comparing this with Kim Shijong’s poetry, the problematic issue is the concept of “one’s own place”. Kim Shijong was unable to construct his own place in Jeju. Kim Sokpom, on the other hand, has spent decades “building his own place and moving toward a large place” by writing *Kazanto* (1983–1997), which is about Jeju 4.3. Kim Shijong suffered a painful loss of place, while Kim Sokpum acquired places that were not his. Kim Shijong attempted to “retaliate” against the Japanese by writing a poem in the language of “scratches on the wall with a nail”, not in his native language. When the poet turned 95, this was still in the present tense. In his essay “Poetry is a Revolution of Realization”, Kim defines poetry as “existing even when it is not written” (Kim 2024, 172). This is a fitting expression for someone who has lived a painful diaspora life for almost half a century.

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Diasporic Elements in the Post-liberation Works of Yom Sang-seop

*Rajesh KUMAR**

Abstract

The post-liberation era of Korea witnessed a state of confusion and turmoil. The neo-colonial powers and advent of the Cold War led to a partition of the peninsular. By the time Korea earned its independence a considerable number of Koreans were living in Manchuria and other parts of the world, forming the Korean diaspora, and independence led many of these to "return" to home. Yom Sang-seop wrote extensively about the theme of this "return" in his post-liberation novels. However, there is barely any research that has explored the diasporic elements in this author's novels. His post liberation works focused on the partition of the country, the ideological divide among the common people, and their plight as refugees. In his works Yom Sang-seop wrote about the life of Korean people living in Manchuria and their journey back to the Korean peninsula after liberation. His works after the liberation and before the outbreak of the Korean war show a common tendency of diaspora literature, where the central themes are the refugee crisis, ideological divide, displacement, and problems related to housing in the newly established countries of North and South Korea. The paper will focus on his novels and short stories discuss the diasporic aspects in his works.

Keywords: diaspora, post-liberation, Korea, Manchuria, homecoming, disillusionment

Diasporični elementi v delih Yom Sang-seopa po osvoboditvi

Izvilleček

V času po osvoboditvi Koreje sta vladala zmeda in nemir. Neokolonialne sile in hladna vojna so pripeljale do delitve polotoka. V času, ko si je Koreja priborila neodvisnost, je precejšnje število Korejk in Korejcev živelo v Mandžuriji in drugih delih sveta ter tvorilo korejsko diasporo, zaradi neodvisnosti pa so se mnogi med njimi »vrnili« v domovino. Yom Sang-seop je v svojih romanih po osvoboditvi veliko pisal o tem »vračanju«; vendar pa skorajda ni raziskav, ki bi proučevale diasporične elemente v romanih tega avtorja. Njegova dela po osvoboditvi so se osredotočala na razdelitev države, ideološke razlike med preprostimi ljudmi in njihovo stisko kot begunk in beguncev. Yom Sang-seop je v svojih delih pisal o življenju Korejk in Korejcev v Mandžuriji ter njihovi poti nazaj na korejski

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polotok po osvoboditvi. V njegovih delih po osvoboditvi in pred izbruhom korejske vojne se kaže skupna težnja diasporne literature, kjer so osrednje teme begunska kriza, ideološki razkol, razseljevanje ter problemi, povezani z nastanitvijo v novoustanovljenih državah Severne in Južne Koreje. Članek se bo osredotočil na njegove romane in kratke zgodbe ter obravnaval diasporične vidike v njegovih delih.

Ključne besede: diaspora, po osvoboditvi, Koreja, Mandžurija, vrnitev domov, razočaranje

Introduction

Yom Sang-seop (1897–1963), the architect of Joseon realism (Im 1935) and one of the representative writers of naturalism (Baek 1980) in the Korean literary world, has been widely discussed for the realism and naturalism in his works. *Samdae* 삼대 (*Three Generations*), one of his magnum opuses, is one of his most widely read novels. There have been many studies on the works that Yom Sang-seop wrote from 1920 till 1961, with the authoritative research being carried out by Kim Yun-shik (1999). His novels have been widely discussed with the theme of post-colonialism (Kim 1999; Seo 2002; Na 1999; Kim 2003; Huh 2011; Roh 2008; Lee 2012), colonial modernity and the hybrid nationality of the modern state (Yi 2009; Lee 2003; Kim 2015; Ryu 2009; Choi 2007; Lee 2016; Choi 2016). His post-liberation works are seen as attempting to balance the ideological contrast of right and left with the aim of the unification of the Korean peninsula, and finding a middle way to the integration of both ideologies for peaceful co-existence. The nationalism in his writings is thus aimed at achieving a unified Korea, and his post-liberation novel exhibits a hybridization of the colonial experience and formation of the new world order.

However, his post-liberation novels, such as *Haebangui Adeul* 해방의 아들 (*Son of Liberation*), *Sampalseon* 삼팔선 (*The 38th Parallel*), *Ihap* 이합 (*Separation*), *Jaehoe* 재회 (*Reunion*), *Hyopung* 효풍 (*Morning Breeze*), *Imjong* 임종 (*Deathbed*), and *Du Pasan* 두 파산 (*Two Bankruptcies*), focus on the issues faced by Koreans and the troubles on the Korean peninsula after its liberation from Japanese colonial rule. Of course, these works have been researched with regard to the refugee crisis, identity crisis, the dilemmas faced by mixed-blood people, and the motif of political neutrality, where the writer neither supports the capitalist nor the communist side. These works are read in this way because they exhibit these themes very explicitly if read superficially. However, if Yom's works from the post-liberation era are more carefully examined then they also explore the theme of living in exile and feeling nostalgia for home, as well as a desire to return home. They thus have a diasporic element and a tendency towards diasporic literature.

The post-liberation period on the Korean peninsula was marked by the rapidly changing geopolitical scenario. In the aftermath of the Second World War two superpowers emerged, and thus began a tussle for power in the form of the Cold War, which divided the world into the binaries of communist and capitalist. Research on post-liberation period Korea is very much centred on this binary and its role in the partition of Korea. The protagonists of the Cold War power struggle have been called neo-colonial powers (Na 2008, 37–59), which together decided the fate of Korea. The ideological differences, the problem of pro-Japanese Koreans or the Koreans who supported Japanese colonial regime and the formation of a new nation state occupy a significant space in the discourse of post-liberation literature. However, amid the chaos of partition on the Korean peninsula, the story of Koreans who were living in Manchuria is lost, thus ignoring the people who were either forced into exile, chose exile themselves or simply ran away to Manchuria in search of a better life. The story of the people who were thus displaced and their subsequent return to a homeland that had now changed needs to be told in order to understand the chaos and problems on the Korean peninsula post-liberation. The people who left for Manchuria experienced a diasporic journey of settlement and uprooting, and in many cases, this was followed by a return. Since they travelled out of the homeland their journey needs to be viewed from the perspective of the diaspora. Diasporic discourse thus occupies the centre stage in their experience of exile and “return”, and the peripheral discourse could be that on the formation of the nation state. In other words, the formation of the nation state had a very significant influence on people and their decision whether or not to return. The formation of the nation state was thus a subsidiary force that motivated people to become “de-diasporized”. This paper aims to address the story of those who ran away or were exiled from the Korean peninsula and then returned after liberation. Their exile, homecoming and overall journey were indeed a diasporic experience, and that is why the story of those people who returned need to be discussed based on the theories of diasporic discourse.

The definition of diaspora has changed over time. Walker Connor described a diaspora as referring to those people who live outside of their homeland (Connor 1986). Now the term diaspora is not only limited to people who immigrated from or are living outside of their homeland, but is also used with people who have experienced diasporic displacement and then moved back home. As pointed out by Cousins (Cousin, Dodgson-Katiyo and Emenyonu 2006, 7), borrowing from Françoise Kral, it has been reasonably argued that the treatment of diaspora by critics such as Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy and Homi Bhabha has moved the discussion away from the “emphasis on the return journey” (Kral 2009, 12) which is fundamental to William Safran’s classic definition of diaspora. Safran

said that “some diasporas persist—and their members do not go ‘home’—because [...] although a homeland may exist, it is not a welcoming place with which they can identify politically, ideologically, or socially; or because it would be too inconvenient and disruptive, if not traumatic, to leave the diaspora” (Safran 1991, 91). Safran describes a member of a diaspora as a temporary resident in a foreign land who is determined to return to their homeland (ibid., 85). Robin Cohen further elaborates the definition of diaspora by saying that it should also include not only people covered by voluntary migration, but also those who have experienced involuntary migration due to aggression, persecution, or extreme hardship (Cohen 2008, 2). Cohen says that members of a diaspora who are living in foreign country have a collective memory of their homeland, which they tend to idealize. They relate to their homeland and think about the restoration of its original condition (ibid., 4), and thus they think of returning to it. However, any actual homecoming has various elements to it, which Safran summarizes as rupture, surprise and perhaps disillusionment (Safran 1991). Schutz describes this return to the homeland as involving both shock and nostalgia (Schutz 1976, 106–07). Yoon In-jin 윤인진 says that in Korean the term used for diaspora also means ethnic dispersion or ethnic dispersal, and has a meaning that encompasses not only the process of people moving to various regions around the world, but also the places and communities in which they live (Yoon 2005, 4–5). In addition, the idea of diaspora is characterized by “a persistent attachment to one’s home country and compatriots and an attempt to maintain national identity” (ibid., 30). Yoon further says that the after 1990 the idea of diaspora has been used as a “comprehensive concept encompassing international migration, asylum, refugees, migrant workers, ethnic communities, cultural differences, and identities of other ethnic groups” (ibid., 6). The term diaspora has thus become much more inclusive, and thus able to narrate the story of all those who “left” or all those who “returned”, and thus achieved the homecoming or the *Gwihyang* of the Korean people. In Korean diasporic discourse the return journey—or *Gwihyang*—that took place after the fall of the Japanese empire had mainly two characteristics. One was return from the imperial centre, i.e. Japan, and other was a return from Manchuria, where people migrated to avoid the persecution under Japanese rule. Many Koreans fled to Manchuria in search of a better life, but then sought to return home due to the violence they suffered there. Moreover, fascination with one’s own liberated homeland played a crucial role in the homecoming of those who were living outside Korea.

Yom was a prolific writer in Korea before he exiled himself to Manchuria and became part of the diaspora. Before fleeing away to Manchuria he wrote hundreds of novels and short stories that established him as writer of realism and naturalism. But why did Yom quit a flourishing career in Korea and exile himself

to Manchuria? Kim Jae-yong 김재용 says that the reason for this lies in Japan's Naeseonilche (내선일체) policy (Kim 2019, 19), which was brought in to force Koreans to adopt a Japanese identity, and was promoted in Korea newspapers with the use of propaganda. At this time Yom was working in a newspaper agency as a journalist, and was asked to write propaganda pieces to justify Japanese aggression in the Sino-Japanese war. In doing so he would also have to justify the Naeseonilche policy that was a direct attack on the Korean identity. Moreover, while the Japanese were enforcing Naeseonilche on the Korean peninsula, they had a more moderate policy in Manchuria. This was called "Ojokyeopwa" (오족협화), and was the same as the Chinese policy called "Five Races Under One Union" which aimed to unify the East Asian identity under the leadership of Japan. It focused on the unity of all the five "races" of East Asia, which included the five ethnic groups of the Manchus, Japanese, Han Chinese, Mongols, and Koreans. In doing so it also give the impression of an independence and sense of harmony between the Korean and Japanese identities, rather than the dominance of the latter, which was the policy on the Korean peninsula. Yom Sang-seop realized that if he wanted stay in Korea then he would have to write propaganda, and thus betray the nationalist cause, and so he decided to migrate to Manchuria, where he would at least be able to assert his Korean identity because of the Ojokyeopwa policy (Kim 2019, 21). It was this "forced self-exile" that made Yom a member of the Korean diaspora, someone who always longed for a return home, something that is clearly reflected in the works he wrote during his stay in Manchuria (Oh 2012).

This sense of nostalgia of his home and return to his fatherland is reflected in *Ujuhaengnoga* 우주행로가 (*To Space*). In this Yom writes that he has never considered himself as a part of Manchuria (Qian 2020, 160). He describes life there as a "life without depth", a life without tradition or established culture, and positions himself as a "Japanese citizen" because his identity as a Korean has been colonized by Japan. Yom could not escape this harsh reality and found himself torn between his true identity as a Korean and his forced identity as a Japanese citizen under colonial rule. His culture and tradition were inherently Korean, but the identity he forced to accept was that of a Japanese citizen, and this is why he calls his life in Manchuria one without depth. In other words, in Manchuria Yom was just an immigrant and was unable to decide how to position himself in this new environment (Qian 2020, 161), seeing himself as a "neo-immigrant" and feeling confusion over his identity. This is a classic expression of the diasporic experience, where a person tries to shed the old identity of their homeland and take on a new identity in their new home, but in doing so they lose their original identity without fully gaining a new one.

Yom was in Manchuria when he learned about the sudden liberation of Korea, and moved to the northern part of the peninsula, to a place called Sinuiju, not

imagining that this liberation would come at the cost of permanent partition of his homeland. Kim Jae-yong assumes that even after the liberation Yom decided not to go to Seoul immediately because of the political uncertainty (Kim 2019, 25), due to the presence of US and Soviet forces governing the South and North of the peninsula, and remained hopeful of an amicable solution to the ideological differences among the people, and that the country would soon be unified under the banner of one Korean nation. That is why he stayed in Sinuiju after coming back from Andong and waited for the chaos to settle down.

Yom Sang-seop's post-liberation novels reflect his diaspora days in Andong and Sinuiju, with narratives of the "displacement of post-liberation" (Qian 2020, 151). This does not only manifest itself as a physical displacement, but also as the displacement of one's loyalty and faith to the newly founded country, a loyalty that is based on an ideology and blood identity. Yom's novels such *Haebangui Adeul* 해방의 아들 (*Son of Liberation*) and *Sampalseon* 삼팔선 (*The 38th Parallel*) give a voice to the displaced people of the post-liberation era (ibid.). Meanwhile, *Ihap* 이합 (*Separation*), *Jaehoe* 재회 (*Reunion*) and *Hyopung* 효풍 (*Morning Breeze*) talk about the displacement of people after the liberation and the problems of rehabilitation and finding a new beginning in the liberated country.

This paper will try to explore the diasporic experience as reflected in these novels. Specifically, it will examine the ruptures that occur in the process of homecoming through these works that talk about escaping from Manchuria. The paper will further explore the elements of surprise, the "re-diasporic" experience, disillusionment with the homeland, and the reality of life in the newly liberated country.

The Homecoming: Becoming a Refugee in One's Own Land

Novels about the liberation period in Korea express rupture and discontinuation. In the case of Yom Sang-seop, this rupture can be called a "doubled rupture". The first rupture is the fact that Yom had to leave Korea and move to Manchuria. After living in Manchuria for almost a decade, he saw the liberation of his homeland, which created a hostile situation for Koreans living in Manchuria. A series of violent attacks on Koreans led Yom Sang-seop, along with others, to flee Manchuria (Choi 2011, 179).

Sampalseon 삼팔선 (*The 38th Parallel*) is a novella presented as a travelogue of refugees who are met with unexpected conditions and must change their plans many times. The pain and suffering of the refugees is clearly revealed, while the emotions of the people who meet or get separated on this journey are expressed

through the personal experience of narrator. Many Koreans left their homes for Manchuria to avoid persecution and high taxation from the colonial government. Over time some of the Koreans in Manchuria became rich, owning land and other property. After Japan was defeated in the Second World War this triggered a desire for revenge in many Manchurians, who saw Koreans as collaborators of the colonial regime, because they enjoyed certain liberties and privileges in the established hierarchy. As such, both Japanese and Koreans were the focus of violent attacks by Manchurians, and many thus decided to leave.

The 38th Parallel chronicles the dangers faced by the Koreans, as well as their “incomplete-independence”, which came with the pain of partition, making many people part of a diaspora within their own native land, as divided by neo-colonial regimes.

In the novel the journey of the refugees is painted in a very vivid and detailed manner. For example, the narrator mentions that the “refugee certificate became like a family member”, which they could not afford to lose. The movements of refugees were constantly guarded and controlled by the authorities, and the people had to prove their identity at each step of their journey. Constant changes to plans and routes meant that the journey home become longer and longer. The trains were not running on time, and those that were running were full of refugees. Moreover, because the movement of refugees was restricted, many people were stuck in places they did not want to be. Refugees lived in fear of being caught by the authorities, while hotels and refugee camps were overflowing and in very poor condition. Indeed, the failure of the government to provide safe, hygienic and habitable shelter for its own people can be seen in the novel, where the refugees become small parts in the government machinery. This is reflected in *The 38th Parallel*.

조밥 한 사발에 파를 송던송던 썰어 넣은 간장 국물은 냉국이란 거요. 설경설경한 감자조림 하나뿐이다. 무서운 세상도 되었다고 생각하였다. (Yom 2007, 244)

The soy sauce soup with finely chopped green onions in a bowl of millet is just like a cold soup and the stewed potato is the only one dish. A thought that it had become a scary world came to my mind. (Author's translation)

In this excerpt the narrator mentions that the “the world had become a scary place”, and in the novel *Jaehoe 재회* (*Reunion*) the protagonist mentions sarcastically that “the telephone is not liberated yet”.

전화는 해방 안 됐나요! 음식점에서 나오면서 장한이는 귀에 남은 주인의 말을 속으로 되어 보았다. 서울 들어오는 첫발에 해방된 전차와 전화로 두 시간 이상을 시달리고 나니 장한이는 이만하면 서울 남조선도 반남아나 안 듯싶었다. (Yom 1987, 124)

The telephone is not liberated! As he left the restaurant, Jang Han listened to the owner's words in his mind. After being tormented by the liberated train and telephone for more than two hours on the first step in Seoul, Jang Han felt that Seoul, South Korea are still more than half left. (Author's translation)

These excerpts point towards the mismanagement of the newly liberated government and the poor functioning of its machinery. Yom Sang-seop faced the ordeal of being a refugee himself, and experienced these hardships, and thus criticized the liberation which instead of bringing comfort to the people brought more pain and suffering.

The refugees did not have enough money to afford food and lodging, and their conditions worsened with each passing day. Thus, people who were running away from persecution in one country faced it in another, and it seemed as if the whole painful exercise of running away from suffering was in vain. The refugees not only had to fear the government authorities, but also bandits, criminals, and smugglers. They were easy targets for abuse, as even if they were robbed and cheated there was little they could do about it. To make things worse, even if they avoided criminals then the refugees were humiliated by the authorities. They were unwanted and harassed in the name of fighting disease (cholera), ideology (communism) and crime.

“가미소리 있소? 가미소리 있기던 하나 주어”

-그런 것도 저기서 조사할 때 모두 빼앗겼어요. 말이 선듯선듯 통하니 이런 중에도 얼마나 다행이고 시원하랴

‘집 속에는 무어 있어?’

무엇보다 무서운 것이 집을 조사할 테니 따라오라는 밀이 떨어지지나 않을까 하는 것이다.

“없어요. 우리 가지 한가지요. 만주서 다 뺏겼어요.”

“만주에서 왜 와?” “가리구 내 쫓아서요”

‘돈 얼마 있어? 많이 가지고 가면 안돼. ‘돈 없어서 밥도 못 먹었소.’ (Yom 2007, 253)

“Do you have razor blade? If you have, give me one.”

“They took even that while investigating there.” It was fortunate that the words were being conveyed without any problem even in this situation.

“What do you have in your bag?”

The scariest thing during a bag inspection was the phrase follow me.

“Nothing. We are just like beggars. They took everything in Manchuria.”

“How much money do you have? You cannot take a lot.” “We don’t have money, that’s why we couldn’t even eat.” (Author’s translation)

The above excerpt shows a situation where the refugees coming from Manchuria were continuously harassed and subjected to scrutiny and surveillance by the Soviet Army, which during the post-liberation period were the caretakers of the northern part of peninsula and the authorities who were running a provisional government. This surveillance, harassment and scrutiny is a phenomenon that can also be seen today, when people who have migrated to a new country for various reasons are constantly scrutinized and viewed with suspicion by both the local people and authorities. Migrants thus become unable to find peace in their new home due to the constant gaze of the locals and authorities, even if they have a legal right to be there. As such, migrants are neither fully rejected or accepted by their “new country”, in a rupture to their sense of belonging. This rupture is reflected in the novel and has various attributes and aspects. The re-dislocation in order to avoid further persecution is vividly presented in the novel by Yom Sang-seop (Choi 2011, 178).

One particular phenomenon in this context is the case of mixed-blood people, as reflected in the novel *Haebangui Adeul* 해방의 아들 (*Son of Liberation*). After Japan was defeated by the allied forces, even maintaining a slight relation with the defeated Japanese was looked down on by the Koreans who had just achieved their liberation. This presented a dilemma for those people who were half-Japanese and half-Korean, who can be seen as a kind of diaspora, since they are not sure about which country is their homeland. These mixed-blood Koreans thus faced a great dilemma with regard to choosing whether their loyalty was to Korea or Japan. *Haebangui Adeul* 해방의 아들 (*Son of Liberation*) explores this issue, and is based on aspects of Yom’s life in Manchuria and his settlement in Andong and Sinuiju (Qian 2020, 151). Junshik, the protagonist, is half-Japanese and half-Korean. In post-liberation Korea he attracts the attention of nationalists, who constantly try to test his loyalty. Since he is half-Korean, he cannot find a true home in Japan, and as he is half-Japanese he will always be viewed suspiciously by Korean nationalists. His identity thus suddenly become confusing and he becomes part of

a diaspora in his own homeland. This novel is a reflection on those people who want to return home after a diasporic experience, but even after they return, they cannot truly adjust to the new environment. They neither completely belong to the homeland nor to the country that they were living in as an immigrant. They thus move between a diaspora identity and the struggle to become a full member of their true homeland, which becomes a mirage for them. This thus creates a double diasporic experience, creating a new sense of rupture. Double diaspora occurs when a significant diasporic community experiences a second diaspora from a host land where they have significant history and to which they have developed a strong cultural affiliation (Wacks 2015, 12), as was the case with many Koreans who settled in Manchuria and then returned to Korea after the Second World War. The Koreans in general were living peaceful and prosperous lives in Manchuria until the defeat of the Japanese empire. But when they returned to their homeland they found a country divided on the basis of ideology into North and South Korea—a strange and unfamiliar place where they had to begin their lives all over again. This phenomenon and process of double diasporic experience is referred to as “double diasporization” or “double diasporic experience” in this article.

The other element that one can see in Yom’s novels is the confusion and hardship felt by the characters when it comes to choosing an ideology. In post-liberation Korea, the home that Koreans had always dreamed of was missing. The formation of a new Korean identity was not based on their identity of being “Han people”, but instead on a political ideology. The nation and its identity were missing the basic constituent of a nation—its people. The division into North and South was thus a double diasporic experience for Koreans in Manchuria, as some also went into internal exile because they disagreed with the ideology of one side or another.

Hyopung 효풍 (*Morning Breeze*) is another novel by Yom Sang-seop that can also be read as a memoir of his life in Manchuria. The central dilemma in the novel is whether to return to the homeland or to find a new homeland in the ideology that suits one’s interests. The protagonist wants to choose a middle path that can be compared to the transnational identity of the diaspora. The choice here becomes a form of rupture. The ideology that a person chooses will decide their fate, and this was a choice that many people faced in post-liberation Korea as they considered whether to live north or south of the 38th parallel.

The Mythical Homeland and Its Nostalgia

In *The 38th Parallel*, the narrator is on a bus after a lot of trouble and hard work, and some of the other passengers are singing about a goblin. The children of the

narrator, who are members of the second-generation diaspora, cannot relate to the song, but for the narrator it inspires a feeling of nostalgia. The goblin in the song has long been a part of the Korean oral tradition, and the feeling of nostalgia here takes the narrator back to his childhood, where he heard and sang the goblin song thousands of times, and it gives him a feeling of being close to the homeland—not physically, but emotionally.

The other instance that we see in *The 38th Parallel* is when the narrator meets a girl from Seoul in an inn. She speaks with a Seoul accent and becomes nostalgic about her homeland, as seen in the following excerpt. Here nostalgia is reflected in the feeling of happiness at seeing someone who comes from the same place. The girl does not know the narrator, but she knows the Seoul accent. The narrator explains this joy as like meeting a family member in difficult times, although they are not really related beyond having Seoul as a hometown, which inspires a feeling of nostalgia.

우리의 서울말투에 반색을 한 것인지, 쓸쓸한 판에 식구가 늘어
서 반가워 하는지 생글생글하며 요령있이 이야기를 잘한다. (Yom
2007, 212)

Perhaps because she was pleased with our Seoul accent, or because she was happy to have more family members in this lonely time, she spoke with a smile and tact. (Author's translation)

Ihap 이합 (*Separation*) is a story based on the lives of some members of the diaspora who came from Manchuria and settled in North Korea. It thus shows a communist society, and various conflicts related to this ideology are the central theme in the novel. The protagonist Kim Jang-han flees Manchuria and settles down in a city called S-eup with his wife and relatives. The ideological differences between husband Kim Jang-han and wife Shin suk-ki eventually force the husband to escape from North Korea. The story of *Separation* shows that the husband's settlement in a new environment was driven by greed as well as helplessness, and how his discontent and continuous longing for and nostalgia about his homeland keep reminding him of the country that was once his own. He envies his brother-in-law Jinho who went to South Korea, while he decided to stay in S-eup, because he could have had a better life there. In the story a few people can adapt to the new society and norms in North Korea, but others cannot, and this is reflected in the fight between the husband and wife, which also shows the different aspirations that different people have in different situations in a diasporic land. And while for some the move offers new opportunities, assimilating into the new society becomes difficult. The superficial reason for this seems to be the ideological contradictions of life in North Korea, but a closer reading shows that nostalgia for

one's homeland plays a bigger role. The homeland that was colonized but is still home to the narrator's relatives, who will sympathize with each other's pain and suffer together. In the same novel another example is when the narrator cannot find any news about his homeland. The heart always wants to be close to one's homeland, if not physically then at least emotionally. When one does not know what is happening in one's homeland, it is possible to imagine only good things, and so the nostalgia of good memories overwhelms logical thinking, and the urge to return becomes stronger, regardless of the reality. The ability of nostalgia and happy memories of one's native land to inspire a return is evident in the story of *Ihap* 이 합 (*Separation*), where Jang-han's difficult life in a new land and the fond memories of the past drive to return to his home in South Korea.

People who settle in a place far away from their homeland do not always do so voluntarily, or for the same reasons. The different motivations and ambitions they have will sometimes lead to clashes, and the willingness to stay and make a better life for oneself plays a great role in the diasporic mindset to stay in one's new home and endure the suffering this entails. However, for some there comes a time when one gives up the dream of a new life in an alien land and chooses to go home instead. In the story of *Separation* the protagonist also returns to Korea in search of the home that was promised after independence, but soon learns that the homeland also has its own problems, and this disillusionment is common among members of the diaspora who eventually go home and see how it has changed and is very different from their nostalgic fantasies.

Homecoming and the Pain of Disillusionment

The reality of returning to Korea was facing the division of the country and the presence of both Soviet and US forces on the "liberated" land, and this often triggered a feeling of disillusionment. This "de-diasporic" experience led to a "re-diasporic" experience among those who returned (Rogge 1994), as they became foreigners in their own country.

In *The 38th Parallel* the narrator crosses the 38th parallel. After seeing the Soviet Soldiers in the North, he imagines that at least his home in the South will be free from foreign intruders, but after entering the South the first thing he sees is the US army guarding a check post.

인제야 삼팔선을 건너셨다는 실감이 들면서도, 갖은 곤경을 다 겪고 들어서는 첫 번에 딱 마주친 사람이 미병이었고고나! 고 머리속에 몇 번이나 뇌어보았다. (Yom 2007, 264)

It finally felt like we had crossed the 38th parallel, but after going through all the hardships, the first person we encountered was American soldiers! I thought about it in my head several times. (Author's translation)

His illusion of a free land, free from foreign influence, is thus immediately shattered. He finds that even though Korea had been liberated, this brought in neo-colonizers in the guise of liberators. He soon realizes the futility of coming back to the homeland. Even though the narrator arrives in South Korea after considerable hardship, the home that he left years ago does not feel the same. Running away from persecution and finding hope in another country, then once again undergoing the same persecution in the new country, leads to a vicious cycle of trauma that is hard to overcome. The people who returned could not forget the persecution and violence they had experienced, and thus they lived in constant fear of getting victimized again, as can be seen in the climax of the story. After returning back to his native land the narrator is taken aback after he realizes that the economic and social conditions in Korea have not changed, and people are still living miserable lives. The country is divided on an ideological basis and it is being governed by a foreign power. The realization of a new reality that is very different from his expectations for a newly independent sovereign motherland makes him question his act of homecoming.

Yom presents a similar phenomenon in *Separation*, when Kim Jang Han settles in North Korea after coming back from Manchuria with the idea that this will mean a better life, and that sooner or later he will be able to visit his ancestral home in the South. At the beginning everything goes well, but slowly the conditions start to worsen. The situation in the North comes as a culture shock, as traditional family values are ignored and women have also been “liberated”, so they also want to work at the cost of ignoring the family. In post-liberation Korea, Jang Han believes that political ideology and propaganda have taken a bigger role in society. Jang Han's wife ignores him as well as their young children and devotes most of her time to serving the political ideology that has liberated her. She does not believe in traditional family values anymore, fights with her husband and ridicules him for being too conservative in the new, liberated Korea. Jang Han thus feels suffocated and cornered, becoming disillusioned with a country that cannot offer him a good life, because it has abandoned traditional social values. He believes that family should be a person's first priority, then society and country. He thinks that the liberation of the country had shattered its traditional values, and that his move to North Korea has been in vain, and so packs his bags once again to start a new journey in search of a real home where his aspirations will be fulfilled.

장한이는 혼자 맥없이 앉아서 어젯밤에 뒷방 사람이 창피하고 동리가 부끄럽게 싸우던 불쾌한 생각을 하다가, 이혼이라 두 해 달라면 해주지 하고 입을 악물며 허공에 대고 눈을 부릅뜨다가 옆에 앉았던 어린 것이 이상히 볼까 보아서 얼른 낫빛을 고쳤다. 그렇게 의심쩍고 못마땅하거든 이혼이라 두 하시구려. 하시구려가 안니라 좋도록 하십시다 그려. “죄 없는 어린 것들이 불쌍하다는 생각이거나, 이것도 급격한 과도기의 한때 풍조니, 주책없이 날뛰는 것을 덩달아서 마주 날뿔 수도 없다는 생각만 없으면야, 진정 이혼이 소원이 라면 덮어놓고 불들어 두려고 빌붙을 묘리도 없다는 역심이 드는 것이다. 그러나 생각하면 해방이 그 잘난 살림까지 거덜을 내놓고 인제는 계집까지 놓치게 된다면, 물론 해방을 타하는 것은 아니나 억울한 노릇이다. (Yom 1987, 100)

Jang Han sat alone, feeling embarrassed, and had unpleasant thoughts about the neighbours and the fights among the couple the night before, and then he clenched his mouth and glared at the air, thinking that he would divorce her if she asked for it, but quickly fixed his expression, thinking that the child sitting next to him might look at him strangely. If you are so suspicious and dissatisfied, then get a divorce. If you think about it, then do it. 'If you don't think that the innocent children are pitiful, or that this is a trend of these rapidly changing times, and that you can just run wild with them, then if divorce is what you really want, then there's no reason to try to hold on to it. However, if you think about it, if liberation means giving up your wonderful life and now even losing your woman, then of course I'm not blaming liberation, but it's unfair.' (Author's translation)

Reunion is a short story about a person who escapes from the communist system of the North. Liberty, freedom of thought and the futility of partition are debated in the novel, which also discusses the issue of the settlement of people who came back from exile, and who linger between the old memories and the new. The conflict between aspirations and reality plays a big role in the settlement of the returned diaspora. Even though one's body may have returned, the soul is left behind. Jang Han comes to the South with his son, leaving behind his wife and daughter. After he arrives in the South he asks about the prices of commodities, and finds out they are at an all-time high. The buses are full and so he cannot get in one, and he cannot afford a taxi because one costs as much as a bag of rice. His disillusionment breaks here, and he realizes the condition of South Korea is not so different to that of the North.

장한이가 도서관에 가서 해방 후의 책은 신문을 보고 와서, 이남은 이러다가는 모리배, 탐관오리에 쓰러지겠다고 혼자 분개도 하고 찬탄도 하는 것을 듣고, 형은 이런 소리를 하는 것이었다. (Yom 1987, 130)

When Jang Han went to the library and came back after reading old newspapers published after liberation, he was left with both indignance and admiration for his brother-in-law who said that if things continued like this, they would end up falling to the hands of thieves and corrupt officials, which was confirmed by his elder brother also. (Author's translation)

In the above excerpt one can see that although Jang Han returned to his ancestral home in Seoul, his home was not the same as he had imagined. The homecoming thus becomes a futile exercise because in the newly liberated South the conditions are not so different to those in the North, with criminals and corrupt officials in power. Soon he starts missing his wife and the family that he left behind in the North. The author shows the reunion of Jang Han and his wife as a hope for the reunification of the country. It also shows a hope that things will get better, as well as the futility of trying to go home. The illusion of homecoming is shattered, and thus the whole exercise of homecoming comes under scrutiny.

Conclusion

Yom Sang-seop went into exile in Manchuria to avoid persecution by Japanese colonial rule, but then realized his diasporic condition in his new home. The Ojokyeopwa policy, that in theory respected the identity of Koreans as Korean, but in reality, still tried to assimilate them into the identity of a 2nd class Japanese of the great Japanese empire. The liberation of Korea gave Yom an opportunity to go back to his homeland. His post-liberation novels also serve as memoirs of his time in Manchuria. They chronicle life there, and the exodus after being persecuted by the Manchurians after Japan was defeated. The novels that he wrote after coming back from Manchuria talk about the hardships and futility of independence, and show the “double diasporic” experience, in which even when a person from the diaspora returns home, the myth of the homeland keeps evading them. For Yom it was the partition of Korea and the ideological divides between people that caused this disillusionment, and his true homeland would have been only achieved after the reunification of the Korean peninsula. In this he chooses a middle path which he terms walking on both the legs instead of one. He believed

that the liberation of people was more important than ideological purity, and that a true nation could only be achieved if both the capitalist and communist ideologies could be hybridized. His homecoming was a futile one, and his novels from the post-liberation period reflect the “double diasporic” experience, where one’s body has returned home but one’s soul is still left somewhere wandering in the nostalgia of a homeland.

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Diasporic and Peripheral Vulnerabilities in Min Jin Lee's *Pachinko*

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to discuss the representations of *Zainichi* (the Korean Diaspora in Japan) and other peripheral identities in Min Jin Lee's novel *Pachinko* (2017). The paper will focus on the intersection between diaspora, as well as other marginal categories, and vulnerability. Regarded here as contiguous to the field of diaspora, the paradigm of vulnerability will be explored according to its multiple facets, while suggesting that layered vulnerabilities fabricate the psyche of the characters in the novel.

Apart from the (trans)generational trauma and the vulnerability that the *Zainichi* family faces in the novel, it is important to verify whether or how the writer opens up space for resistance, forms of empowerment or solidarity. In other words, the following question will be posed: is there something more than vulnerability and trauma that defines marginal identities? Lastly, in distinguishing between diasporic and peripheral identities, a few main and secondary characters will be discussed in parallel in order to explore the dynamic interplay between periphery and centre.

Keywords: vulnerability, trauma, diaspora, *Pachinko*, Min Jin Lee

Diasporične in periferne ranljivosti v romanu *Pachinko* avtorice Min Jin Lee

Izvleček

Namen tega prispevka je razpravljati o reprezentacijah *Zainichijev* (korejske diaspore na Japonskem) in drugih perifernih identitet v romanu *Pachinko* (2017) avtorice Min Jin Lee. Prispevek se bo osredotočil na presečišče med diasporo ter drugimi marginalnimi kategorijami in ranljivostjo. Paradigma ranljivosti, ki jo obravnavamo kot sorodno polju diaspore, bo raziskana glede na svoje številne vidike, pri čemer bo nakazano, da večplastna ranljivost ustvarja psiho likov v romanu.

Poleg (trans)generacijske travme in ranljivosti, s katero se v romanu sooča družina *Zainichijev*, je pomembno preveriti, ali in kako pisateljica odpira prostor za odpor, oblike opolnomočenja ali solidarnosti. Z drugimi besedami, zastavljeno bo naslednje vprašanje: ali obstaja še kaj več od ranljivosti in travme, kar opredeljuje marginalne identitete? Nazadnje

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bo pri razlikovanju med diasporičnimi ter obrobniimi identitetami vzporedno obravnavanih nekaj glavnih in stranskih likov, da bi raziskali dinamično vzajemno delovanje med obrobjem in središčem.

Ključne besede: ranljivost, travma, diaspora, *Pachinko*, Min Jin Lee

Introduction: Vulnerable Diaspora

The concept of vulnerability has been increasingly employed in recent decades in various domains by being given multiple definitions. Disciplines such as development studies, public health, environmental studies, sociology, economy and psychology have offered a variety of definitions and ways of evaluating vulnerability. The increasing interest in addressing the concept of vulnerability is especially determined by the multiple crises that humanity is now confronted with, and it is surely surfacing even more vigorously in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic. Depicted in terms of a “complex” concept or an “academic conundrum”, researchers from various fields have attempted to produce a history of the term, focusing on its diverse definitions and usages within various disciplines, such as the human geographer and environmental scholar Benjamin Wisner (2016).

In this paper, I attempt to explain the paradigm of vulnerability through its intersection with diaspora, as well as to define it in relation to some of its adjacent terms, such as *exposure*, *susceptibility*, *openness*, *relation with the Other*, or *care*. Moreover, regardless of its connection with trauma, and of its perception as a weakness, vulnerability will be read here as a concept with ambivalent connotations. It is true that in fact vulnerability has been widely perceived as endowed with a double valence. It has often been considered, and unfortunately still is, that vulnerability is a sign of weakness or passivity—and thus it has a negative connotation. For instance, in connecting these two concepts—diaspora and vulnerability—certain characteristics could be identified as generally illustrating diasporic communities as prone to developing various vulnerabilities. As an effect of their displacement, many diasporic communities may be readily vulnerable to issues such as: loss of homeland, impossibility in maintaining cultural identity, difficulty in making fulfilling connections within the host society, precarious citizenship, marginalization, and so on. These problems, and many more, culminating with the constant effort and stress that comes with being exposed to them, definitely weaken diasporic communities.

Vulnerabilities *per se* and the effort they imply in particular lead to an increase in the feeling of loss. The loss of one's homeland is paired with the loss of one's cultural identity, as well as the loss (mainly in the sense of an alteration) of one's

(past) memories. If we consider the connection between one's memories—of dear people or relevant moments in their lives, and so on—and the familiar (hometown) surroundings where such memories were initially built,¹ then physically distancing oneself from that familiar backdrop may lead to the difficulty of reenacting one's memories and thus losing the connection to them. In other words, the physical distance from one's hometown means losing the *ground* that keeps one more significantly rooted to one's memories. Meanwhile, the new surroundings of the host land may expose diasporic individuals to a loss of familiarity. Another problematic identity crisis may arise at the crossroads between the struggles to revive *the familiar*, and the attempt at connecting themselves to *the challenging new*. For some, the challenges of *the new* can be motivating and exciting, while for others they can be rather disturbing. What one may be highly disturbed by is, apart from the feeling of loss, the sense of becoming *the Other* by being perceived as a stranger, as well as becoming a stranger to oneself. Thus, a lack of authenticity may add to the outbreak of such an identity crisis. Moreover, all such problems a person may face have the potential to make them subject to stress, anxiety and even more serious mental issues. These are extreme yet highly possible risks of exposure to vulnerability that some diasporic communities may face. In many cases, apart from the psychological and existential impacts of one's dislocation, there are those diasporic communities many scholars deal with that suffer from multiple social, economic or political vulnerabilities, especially when the issue of racism is intertwined with all this. However, though they also touch on various social and legal vulnerabilities, Lee's diasporic vulnerabilities are more personal as she looks at the individual within the diasporic community. By doing so, the author unties the layers of vulnerabilities that subtly add one on top of the other, and she deals with diaspora related vulnerabilities that she blends with the universal vulnerabilities faced by everyone. Then she presents certain diasporic vulnerabilities in parallel with those characteristic of various minorities, such as sexual minorities.

However, apart from its negative implications, and as has been the case since the 1980s through the studies of a number of researchers, the (re)interpretation of vulnerability in a positive manner has often originated from acknowledging its double valence. For instance, in interpreting vulnerability as a synonym of *precariousness*, Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou (2013) stress both the negative and positive valences of the term. First of all, *precariousness* (understood here as vulnerability) has a negative connotation as it describes a condition imposed on certain individuals or marginal groups. Second, it also has a positive meaning on

1 The idea that connects physical places to memory has been extensively explored by scholars such as Edward S. Casey, Gaston Bachelard, or Yi-Fu Tuan.

which the authors focus through their study. While referring to such marginalized individuals or groups as “dispossessed subjects”, they indicate that it is this very type of vulnerability that holds a positive connotation because it serves as a point of resistance against dominant power structures; it brings about its potential for solidarity, ethical engagement; and it can become a tool in transforming the world into a much more inclusive one.

In a similar manner, and while also referring to the theoretical frameworks of trauma and vulnerability, we can still make use of these two concepts’ shared ambivalent valences. Despite the negative effects of a traumatic event, researchers such as Viktor Frankl² suggest that a trauma victim may benefit from a type of post-traumatic growth by discovering new and more relevant meanings to their lives, strengthening their empathy, fostering deeper connections with others, etc. In a similar way in which the theoretical framework of trauma also deals with the positive outcomes of traumatic events, Min Jin Lee creates characters whose lives are deeply permeated with the benefits of resilience, empathy, care, or mutual support. In her personal manner, the author illustrates such positive connotations of vulnerability through the connection built among her novel’s characters. First, she deals with the solid connections among the members of the various generations of the family—from the first to the fourth, they all relate to one another either through direct interaction, or through relating to the cherished memory of an already departed family member. Second, *Pachinko*’s author crosses the borders between centre and periphery, and establishes significant connections among representatives of the two realities. In doing so, she actually shows these two realities as one when it comes to its representatives’ suffering from marginalization. Moreover, centre and periphery can unify due to the empowerment individuals may sense while connecting to one another through the ties of care.

In this paper I will thus refer to the vulnerability presented in Lee’s novel as endowed with positive features regardless of its implied weaknesses. This positive reading of vulnerability comes as a counterpoint to the reality of “dispossessed subjects”, as endured by the characters of the novel, and is based on their accomplishments regardless of everything that works against them. As will be shown further on, such accomplishments become visible against their exposure and susceptibility to wounding.

2 Viktor Frankl describes such positive outcomes of trauma in his work entitled *Man’s Search for Meaning* (2000).

Vulnus and Trauma: Bearing Wounds is Building a Relation with the Other

The Openness of the Communicating Wounds

Acknowledged as an “elastic” and “seemingly multi-purposed concept” (Alyson Cole in Fernández-Santiago and Gámez-Fernández 2022), the usage of vulnerability “stretches” to the point of being also relevant to literary studies, in a similar manner in which trauma already has a quite long and well-known history of being employed as a literary concept. Both their etymologies share a common idea of suffering and pain. Vulnerability stands for a wounding/wound—the world vulnerable being derived from the Latin *vulnerare* (meaning *to wound*), and *vulnus* (*wound*) (as defined in the online version of the Merriam-Webster Dictionary). Its equivalent in Greek is *trauma*—bearing the same meaning of *wound*, though it was initially used merely to denominate a physical injury—both in Greek as well as in medicine. Thus, it is not surprising there are scholars who address both the concept of trauma and that of vulnerability, such as Jean-Michel Ganteau and Susana Onega, whose studies are also significant for reviewing most usages of the concept.³ As a matter of fact the paradigm of vulnerability can be perceived as a paradigm contiguous to that of trauma, as well as an extension or addition to it. Firstly, there is precisely the *openness* of the wound—*vulnus* or trauma—that represents a gate to communication. The wound does not merely present a piece of information about itself or the bearer of the wound, but also information that is being transmitted to the other—the listener/the witness, either wounded or non-wounded. In cases when the listener is also wounded, the *openness* of both wounds enables communication with each other. Nevertheless, this type of communication involves the presence of two parties, and this brings me to the second stream of thought regarding the intersection between trauma and vulnerability.

3 In their studies, Ganteau and Onega (2011; 2014) successfully review the key works on the paradigm of vulnerability from the 1980s, moving from Carol Gilligan’s research to present times, emphasizing the role that a group of French philosophers (such as Marie Gaille, Sandra Laugier, Guillaume Le Blanc, Nathalie Maillard, and Corine Pelluchon) has had on casting more light on the possibilities of referring to the paradigm of vulnerability. Among many researchers whose work on vulnerability has been reviewed in this manner, one worth mentioning in particular is Judith Butler (2004), also referred to in this paper, especially due to the fact that her work represents a milestone in the consolidation of the term vulnerability. The term and ways of (re)addressing it was brought about by 9/11 terrorist attack. In the aftermath of this tragic event, Butler was thus one of the relevant scholars whose work influenced the development of vulnerability as a concept. In addressing vulnerability, she adopted the terms *precariousness* and *precarity*. The state of being *precarious* is an intrinsic human condition—and not only due to everyone being subject to slowly aging and eventually dying. On the other hand, *precarity*, Butler suggests, refers to “a politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support” (Butler 2009, 25).

The Openness of the Listener

In its contemporary use, the paradigm of vulnerability is indebted to the current implications within the discourse of trauma which refer to the need for more attention being paid to “the Other”. The openness of the wound asks for the openness of the listener. While there is *openness* as exposure or susceptibility to a wound, or “a site of potential danger”, there is also the *openness* of the listener, meaning their ability to empathically listen to the bearer of the wound. In Ahmed’s words, “vulnerability makes a particular kind of bodily relation to the world in which openness itself is read as a site of potential danger, and as demanding evasive action. Emotions may involve *readings of such openness*, as spaces where bodies and worlds meet and leak into each other” (Ahmed 2004, 69).

The emotions implied in such a connection (*relation*) among bearers of wounds and listeners⁴ imply care for one another. “The ethics of care”⁵ embedded in the trauma discourse is built on the “responsibility for victimhood and vulnerability as susceptibility to the wound” (Ganteau and Onega 2017, 5). Responsibly and caringly dealing with victimhood and vulnerability are being perceived as more positive attitudes to trauma victims, as Fassin and Rechtman (2009) suggest. In their study, they add to the general idea according to which a person exposed to violence may become traumatized a quite recent one: that this very person may be recognized as a victim. Theorizing on the changing perception of the trauma victims they emphasize that authorities as well as common citizens’ attitude towards trauma victims has recently shifted from one of suspicion to one of sympathy, while, when (re)defying trauma and vulnerability, the “politics of reparation” adds to the more encompassing considerations of trauma, the concepts of susceptibility to the wound, exposure, and victimhood—all regarded as “characteristics defining what it is to be human” (Ganteau and Onega, 2017, 7). In other words, summing up the above mentioned researchers’ ideas, it is entirely human to be exposed and susceptible to a wound, which makes one indubitably vulnerable, as well as in need for care and reparation. Nevertheless, acts of reparation, accompanied by an attitude of care, could and should originate not only within the victim’s efforts at healing their wound, but also within the Other, whether a witness or a non-victim. It is the Other’s openness to caring and hearing the victim’s voice that has an active role within the victim’s process of reparation. This very role, as well as the

4 Listeners may also be bearers of their own wounds, which adds to the reading of vulnerability as a characteristic available to all humans.

5 In her work with a profound impact on feminism and ethics, Carol Gilligan (1982) highlights the significance of care and empathy within the process of recognizing and valuing different voices; one’s identity, she suggests, is insufficient without “the experience of interconnection” (Ganteau and Onega 2017, 6).

essential relation established between the victim's wound and the Other's capacity as a sympathetic and caring listener, has been emphasized by several researchers. As Ganteau and Onega (2017) also remarked in their study, Cathy Caruth is one of the most important researchers on trauma studies to have mentioned the relation between trauma and alterity, or the trauma victim and the witness. In Caruth's words, trauma should not be only read "as the story of the individual in relation to his own past, but as the story of the way in which one's own trauma is tied up with the trauma of another, the way in which trauma may lead, therefore, to the encounter with another, through the very possibility and surprise of listening to another's wound" (Caruth 1996, 8). The wound can thus be also defined, Ganteau and Onega suggest, as a "trace of a relation, including a link to the other's wound" (Ganteau and Onega 2017, 5).

In looking into *Pachinko*'s characters' diasporic identity and the wounds that this type of identity exposes them to, such a "trace of a relation" among them will be visible in terms of the solidarity and care they build for one another, as well as the transgenerational trauma they bear within and keep on perpetuating. Moreover, as previously mentioned, all these characters' deepest means of communication is precisely through the wounds they bear—either the generationally transmitted wound that they share and which is embedded within their diasporic identity, or the other layers of wounds that they accumulate on personal levels according to their particular manners of resilience.

Vulnerability in *Pachinko*

Min Jin Lee's *Pachinko* is a saga of four generations, presented in three parts. The first part, *Gohyang (Hometown)*, describes the lives of the first generation of a Korean family, unfolding during the period 1910–1933, in Yeongdo, Busan. The story starts with Hoonie and Yangjin, a couple who brought into the world—after facing six miscarriages and having witnessed their first three children dying—a girl named Sunja. After Hoonie, a man with a cleft palate and a twisted foot eventually dies of tuberculosis, Yangjin remains with her daughter to run a boarding house. A few years later, Sunja is seduced by a good-looking, older man, named Koh Hansu. She becomes pregnant, but luckily Baek Isak, a Presbyterian minister from Pyeongyang, saves her honour, marries her and takes her to Japan. Sunja and Isak get to live together with Isak's brother, Yoseb, and his wife Kyunghee, in a small place in Osaka. Soon Sunja gives birth to Noa, and later to Isak's son, Mozasu. The lives of the third generation, the children of Sunja and Isak respectively, are depicted in *Motherland*, the second part of the novel, which unfolds between

1939 and 1962. During this time many things happen. The two boys grow up with different life perspectives; their mother and aunt start working in a *yakiniku* restaurant, making *kimchi* without knowing that such a good opportunity to make money comes from Hansu, who wants to protect his only son and offer him a better life. After Isak gets imprisoned for his religious beliefs, Hansu arranges to take them all to Tamaguchi's farm where they can work and be safe. Noa starts working as a bookkeeper and secretary for a Japanese businessman, while Mozasu is unexpectedly hired as a pachinko boy. They both prove to be excellent employees, and quickly get promoted. Mozasu marries Yumi, while due to his relationship with Akiko, Noa accidentally finds out who his real father is. Deeply affected by the reality of being the son of a *yakuza*, Noa leaves without wanting to ever be found by any of his relatives. The third part of the novel, *Pachinko*, continues narrating the life experiences of the third generation, while introducing the fourth generation, and the action takes place from 1962 to 1989. Noa lives in Nagano, marries a Japanese woman with whom he has four children, ends up working in a pachinko parlour despite his abilities and all his big dreams, and finally commits suicide immediately after Sunja's visit.

The representative of the fourth generation is Solomon, Mozasu's son, who after his mother's accidental death continues to study hard and soon proves to be outstanding in his finance-related job. While the members of the first two generations die, become old or sick, Mozasu tries to rebuild his life in his partnership with Etsuko, and Solomon is emotionally exposed to different types of knowledge through his relations with Hana and then Phoebe. His work life also provides him with a tough lesson, as in the end he is fired because his father is seen as a *yakuza*, which makes him choose to work together with his father in the pachinko business.

As previously mentioned, the aim of this paper is to identify various types of vulnerability faced by the characters in the novel. As will be shown, most characters are built on multiple layers of vulnerability—each describing either universal aspects of vulnerability, or particular facets of it. It is precisely the layered vulnerability that is characteristic of Lee's writing. Most characters in the novel are highly exposed to various vulnerabilities, such as the vulnerability to witnessing their own or another's aching or aging body, the vulnerability to death, as well as the vulnerability to being defined by/reduced to a diasporic/peripheral identity.

The Vulnerability to Physical Deterioration and the Approach of Death

The vulnerability to physical deterioration refers to two types of vulnerability: the vulnerability to acknowledging the natural aching and aging process of one's own

body and that a loved one, and the vulnerability to witnessing the approach death of loved one.

The Vulnerability to Acknowledging One's/A loved One's Deteriorating Body

The novel abounds with the diseased, physically impaired, and weakened, or simply with characters whose natural aging process is being accelerated by extreme fatigue or physical suffering. Starting with the first generation, we find out that Hoonie is not just the only surviving son in his family, but also a man born with a cleft palate and a twisted foot. Shortly after marrying Yangjin and their daughter Sunja is born—after losing three children and surviving not less than six miscarriages—Hoonie dies of tuberculosis. Yangjin goes on to live an exhausting life and in the end dies of stomach cancer. Koh Hansu too, after becoming old and diagnosed with prostate cancer, ends up living in a hospital. Isak and Yoseb's bodies also ache at different times—a fact that brings more suffering by exposing each of the two brothers to the vulnerability of witnessing a loved one's deteriorating body. At the same time, Hana, a secondary character (though very important to demonstrating Lee's implied idea on the universality of vulnerability), ends up in a hospital bed after an abortion, working as a hostess, and eventually becoming ill with a sexually transmitted disease. Other secondary characters also suffer from different types of cancer, such as Haruki Totoyama's mother.

By describing all these characters' lives, the author seems to point to one of the most essential aspects of vulnerability—the vulnerability to the inevitable process of the human body's debilitation through illness, aging or both. By doing so, she also reiterates that being human means being vulnerable. An irreversible and gradual alteration of one's corporeality is an essential aspect of a universally intrinsic process that any human passes through. It is what Butler (2009) refers to as one's state of being *precarious*, or in other words exposed to being vulnerable to illness, aging, and eventually death.

Nevertheless, in these characters' particular instances we can add to the vulnerability of the human the vulnerability of the marginal, and thus the vulnerability of acknowledging the frailty of one's own corporeality or witnessing a loved one's weakening of the body bears additional meaning in the novel. For instance, while becoming aware of their deteriorating bodies, both in Yoseb's as well as in Isak's cases, their physical alteration and the acknowledgement of their approaching death are heavily augmented by their sense of guilt for their family. Such a sense of guilt originates from a deep sense of responsibility, while their responsibility is being intensified precisely by the particular circumstances they are facing and by their newly gained identity—that of marginal individuals who need more than anyone

else to survive. Moreover, they both feel that their survival tactics, such as preserving silence, or on the contrary saying what they are expected to, keeping a low profile, and being extremely industrious, represent their own responsibility. Adopting such behaviours means maintaining a high degree of responsibility towards their family.

Starting with the confident statement of "I can take care of this family" (Lee 2017, 160), Yoseb gradually becomes more and more emotionally affected by the hardships the two of them have to endure, especially after his brother's arrest due to his religious beliefs. The "unspeakable grief" (ibid., 173) that he feels while being aware of the rapid and irreversible deterioration of his brother's health, also determines his own physical alterations. Therefore, in this case, being vulnerable to a loved one's deteriorating health may lead to witnessing the gradual and irreversible weakening of one's own body: "[...] Isak's arrest had altered him considerably. Patches of gray smudged his once jet-black hair, and he suffered from intense stomach cramps" (ibid., 173). Later on, after he suffers a life-threatening accident and sees his family relocated and in danger of disintegration, Yoseb acknowledges his own health as "declining precipitously" (ibid., 259), which makes him want "to apologize for not providing for them [the family] and for the expense he caused them, but he couldn't say these things now" (ibid., 291). He also feels guilty for not being able to properly take care of his brother and for causing the tragedy of his imprisonment: "Isak-ah, why did I bring you to this hell? I was so lonesome for you. I was wrong, you know, to bring you here, and now I'm punished for my selfishness" (ibid., 211). Isak is no different from his brother, and though he "had prayed constantly for his family's provision" once he becomes vulnerable to his deteriorated body after being imprisoned, he senses the same responsibility and guilt for not being able to fully support Sunja and the boys. "I brought you here and make your life more difficult" (ibid., 208), he says.

It is not only Isak's and Yoseb's vulnerability with regard to acknowledging their own frail bodies, or the vulnerability to bitterly witnessing each other's irreversible weakness, but also their family members' exposure to such vulnerabilities. Mozasu becomes vulnerable to his family's needs in childhood, when he maturely acknowledges he will need to make a lot of money, which soon after he does, since his greatest preoccupation is to work as much as possible in order to provide enough to cover both the bills for Yoseb's medical treatment and for Noa's studies. Sunja's and Kyunghee's emotional response to their husbands' acknowledged vulnerability to their own deteriorating bodies adds to the family's increasing vulnerability. In such a way, through each character's own vulnerability as well as through the Other's emotional response to it, multiple layers of vulnerabilities add one on top of the other. The vulnerability to witnessing a loved one's aching or aging body complements the vulnerability to acknowledging one's own irreversibly

weakening body. It is precisely such layered vulnerabilities and (trans)generational traumas that create these characters' psyches.

The two women witnessing their husbands feeling vulnerable makes them vulnerable, too, as this type of exposure makes them feel helpless. They do not complain much, but form a silent team preparing and selling *kimchi* together, as well as effectively teaming up and working through their common pain. They support one another when their husbands suffer. They are pragmatic, with a developed sense for survival. Sunja feels sorry for not being able to talk to her sons about their father's condition, though she is prepared for the worst. Without her husband's support, on top of feeling vulnerable to her husband's deteriorating health, she starts feeling even more "ashamed of her life, her powerlessness" (ibid., 247) since she is more dependent on Hansu's help, which makes her feel humiliated. In such a way, various types of vulnerabilities are inevitably paired with different feelings and emotional responses due to particular circumstances, as well as to the even more particular circumstance of being an individual belonging to the periphery.

While Sunja and Kyunghee form a silent team, supporting one another and working for the betterment of the family, when it comes to giving voice to their vulnerabilities and to the emotional responses they determine within their psyche, Isak and Yoseb are more verbally expressive than their wives—they verbalize their sense of shame and failure, and express it in an apologetic form to their spouses. Their personally acknowledged role has always been that of responsible carers, and failing at this makes them apologetic, while their wives' role has been that of always being ready for sacrifice and never allowing their husbands to suffer. Sunja's promise to protect her husband from suffering silences her and suppresses the possibility of verbally expressing any of her worries or fears.

The Vulnerability to Witnessing a loved One's Death Nearing

As time passes, their vulnerability to acknowledging/witnessing their own and loved ones' debilitating bodies is carried on by the vulnerability to their own death approaching/witnessing a family member's death. Though the whole novel is filled with premature death and suicide, two instances worth mentioning in particular are those of Yoseb and Noa. On the one hand, as he is witnessing his own body's deterioration, Yoseb becomes terrorized with the thought of death approaching:

What surprised him was that he felt closer to death, he felt the terror of death, its very finality. There were so many things he had failed to do. [...] He thought of his parents, whom he should have never left; his brother, whom he should never have brought to Osaka; and he thought of the job in Nagasaki he should have never taken. (Lee 2017, 290)

His vulnerability to his approaching death equals the vulnerability to his fear of failure. As such, his fear of death is not a melancholy for the end of his own life, but a fear of having failed his family. Death does not merely mean the termination of his life, but the end of his responsibility towards his family—the same responsibility that has always been a catalyst for their connection and survival as a family.

On the other hand, there is Noa who commits suicide as his perfection—that of fitting in to the extent of being identical to a native Japanese—proves to be false the moment he is found by his mother. His mother's unexpected visit represents a reminder of his lost authenticity, as well as the possible danger of being discovered by others. Realizing this puts his whole lifelong struggle for perfection, as well as his vulnerability to obtaining it at all costs, into perspective: he succeeded in getting closer to the mimicked identity of a native Japanese, yet he felt a sense of failure as he distanced himself from his family and lost his authenticity.

*The Vulnerability to Being Defined by a Diasporic or a Peripheral Identity*⁶

Along with the universal vulnerabilities to acknowledging the irreversible weakening of one's body, or the vulnerability to witnessing a loved one's aching or aging body, the characters in *Pachinko* suffer from the vulnerability of being defined by a diasporic or peripheral identity. Here *being defined* by a particular identity—either diasporic or peripheral—is to actually be understood as *being reduced to it*. The features that define such individuals are those that reduce them to a status of either “half-citizens”, by being referred to as *Zainichi Kankokujin/Chosenjin*, or as outcasts (*burakumin*). Being reduced to the identity of an outcast or that of a half-citizen is caused by various incompatibilities with the expected norms that society has set for either groups or individuals. At the same time it represents an amputation of an individual's or a group's distinctiveness.

Diasporic Identities: “Half-citizens” and Their Constant Drive for Perfection

A diasporic identity is prominent through the characters' constant drive for perfection, unceasing preoccupation with homemaking and dealing with housing issues, as well as exposure to abrupt and new challenges. Moreover, characters with a diasporic identity have a great deal of anxiety, scepticism or suspicion—they are always

6 A diasporic identity could indeed be perceived as peripheral due to its embedded ostracism and dual belonging, yet in this paper I distinguish between the two in order to consider the category of native Japanese—represented here by the characters Haruki Totoyama and Hana, who are ironically treated as individuals with peripheral identity—as well as to hint at the commonalities of the two concepts, such as the experiences of marginalization, identity and belonging issues, or cultural hybridity.

prone to an imposed silence and keeping a low profile. The drive for perfection takes many forms, such as the need for success (in terms of money and career), the need to fit in (with society itself, or a certain group of people), the display of flawless behaviour or a remarkable physical appearance. Moreover, the vulnerability to being reduced to a diasporic identity is in addition to other personal vulnerabilities depending on the character, as well as certain universal vulnerabilities. Simultaneously their collective vulnerability—as a diasporic/peripheral group, as well as their personal vulnerabilities—such as that of the social construction of gender, bring up various survival strategies to suit such particular circumstances.

The vulnerability to (self) imposed perfection marks the characters even prior to their migration to Japan. The need to be perfect in whatever they are doing is present even for the first generation of characters, those who never leaved the Korean Peninsula. Yangjin is, for instance, described as never being idle, always paying for coal on time, as well as being known as the best cook. Koh Hansu, though depicted as an “arrogant interloper”, is the best at his business. In his perfection, Isak could have passed for a rich Japanese man in the way he dressed, also perceived as a *yangban*, though he lived his life as an invalid due to his medical condition. For Isak and Yoseb, the vulnerability to witnessing their brother Sam-el’s suffering and death affected them in a similar manner, increasing their drive for perfection. Though in the case of Isak the drive for perfection crystallized in a life as a pastor—as a personal way to adopt self-sacrifice and religious meaning to suffering—for Yoseb it took the shape of always assuming responsibility for the family’s needs, and always having a professional and irreproachable attitude at his job as a foreman at a biscuit factory. His manners and dress copy the Japanese model, almost like a disguise in order to fit in as perfectly as possible.

Yoseb’s wife, Kyunghee, is also presented as a remarkable woman in every respect. In their drive for perfection, they brought in a useful ally—their mutual support of one another, and the strength and optimism that come from within. Apart from that, another essential component of the life strategy they adopted was that of keeping their heads down and working hard. Understanding the importance of creating and then strictly following such a path, Isak also abandons her ideals with regard to fighting against colonization. Influenced by their attitude, Sunja feels that things would change for the better: “They’d make a tasty broth from stones and bitterness” (Lee 2017, 117), she says. Yoseb abandons the Christlike necessity to resist oppression for the newly achieved urgency to keep himself safe and also provide safety for his loved ones. Therefore, once they have moved to Osaka, all these members of the generation of Koreans born on the Korean Peninsula developed a survival strategy that corresponded to each of their vulnerabilities. Even their physical appearance seems to be adjusted to suit their survival strategy. Yoseb

is short, powerful and quick, as if always ready to sneak through extreme situations. Though Isak has a frail appearance—due to his medical condition—he now looks purposeful as he has the responsibility to keep everyone safe in Osaka. Yet their continuous struggle to always keep themselves vigilant, calm and in control, makes them anxious—an anxiety which they tried to hide and which surfaces at times in the form of Yoseb's crankiness, or the gaze of Sunja's small eyes. Anxiety is doubled by scepticism and suspicion. In dialogue with unknown people, when offered a job, or in relation to their neighbours after being able to buy their house, they all remain sceptical and suspicious.

In relation to their diasporic identity, a constant preoccupation with housing issues and homemaking is another associated motive. However, the first generation of migrants are not very much involved with making a home in Osaka, but instead preoccupied with creating resistance and strengthening a sense of solidarity. The social representation of Ikaino—its depiction as a Korean ghetto—where the first generation of migrants live, sharing the same roof, contradicts the lived experience of the place. The house they all share is characterized as a “boxlike shack” (Lee 2017, 112). It is a place that is only suitable for “pigs and Koreans”, “not quite like home”, Yoseb says, but it will soon “do very well for us”, Isak replies, referring to himself and Sunja. Yet as times goes by it will be shown that the residents of the “boxlike shack” attach meaning to it, as it becomes the place where some of their children are born or some of them dies; moreover it is the place where the first generation of migrants first gathered and created family cohesion. The place is the visual embodiment of their diasporic identity—it depicts their social inferiority, yet it nurtures the attachment to one another. It becomes a nest for resistance, mutual empowerment and solidarity. It takes the efforts and success of the coming generations to start being preoccupied with homemaking.

Peripheral Identities: Outcasts' Stigma

Though circumstances are different, some of the characters' exposure to negative criticism, lack of empathy, hatred, neglect, or ostracism, cause a similar degree of suffering to that felt by those characters who are defined by a diasporic identity. The characters with a peripheral identity are those Japanese whose flawed reputation makes them either invisible—in the sense of being neglected—in the eyes of the rest of the Selves, or too visible while being put at the centre of their critical attention.

The Periphery of Those from Stigmatized Family Backgrounds: Hana

Some time after losing his wife Yumi in a car accident, Mozasu gets involved romantically with Etsuko, a Japanese lady with three children, referred to in the

novel as outcasts. Among them Hana is the one who befriends Solomon. Through secondary characters such as Hana, the author raises the issue of false purity and perfection. On the one hand, though a Japanese citizen, Hana is far from being regarded as a pure Japanese. Moreover, her family background—having no father, having a mother with a bad reputation, and being pregnant at only 15 years old—inevitably places her on the outskirts of society. She then fails in her attempt at normalizing her life as she can only work as a hostess. This “dirty flower” (Lee 2017, 473), as she refers to herself, will soon perish before having any chance to blossom. In her relation to society’s norms she is dispossessed of her own identity, and her family background as well as her whole life become a long and ongoing process of dispossession that is enacted and continuously reinforced on her (Butler and Athanasiou 2013, 2). Though a Japanese citizen residing in her homeland, Hana is pushed to the periphery of the society she belongs to due to her lack of purity and conformity. But ironically, the Korean Solomon appears to be much better integrated within society and definitely more successful, including financially. Once Hana meets Solomon and gets invited to his birthday party, she notices his privileged status and remarks ironically: “I wish my dad was a yakuza. [...] American private schools, millions in the bank, and a chauffeur. [...] He has a fancy party that’s nicer than most weddings” (ibid., 440–41). In reality, in order to be less vulnerable to society’s expectations and to the ostracism and agony it inflicts upon them, what each of the pair has does not suffice on its own. A financially or professionally fulfilled life is incomplete if, as in Solomon’s case, a person has an alien registration card and needs to request permission to stay in Japan every three years. On the other hand, being a native Japanese, like Hana or Haruki, is not enough as long as one has a poor family background.

By contrast, Solomon’s uncle, Noa, engages in a perpetual struggle for purity and perfection, which could finally and irreversibly erase his diasporic identity. His impurity comes from his background, as in Hana’s case. Yet he never gives up on hiding it, and thus becomes vulnerable to chasing the purity and perfection of being identical to the Self. His extreme efforts with regard to completely blending in with Japanese society finally reach an extreme when he is visited by his mother. He commits suicide immediately after this, as it represents a reminder of his stained past, as well as a danger of being discovered by his family and acquaintances who all saw him as Japanese. Noa was thus forced by circumstances to suppress his identity, which was corroborated by his own determination to being identical to the Self and thus lose the distinction of the Other. He mimicked the Self’s identity to such an extent that he completely lost his authenticity, and prior to his suicide his greatest achievement was that of successfully blending in as a Self.

The Periphery of Sexual Minorities: Haruki Totoyama

Another secondary character with a peripheral identity is Haruki Totoyama. He is Mozasu's best friend, who lives "on the border street between the Korean ghetto and the Japanese poor" (Lee 2017, 270).

[...] rumors spread that Haruki was a *burakumin*, though he wasn't. Then it was discovered that Haruki had a younger brother with a head shaped like a dented summer melon. Even as a Japanese, it had been difficult for Haruki's mother to find a better place for them to live, because many of the Japanese landlords thought the family was cursed. Haruki did not have a father [...] Haruki cared deeply about fitting in and tried very hard, but even the kids with the lowest social status wouldn't give him a chance. (Ibid., 270)

In addition to his poverty, the unfortunate family background of having no father, and a mentally impaired brother, Haruki is a homosexual—an identity which he has to hide in order to survive within society. He thus ends up marrying Ayame. His background and identity are seen as shameful because he is often taken for a Korean citizen, which makes the border between Selves and Others even more problematic. Mozasu "did not intend to be a good Korean" (ibid., 270) as he could see no point in that, yet he also did not try to turn himself into a "good Japanese", unlike his brother Noa. All he attempted to do was survive and offer his family a better life—independent and financially stable. On the other hand, Haruki did aspire to being a good Japanese—meaning being accepted as a Japanese man within his own Japanese society. Nevertheless, any sense of belonging is definitely and agonizingly denied by all followers of the norms, which leads to a re-evaluation of the meaning of the Other by making it more inclusive—in the sense that anyone who fails at following the norms is subject to being perceived as the Other.

By pairing a diasporic identity with a peripheral identity, such as Solomon and Hana, as well as Mozasu and Haruki, the author demonstrates the complicated dynamics between Others and Selves, and indicates that even a Self can be viewed as an Other if it does not perfectly fit in with the harsh norms regulated by society. In such an intricate way, in terms of humans' deepest vulnerabilities, the borders between centre and periphery can be easily broken. As Min Jin Lee seems to argue, ostracism due to the incapacity to fit in or to the desire to conform to any rules and expectations, represents a common vulnerability to either diasporic or peripheral identities.

Layered Vulnerabilities: The Case of Sunja

Starting with the colonial period in the Korean Peninsula, the lives of the first generation of characters—represented by Hoonie and Yangjin—present themselves as marked by illness, misfortune, loss and early death. All the adversities that mark these characters' lives represent the layers of vulnerabilities they are fabricated from. Sunja is a central character in the novel as well as one of the best instances of a character with layered vulnerabilities. The first and most family rooted misfortune she faces is being stained by the reality of being the daughter of a disabled father. As a young girl Sunja had no marriage prospects due to her father's condition. Moreover, while her legacy from her father was the stigma of "people don't want(ing) *that* [emphasis added] in their bloodline" (Lee 2017, 64), her mother Yangjin leaves her the legacy of a painful truth that she had previously inherited from her own mother, which would end up shaping Sunja's whole life: "Men have choices that women don't" (ibid., 13), and "a woman's life is endless work and suffering." (ibid., 30) Apart from the inexorable work and suffering that a woman will always be vulnerable to, prior to Sunja's marrying Baek Isak, Yangjin also warns her about the role of men in a woman's life.

There is suffering and then more suffering. It's better to expect it, you know. You're becoming a woman now, so you should be told this. For a woman, the man you marry will determine the quality of your life completely. A good man is a decent life, and a bad man is a cursed life—but no matter what, always expect suffering, and just keep working hard. No one will take care of a poor woman—just ourselves. (ibid., 30)

The fear of never being able to marry Sunja due to her father's misfortune, and the fear of her marrying a "bad man", evaporate as soon as Baek Isak becomes determined to make her his wife, thus saving her from an ill-fated life, especially since her misfortune doubled when she got pregnant by a man who would never marry her. Yet Sunja is still vulnerable to the humiliation of having discovered that Koh Hansu is married and has a family in Osaka. She is also vulnerable to her feeling as a woman with a damaged reputation, and that of having erred and embarrassed her mother. This precarious position she finds herself in is due to the role and identity that she has to perform in relation to the men in the patriarchal society she is living. Unlike others, she is not a character who deviates from these norms. On the contrary, she tries her best to follow them rigorously, yet the very exposure to such patriarchal norms is amplified by the vulnerability to new challenges and unknown norms, such as those imposed by Christianity—a foreign religion she cannot comprehend.

A touching episode involving Sunja's vulnerability to new challenges is when Isak takes her to Pastor Shin. In Pastor Shin's office, apart from feeling humiliated and embarrassed, she finds herself extremely uncomfortable due to the pressures from the pastor who wants her to repent for her sins and ask forgiveness. Not a Christian, and without ever being exposed to Christian teachings, Sunja cannot comprehend the meaning of sin or the love of a merciful God. She can only understand that she "made a serious mistake" with regard to her mother, and became "a burden [...] for the good pastor" (ibid., 91). She is sincere in her apology, yet becomes vulnerable to the repeated efforts of Pastor Shin. Her mother, also present in the office, tries to alleviate Sunja's pain and put an end to her sobbing by making her repeat what she is asked to say: "Tell the pastor – tell him that you want forgiveness from the Lord" (ibid., 92).

However, neither Yangjin nor Sunja knew what that would mean. Would there be a ritual like when you gave the shaman a sow and money to make the crops grow? Baek Isak had never once mentioned anything about forgiveness.

'Could you? Could you forgive me?' Sunja asked the older minister.

[...]

'Sunja, it's not up to me to forgive you,' he replied.

'I don't understand,' she said, finally looking directly at Pastor Shin's face, unable to keep her eyes lowered. (Ibid., 92)

This episode marks the beginning of Sunja's emotional journey of exposure to a series of new challenges in her life—the challenges of the new and the unfamiliar, such as having to deal with incomprehensible aspects of Christian belief, being married to a Presbyterian minister, as well as leaving her mother and homeland behind and starting a new life in Japan. Once she arrives in Osaka she is about to become a member of the Korean diaspora in Japan, ready to "be a perfect Korean" as Pastor Shin put it, and to fulfil the role her mother set out—that of making a good home for her husband and child, as well as make sure they do not suffer. Her already developed vulnerabilities to being stigmatized as a child with a disabled father, then as a woman in a patriarchal society, would soon double her newly experienced vulnerability with regard to a diasporic identity. It is hard to say which of her layered vulnerabilities is rooted deeper in her psyche and is affecting her the most, yet the vulnerability to her diasporic identity definitely exposes her to multiple stressors, and at the same time it also leads her to self discovered empowerment and resistance.

Empowerment and resistance are built on the relationship Sunja develops with other family members, while at the same time such relationships are permanently

fuelled by the care these individuals have for one another. While the author of the novel brings to attention various types of vulnerabilities, including the universal ones, she also emphasizes the universality of its implied possibilities. As Margrit Shildrick mentions, humans, as individuals or groups exposed to being susceptible to becoming wounded, develop “an ethics of relationship” (Shildrick 2002, 70), in which good life is based on *care*. At the same time, *care* can be understood as “attention to the other, responsiveness to the other, solicitude for the other, and practical help of the other” (Ganteau 2015, 11). As it can also be reiterated through the caring relations among the main characters of the novel, based on the idea of such an implied *relation*, many researchers have emphasized the positive power of vulnerability, since the possibility of empowerment is indeed embedded within the paradigm of vulnerability. Interconnectedness and solidarity are precisely such positive powers of vulnerability (Ganteau and Onega 2017, 9). Though vulnerable, these characters also show an “ability to be vulnerable”, as Brené Brown suggests. Their vulnerability is thus not only a sign of incapacity to totally fit in, of incompleteness or weakness, but also a measure of courage—that of “daring greatly” and constantly, as well as a catalyst for compassion and connection (Brown 2012, 3).

Conclusions

Most definitions of vulnerability seem to imply the existence of such a *relation* between “the same” and “the Other”,⁷ and to have a common denominator which is its connection to concepts such as *exposure* and *susceptibility*. To be vulnerable means to be open to all sorts of attacks as well as being exposed to being wounded in both a physical and an emotional manner. Through their newly gained identity—that of diaspora subjects—most characters in Min Jin Lee’s novel *Pachinko* are vulnerable to such a *relation* formed between them as a diaspora group and the colonizer, whose territory they migrated to.

It has been shown in this paper that the prominent feature of Lee’s manner of dealing with diasporic vulnerabilities is her presenting them alongside the vulnerabilities of other minorities and marginalized individuals, as well as her way of placing them within the panoply of the universal vulnerabilities faced by everyone. The characters in this novel were thus discussed in terms of the layered vulnerabilities that shape their psyches. The main characters were described as being vulnerable to their highly challenging diasporic identity—a vulnerability that is often juxtaposed with universal vulnerabilities such as those in relation to gender

7 “The same” is defined in relation to “the other,” or “the self manifests itself in relation to some constrictive other”, as Ganteau and Onega suggest (2011, 7–16; 2017, 3).

expectations, or acknowledging one's own weakening body, or witnessing a loved one's death or deteriorating health. Yet, as has also been shown, there are secondary characters whose peripheral identities result from their differences in terms of sexuality (Haruki Totoyama), or the lifestyle they have adopted as an unfortunate result of being marginalized due to their family background (Hana). Some of their personal stories are subtly presented and entwined with those of the main characters. Nevertheless they offer illuminating insights into the author's depiction of alterity and vulnerability, as well as into the dynamic interplay between the periphery and the centre. By showing that a Self can move from centre to periphery and become an Other, it is emphasized even more that vulnerability represents a common trait in depicting both Selves and Others.

The story of vulnerability due to discrimination and ostracization will continue as long as the story of human vulnerability. Vulnerability—in its various forms—will continue to permeate human existence. It is important, the writer seems to emphasize, just to acknowledge it and to refer to it better by allowing ourselves to be vulnerable, and protecting others from becoming more vulnerable than we already are.

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THEMATIC FOCUS:
KOREAN DIASPORAS

Individual Narratives and Biographies

Can the Hometown Also Be the Ideology? Exploring the Narrative of a North Korean Student Studying in Hungary

*KIM Bogook**

Abstract

This article chronicles the life of Choi Inhwan, focusing on his movements across North Korea, Hungary, Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia, and Switzerland in the 1950s. Choi's North Korean background is traced, with scant details available after his return in 1960. Born in 1934 to ordinary farmers, Choi's early education spanned from primary school to high school in Uiju, North Pyongan Province. His academic journey continued in Hungary (1953–1957), where he faced language challenges but excelled in Hungarian and biology at Budapest Medical University. His involvement in the 1956 Hungarian Revolution is highlighted by multiple sources, confirming his active participation and subsequent escape to Yugoslavia, followed by relocation to Switzerland as a political refugee in 1957.

In Switzerland, Choi's ideological stance fluctuated dramatically. Initially supported by local and international refugee aid organizations, he displayed anti-socialist sentiments. However, by late 1959 Choi approached both Chinese and Hungarian embassies, expressing a desire to return to North Korea via Hungary, showcasing a sudden ideological shift towards anti-capitalism. His eventual repatriation to North Korea in 1960 is documented through Hungarian diplomatic channels, marking the culmination of his complex and politically charged journey. The article underscores Choi's multifaceted ideological evolution and his strategic navigations through the geopolitical landscapes of the Cold War era, reflecting broader patterns of defection and political realignment among North Korean students and intellectuals abroad during that period.

Keywords: diaspora, defector, National Archives of Hungary, Diplomatic Archives of the Republic of Korea, North Korea, South Korea, Hungary, Eastern Europe

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Ali je lahko domači kraj tudi ideologija? Raziskovanje pripovedi severnokorejskega študenta, ki je študiral na Madžarskem

Izvleček

Članek opisuje življenje Choi Inhwana, pri čemer se osredotoča na njegovo gibanje po Severni Koreji, Madžarski, Federativni ljudski republiki Jugoslaviji in Švici v petdesetih letih 20. stoletja. Zasledimo Choijevo severnokorejsko poreklo, po njegovi vrnitvi leta 1960 pa je na voljo le malo podrobnosti. Choi se je rodil leta 1934 v navadni kmečki družini ter se je šolal v osnovni in srednji šoli v mestu Uiju v pokrajini Severni Pjongan. Študijsko pot je nadaljeval na Madžarskem (1953–1957), kjer se je soočal z jezikovnimi težavami, vendar se je izkazal pri madžarščini in biologiji na Medicinski univerzi v Budimpešti. Več virov izpostavlja njegovo sodelovanje v madžarski revoluciji leta 1956 ter potrjujejo njegovo aktivno udeležbo in poznejši pobeg v Jugoslavijo, ki mu je leta 1957 sledila selitev v Švico s statusom političnega begunca.

V Švici je Choijeva ideološka drža močno nihala. Sprva so ga podpirale lokalne in mednarodne organizacije za pomoč beguncem, izražal pa je protisocialistična čustva. Konec leta 1959 pa se je Choi obrnil na kitajsko in madžarsko veleposlaništvo ter izrazil željo, da bi se prek Madžarske vrnil v Severno Korejo, s čimer je pokazal nenaden ideološki premik k protikapitalizmu. Njegova končna repatriacija v Severno Korejo leta 1960 je bila dokumentirana po madžarskih diplomatskih kanalih in je pomenila vrhunec njegovega zapletenega in politično obarvanega potovanja. Članek poudarja Choijev večplastni ideološki razvoj in njegovo strateško krmarjenje po geopolitičnih pokrajinah obdobja hladne vojne, kar odraža širše vzorce prestopov ter političnih sprememb med severnokorejskimi študenti in študentkami ter intelektualkami in intelektualci v tujini v tem obdobju.

Ključne besede: diaspora, prebežnik, Madžarski narodni arhiv, diplomatski arhiv Republike Koreje, Severna Koreja, Južna Koreja, Madžarska, Vzhodna Evropa

Introduction and Review of Prior Research

Materials about Choi Inhwan, a Budapest Medical University student, are stored in both the National Archives of Hungary and the Diplomatic Archives of the Republic of Korea.¹ Although he is not a celebrity, a substantial amount of information about him exists in archives across various countries, including records at Budapest Medical University and Zurich Medical University, where he studied. Given the circumstances of the era concerned, it is quite unique for an ordinary North Korean individual to have left such an extensive trail of data in different archives. His

1 According to a fellow researcher, related materials are also stored in the National Archives Administration of China (中央档案馆), although I have not yet been able to confirm this directly. Additionally, during Choi Inhwan's approximately nine-month stay in the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia, the North Korean government continued to track him and contacted Yugoslavian organizations. Therefore, it is presumed that some related materials are also in the archives there.

dossiers were discussed in my previous paper (Kim 2014) that examined the voluntary return of North Korean students from Eastern Europe to their homeland in the 1950s and early 1960s, which included a brief overview of Choi Inhwon's activities, covering two or three pages. In this paper, we will examine his actions and thoughts in greater detail, exploring why he took the risk of leaving Hungary and staying in unfamiliar countries. Additionally, I will discuss the reasons for his "deviation". Before delving into his case, I will briefly summarize the background of his actions as covered in the previous literature (Kim 2014, 255–73).²

From the viewpoint of the North Korean diaspora, the post-Korean War scenario in North Korea mirrored a dilemma similar to that in South Korea. The country faced a severe shortage of labour necessary for reconstructing its war-torn landscape, coupled with a pressing need to send promising young people abroad to acquire the advanced skills and knowledge essential for national redevelopment. In response to requests from allied socialist nations, North Korea sent an estimated 30,000 war orphans³ to countries like China, the Soviet Union, various Eastern European states, and Mongolia for education. Among these, China received the majority, and reports suggest that alongside pure war orphans, children of high-ranking North Korean officials were also included (Joung 2011, 228).

Around 1959, most war orphans were recalled to North Korea. The primary reason for this was the completion of the withdrawal of approximately 250,000 Chinese People's Volunteers in October 1958, who had been aiding North Korea's post-war reconstruction. This withdrawal necessitated the repatriation of these individuals to fill the resulting demand for labour. Equipped with skills and knowledge from relatively more developed countries, these returnees contributed significantly to North Korea's reconstruction. Recent research has begun to shed light on their roles and statuses within North Korean society.⁴ However, detailed data on students who went to Eastern Europe remain elusive, mainly due to access limitations.

2 Due to the overlap with Choi Inhwon's activities, some chapters share similar content with a paper published in 2014.

3 Regarding these figures, there is still a lack of sufficient data, and the limited data available present different figures. The number of persons is only an estimate based on the Korean materials held by the 1st Far Eastern Department in the Archives of Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation (АВПРФ, ф 0102, оп.16, п.24, д.6, лл.97~99; recited from Sin 2005, 58–59). However, there are still questions about the figure of "30,000 war orphans" sent overseas. It is believed that this number includes all North Korean students studying abroad, not just war orphans.

4 Joung, Eun-lee, in her paper "Re-illumination of North Korean System through Life of Korean Residents in Japan Returning to North Korea: Focusing on Testimony of North Korean Defectors in Japan" (2009), presented significant research findings on the roles and status of repatriates in North Korea based on the testimonies of North Korean defectors from Japan.

Existing studies have primarily concentrated on the contributions of these returnees to North Korea's post-war recovery, with insufficient exploration from the diaspora's perspective. Investigating their experiences is crucial because, despite sharing the same socialist ideology, North Korea and Eastern European countries faced different political contexts. These exchanges led to the formation of unique perspectives that could only arise from experiencing both regions' political climates. This shared experience often extended beyond personal anecdotes, revealing a broader pattern of resistance against the North Korean regime and a preference for defection to the West among the students.⁵

From the North Korean leadership's perspective, such tendencies were unwelcome. Consequently, in Eastern European socialist countries, including the Soviet Union, the North Korean government implemented relatively strict policies towards North Korean students and other dispatched groups, subjecting them to stringent supervision. These measures were primarily influenced by North Korea's domestic political conditions, such as the August Faction Incident of 1956, and the broader international environment. Despite these strict policies, North Korean students actively sought to overcome the constraints enforced by their government.

To fully comprehend these dynamics, it is essential to examine the political situation in North Korea and Eastern Europe during the mid-1950s. In North Korea, the August Faction Incident of 1956 was a pivotal event, exacerbating conflicts with China and the Soviet Union. This incident hastened the withdrawal of the Chinese People's Volunteers, resulting in a severe labour shortage for reconstruction efforts and prompting the policy of recalling overseas nationals. Moreover, this event, recognized as the only organized civil attempt to challenge North Korea's supreme power, had a profound impact on its political landscape, propelling the Juche ideology to prominence.

During the same period, Eastern Europe was fraught with tension. The August Faction Incident and the Polish and Hungarian revolutions of 1956, although not publicized, were directly or indirectly connected to the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party in February 1956, where criticism of Stalin began.

Understanding the thoughts and worldviews of those North Koreans who chose to remain in Europe rather than return provides valuable insights into their imaginative geography during that era. From this perspective, the case of Choi In-hwan has several implications. First of all, the abundant data on him facilitates research. Secondly, his decision to return to North Korea was influenced not only by his unique personal circumstances, but also by broader circumstances that were

5 In 1956, a number of North Korean students in East Germany and Hungary defected to the Western world (see the Chapter "Returning to the Hometown: Escaping Political Realities").

unavoidable considering the flow of the world around him, even if he was not aware of it at the time.

Choi's Traces in North Korea and His Studies in Hungary

There is very little information about Choi Inhwan's activities in North Korea, especially after 1960 when he returned to the country. The Diplomatic Archives of the Republic of Korea contains a single page of information about him (Diplomatic Archives of the Republic of Korea, hereafter DAROK Class No.: 743.73GE/KN 1957-1959. Reg. No. 329. Film No.: K0001. Frame No. 0185). According to these records, Choi Inhwan (Choi In Huan 崔仁煥) was born in 1934 to his father Choi Sung Jung (최성정, 崔性正), and his mother Kim Chang Hee (김창희). According to a report from the North Korean Embassy in Budapest, his parents were described as ordinary farmers (National Archives of Hungary, hereafter NAH Roll No. 53706, Frame No. 2008 0000 0078). He was born on March 10, 1934, in Uiju (義州), North Pyongan Province. His educational background includes attending Uiju Primary School from 1941 to 1947, Uiju Middle School from 1947 to 1949, and Uiju High School from 1949 to 1953. Beyond these details, there are no additional records available to trace his whereabouts or activities.

According to documents from Korean diplomatic archives based on Choi Inhwan's statement, he is recorded as having stayed in Hungary from 1953 to 1957. There is a document he authored stating he studied abroad in Hungary from September 1953. Another document he wrote indicates he arrived in Hungary in early 1954, learned Hungarian until August 1954, and studied at the Budapest Medical University (now Semmelweis University) from September 1954 to October 1956 (NAH Roll No. 53706. Frame No. 2008 0000 0078). A 1954 report on North Korean students studying in Hungary notes that Choi was preparing to enter medical university and was dedicated to his studies at the beginning of the year. Although he later faced linguistic difficulties learning terminology and academic content related to his major, he mastered the basics of Hungarian well. His ethical conduct was notable, though he was somewhat closed-minded, and there is a record of him being sick. Thanks to his hard work, he received the highest scores (5 points) in Hungarian and biology, and a slightly lower score (4 points) in chemistry (NAH XIX-J-1-K, North Korea, 1945–1964, 8 Box, 0293).

According to the academic register of Budapest Medical University, he is listed as having started his studies at the Department of General Medicine on September 1, 1954, and earning credits by the end of 1956. It appears to be true that he

participated in the battle against the Soviet Army when the Hungarian Revolution broke out in October 1956. In this respect, his statements are consistent, and there are objective materials that testify to this. The Hungarian Committee of Zurich for Aid to Refugee Students in Switzerland (Hilfsaktion für Flüchtlingsstudenten in der Schweiz, Ungarnkommission Zürich) confirmed the following text: “Dr Jozsef Dioszilagy, currently living in Canada and a former leader of an active revolutionary group in Hungary, said Choi Inhwon actively participated on the side of anti-communists in the revolutionary demonstrations in Hungary in October 1956. This is confirmed with a signature” (DAROK Class No.: 743.73GE/KN 1957-1959. Reg. No. 329. Film No.: K0001. Frame No.: 0184). Additionally, according to Herzum Péter’s testimony some North Korean students participated in the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. In his testimony about his armed combat against Soviet troops in the so-called Battle of Tűzoltó utca in Budapest, at least two North Koreans appear, one a medical student and the other an engineer (Molnár, Körösi and Keller 2006, 124–241). During the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, other North Korean students studying abroad in Hungary fled to the West through Austria (NAH XIX-J-1-K, North Korea, 1945-1964, 13 Box, 002982), indicating that Choi Inhwon was not the only student who participated in the revolution or went into exile in the West afterward.

Choi Inhwon stated that he was one of the two students who achieved the best grades out of 60 Korean medical students at Budapest Medical University. Although this may be a slight exaggeration, an examination of the academic records of the students at the time reveals that the truth is not much different. He took four semesters, receiving top grades in all courses except for “histology and embryology” (Archives of Semmelweis Univ., 5.c. ÁOK törzskönyv, 8 kötet, 40 törzsszám).

Meanwhile, according to data from the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Choi Inhwon is known to have stayed in Hungary until December 1956, and this appears to be based on his own claims (NAH Roll No. 53706. Frame No. 2008 0000 0075, 0078, 0080). Previous reports from 1954 recorded Choi Inhwon as a somewhat closed-minded person (NAH XIX-J-1-K, North Korea, 1945-1964, 8 Box, 0293), but in reality, he had many friends and even a girlfriend in Budapest, though the North Korean Embassy in Budapest informed the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs that she broke up with him after his exile (NAH Roll No.: 53706. Frame No.: 2008 0000 0108).

Choi's Actions Following the Suppression of the Hungarian Revolution in 1956

No direct information on Choi Inhwan's activities in Yugoslavia has yet been discovered. However, some information can be obtained from diplomatic documents in the National Archives of Hungary. Additionally, simple but relevant information is also found in South Korean diplomatic documents.

Choi Inhwan mentioned that he had been in Yugoslavia for about a year while applying for a Hungarian entry visa at the Hungarian Consulate in Bern (NAH Roll No. 53706. Frame No. 2008 0000 0110). Conversely, during a meeting with Consul Sohn Won Yil at the South Korean Consulate in Bonn, West Germany, on February 21, 1958, he stated that he had fled from Hungary to Yugoslavia in 1957 and then moved to Switzerland in September 1957. He chose the Hungary-Yugoslavia border due to the heavy surveillance on the Hungary-Austria border (DAROK Class No.: 743.73GE/KN 1957-1959. Reg. No. 329. Film No.: K0001. Frame No. 0188). According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), approximately 200,000 refugees were created following the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. Of these, about 180,000 crossed the Hungary-Austria border, while about 20,000 escaped via the Hungary-Yugoslavia border, later settling in 37 countries (Colville 2006, 2). Nonetheless, in another document written by Choi himself he mentions leaving Yugoslavia in October 1957 after staying there for about nine months and relocating to Switzerland (NAH Roll No. 53706. Frame No. 2008 0000 0110). On the other hand, he wrote that he went to Yugoslavia for a preliminary investigation to engage in partisan activities in South Korea in the future. However, this statement was part of a lengthy letter with the nature of a "confession" written during his attempt to enter Hungary from Bern, so its authenticity is questionable.

According to Hong Dong Cheol, the North Korean ambassador in Budapest at the time, he personally investigated the matter immediately after Choi Inhwan's escape from Hungary. He inquired about Choi at the Yugoslavian Embassy in Budapest, but the authorities confirmed that Choi's name did not appear on the list of those who had fled Hungary. However, Hong Dong Cheol later learned that Yugoslavia not only permitted Choi to travel to the West, but also assisted him (NAH Roll No. 53706. Frame No. 2008 0000 0110).

The detailed circumstances of how Choi was able to travel from Yugoslavia to Switzerland are not known. Mr David Galloway, an administrator at the temporary office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in Belgrade, confirmed that Choi was in a very dangerous situation in Hungary due to his participation

in the 1956 Hungarian Revolution and had no alternative but to leave the country. This led to his departure from Yugoslavia as a political refugee, arriving in Switzerland on September 7, 1957 (DAROK Class No.: 743.73GE/KN 1957-1959. Reg. No. 329. Film No.: K0001. Frame No. 0184, 0185).

Choi Inhwon's actions in Switzerland appear inconsistent and duplicitous, reflecting extreme aspects of both anti-socialist and anti-capitalist ideologies. Examining his activities through Hungarian and Korean diplomatic documents provides insights into his complex behaviour.

Despite his testimony that he moved from Yugoslavia to Switzerland in October 1957, records indicate that Choi entered Switzerland on September 7, 1957, after obtaining political refugee status from Yugoslavia (DAROK Class No.: 743.73GE/KN 1957-1959. Reg. No. 329. Film No.: K0001. Frame No. 0185). On December 2, 1957, the Hungarian Committee of Zurich for Aid to Refugee Students in Switzerland issued an official confirmation with the following points: (a) Choi Inhwon was selected as a scholarship student in Switzerland; (b) Dr Jozef Dioszilagy, currently residing in Canada, was formerly a leader of a revolutionary group in Hungary. Jozef Dioszilagy confirmed that Choi actively participated in anti-communist revolutionary demonstrations in Hungary in October 1956; (c) David Galloway, Director of the Temporary Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in Belgrade, confirmed that Choi participated in the mentioned protests and was in a dangerous situation in Hungary, necessitating his departure. As a result, Choi was registered as a genuine political refugee; (d) The signatures below the document attested to Choi's loyalty (DAROK Class No.: 743.73GE/KN 1957-1959. Reg. No. 329. Film No.: K0001. Frame No. 0184).⁶

This confirmation indicates that upon his arrival in Switzerland in early September 1957, Choi received support from a local organization aiding Hungarian refugee students. Following the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, the organization "Student Direct Assistance Switzerland—Hungary" provided substantial support to Hungarian students in Switzerland. Although this organization disbanded on April 30, 1957, the "Aid to Refugee Students in Switzerland" organization was later established, continuing to assist many refugee students, primarily Hungarians. A diplomatic report by Consul Sohn Won Yil of the Korean Consulate in Bonn in February 1958 mentioned that Choi was receiving support from this organization.

6 As stated in the main text, this document is owned by DAROK. It does not exist in the archives of the Federal Institute of Technology Zurich, where the original is supposed to be kept. He may have arbitrarily created (forged) the document and submitted it to the South Korean Consulate in Bonn, or the original may not be stored in the university archives in Zurich.

Sohn Won Yil met Choi on February 21, 1957, and upon learning that financial help from the Hungarian Committee of Zurich was insufficient, he requested more support from Yang Yu Chan, the South Korean ambassador to Washington at the time. As a result, Choi received financial support from the American-Korean Foundation (hereafter AKF), including an initial settlement fee of USD 200 and a monthly allowance of USD 100 for a year, renewable annually. Sohn Won Yil also facilitated the issuance of a South Korean passport for Choi (DAROK Class No.: 743.73GE/KN 1957-1959. Reg. No. 329. Film No.: 0188-0192). Indeed, Choi was issued a South Korean passport, as confirmed by Hungarian diplomatic documents. His application for an entry visa to Hungary on January 21, 1960 included South Korean passport number 23092, valid until September 13, 1960 (NAH Roll No.: 53706. Frame No.: 2008 0000 0066). According to Choi Inhwan's testimony, a Swiss company conducting business with South Korea recommended that he obtain a South Korean passport, although the accuracy of this claim is unclear (NAH Roll No.: 53706. Frame No.: 2008 0000 0104).

Despite inconsistencies in dates, Choi's actions indicate a strong anti-socialist stance. During the 1956 Hungarian Revolution he reportedly fought against Soviet forces while attending Budapest Medical University, and later fled to Yugoslavia, where he was recognized as a political refugee. It is also evident that he obtained a South Korean passport through the South Korean Consulate in Bonn. Consul Sohn Won Yil described Choi as "a loyal young student, firmly believing in free life" and was "strongly impressed by his firm belief and loyalty to our government" (DAROK Class No.: 743.73GE/KN 1957-1959. Reg. No.: 329. Film No.: 0188-0189).

Regarding his activities in Switzerland, there are no records of Choi Inhwan from March 1958 to July 1959 in the diplomatic documents of South Korea and Hungary. At the end of July 1959, after about one year and four months of no documented activity, Choi visited the Chinese Embassy in Bern. During this visit, he advocated for a union or confederation between North Korea and China based on Marxism-Leninism, expressing his political viewpoints. However, due to language barriers the discussion was difficult, and an embassy employee suggested that he articulate his views in a letter (NAH Roll No.: 53706. Frame No.: 2008 0000 0094). Choi followed this advice, but he received no response from the Chinese Embassy.

Disappointed, Choi then visited the Hungarian Consulate in Bern around the end of October 1959. Immediately after this visit, on October 27th, he sent a lengthy letter to the Hungarian Consulate in Bern. This letter detailed his thoughts and political views, his experience during the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, and his

interpretation of the international situation. In this seven-page, typewritten letter, he made the somewhat absurd proposal that he be helped to study Chinese in China for a year so he could work at the Hungarian Embassy in Beijing (NAH Roll No.: 53706. Frame No.: 2008 0000 0092-0100). The content of this letter is presumed to be similar to that of the letter he previously sent to the Chinese Embassy. In this lengthy text, he claims to be an anti-capitalist and a socialist based on a “transformed” nationalist ideology. When no reply came from the Hungarian Consulate, he followed up with another letter urging a response, which arrived at the Hungarian Consulate in Bern on December 8, 1959. Although the exact sending date is unclear, it was approximately early December, about a month and a half after his initial letter (NAH Roll No.: 53706. Frame No.: 2008 0000 0089). Another letter urging a response was sent to the Hungarian Consulate around the same time (NAH Roll No.: 53706. Frame No.: 2008 0000 0087~0088).

Then, in a sudden shift of attitude, he applied for a visa to enter Hungary at the Hungarian Consulate in Bern on January 21, 1960. This application was accompanied by a handwritten document, which, though untitled, served as a kind of “Letter of Political Conversion”⁷ (NAH Roll No.: 53706. Frame No.: 2008 0000 0065~0066). In his handwritten application for a visa to enter Hungary, Choi Inhwan expressed his intention to return to North Korea (NAH Roll No.: 53706. Frame No.: 2008 0000 0066, 0102), emphasizing his familiarity with the North Korean Embassy in Budapest and his strong desire to travel to North Korea through Hungary (NAH Roll No.: 53706. Frame No.: 2008 0000 0066, 0104).

About a week later, on January 27th, the consul in charge attached Choi Inhwan’s entry visa application to an official document and personally signed it before sending it to the Passport Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Hungary (NAH Roll No.: 53706. Frame No.: 2008 0000 0067). On January 26, 1960, the Protocol Department of the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs met with Kim Taehwa, attaché of the North Korean Embassy in Budapest, informing him of Choi Inhwan’s visa application and assuring him that the matter would be handled according to the North Korean Embassy’s position (NAH Roll No.: 53706. Frame No.: 2008 0000 0063).

A month later, Kim Taehwa requested the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to approve Choi Inhwan’s entry into Hungary and announced Choi Inhwan’s plan to leave Hungary after his arrival, requesting that the Hungarian Ministry of the Interior monitor him “illegally” until then (NAH Roll No.: 53706. Frame No.: 2008 0000 0073). Subsequently, the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

7 It is a single handwritten document, but there are two versions of it with nearly identical content (NAH Roll No.: 53706. Frame No.: 2008 0000 0068 and 0070).

notified Földes László, then Deputy Minister of the Interior of Hungary, about Choi Inhwan's specified period of stay and agreed to cooperate with the North Korean Embassy's request for surveillance during his visit to Hungary (NAH Roll No.: 53706. Frame No.: 2008 0000 0081~0082).

In response, on April 14, the Hungarian Ministry of the Interior accepted the North Korean Embassy's request and obtained Choi Inhwan's consent for a shortened stay to three weeks or one month (NAH Roll No.: 53706. Frame No.: 2008 0000 0084). Upon receiving this request, the North Korean Embassy in Budapest instructed that Choi Inhwan's South Korean passport be collected upon arrival, an alternative passport be issued, and immediate repatriation to Pyongyang be arranged, urging the immediate issuance of an exit visa (NAH Roll No.: 53706. Frame No.: 2008 0000 0073).

The final documents pertaining to Choi Inhwan are dated May 4, 1960, indicating that his return to North Korea occurred approximately four months after he applied for the entrance visa to Hungary in Bern. However, no additional information regarding his whereabouts has been uncovered beyond these last documents.

Returning to the Hometown: Escaping Political Realities

In July 1959, Choi Inhwan, previously known for his anti-socialist stance, made contact with the Chinese Embassy in Bern. By October of the same year, he reached out to the Hungarian Consulate in the same city, embracing an anti-capitalist ideology. Initially aspiring to pursue his political ideals in China, Choi showed no inclination to return to South Korea, where he was then receiving support from the South Korean Consulate in Bonn, or to his birthplace in North Korea. However, realizing the impracticality of his plans, he abruptly applied for a visa to Hungary in January 1960 with the intention of returning to North Korea via this route.

The suddenness of this ideological transformation is underscored by various sources. The North Korean Embassy attaché in Budapest learned from the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs about Choi Inhwan's visa application for entry into Hungary. This was a significant shift from about a year prior when Choi had written to the North Korean Embassy in Budapest, clearly stressing that he never wanted to return to North Korea. The embassy was thus surprised by Choi's desire to return to North Korea with their assistance, mentioning that Choi's parents would be pleased if Hungary granted him an entry visa (NAH Roll No.: 53706. Frame No.: 2008 0000 0078). Additionally, the North Korean embassy in

Budapest noted Choi's radio statement following his exile in Munich, which included criticisms of North Korea, although the exact broadcast date is not listed in the diplomatic documents (NAH Roll No.: 53706. Frame No.: 2008 0000 0073).

The radio statement made by Choi in Munich can be interpreted as a political act, particularly given its critique of North Korea. Furthermore, the defection of North Korean students studying in Europe in the mid-1950s and early 1960s resulted in the information war between North and South Korea expanding to the European stage, sometimes against their will. Most of these defecting students did not consider South Korea as their final destination and only wanted to continue their studies in Western European countries, but some went to the South Korean Consulate (Embassy) on their own, requesting support from South Korea. According to South Korea's diplomatic document (DAROK Class No.: 743.73GE/KN 1957-1959. Reg. No.329. Film No.: K0001. Frame No.: 0188). This is what Choi Inhwon did, and there is also a record of seven North Korean students studying abroad in East Germany visiting the South Korean Consulate in Bonn in early 1958. Among them, two students who escaped from East Germany in 1958 had sought refuge in West Berlin and were residing in a refugee camp in Frankfurt. However, the escape routes of the remaining five students are not documented (DAROK Class No.: 743.73GE/KN 1957-1959. Reg. No.329. Film No.: K0001. Frame No.: 0183, 0193).

Regarding these exiled students, there is an interesting diplomatic document sent from the South Korean Consulate in Bonn, West Germany, to Gyeongmudae, the presidential office, containing noteworthy content. Chang Yoon-Kul, who was working as a first secretary and deputy ambassador at the South Korean Consulate in Bonn at the time, reports the following information on the purges of the August Faction Incident confirmed from exiled students and mentions the possibility of making "political use" of this information:

This information is rather an old story already known to the people, but the reason why I am reporting this to Your Excellency is that this has been confirmed by the two students and also this might be useful in counteracting the recent Communists' unification propaganda campaign. (DAROK Class No.: 743.73GE/KN 1957-1959. Reg. No.329. Film No.: K0001. Frame No.: 0199)

The exact reaction of Gyeongmudae to this report is unknown. However, the contents of another report by Consul Sohn Won Yil of the South Korean Consulate in Bonn, sent to Gyeongmudae about 20 days later, suggest some level of approval. The report states, "As Your Excellency advised me, I am checking their background

and shall continue to be careful to handle these students. [...] But still I am careful and I am trying to obtain information on them". This indicates that Gyeongmudae was at least not negative about the proposal and had instructed a cautious approach (DAROK Class No.: 743.73GE/KN 1957-1959. Reg. No.; 329. Frame No.: 0201). Additionally, it appears that attempts were made to gather information through exiled students, as suggested by the subsequent report.

They told me that there are many students, about 400 persons only in East Germany, but almost all of them are not delighted to study under communist rule and are wondering whether it is true that they would be able to continue to study in West Germany when they chose freedom. Thus, I obtained a list of freedom loving students who, if we could secretly get into touch with them, might come to West Germany. I am enclosing the list showing 10 persons, who are in Dresden, East Germany. Under these circumstances I am studying how I could confidentially handle this case and I also wonder how we can provide school expenses for so many people in case they could all come to us. I presume that the AKF may be able to take a necessary measure to meet the possible increase of such necessary assistance as we are now doing to them. (DAROK Class No.: 743.73GE/KN 1957-1959. Reg. No.329. Film No.: K0001. Frame No.: 0194).

This indicates that attempts were being made to obtain information through exiled students and that discussions were already taking place about the political use of targeting European refugee groups or leveraging their information value. Unfortunately, North Korea's data related to this are not accessible, but we can speculate that it might have responded to or pre-empted these activities by South Korea.

On July 8, 1967, the North Korean Central Intelligence Agency (hereafter KCIA) announced the so-called "East Berlin (Spy) Incident", accusing 194 South Korean students and residents living in Germany, France, England, the United States, and Austria of engaging in hostile activities against South Korea, including traveling back and forth between the North Korean Embassy and North Korea. This incident caused a major diplomatic problem with the host countries as these individuals were kidnapped and forcibly repatriated to South Korea. According to the KCIA, South Korean students living in West Germany had been in contact with the North Korean Embassy in East Germany since September 1958 (Dong-A Ilbo 1967). This suggests a complex backdrop of intelligence and counter-intelligence activities.

While there is no detailed data on how Choi Inhwon is specifically related to the aforementioned historical and political environment, it is clear that his situation might have been influenced by these broader dynamics. He may have decided to leave Switzerland and return to North Korea due to feelings of being “used up”. This South Korean national of North Korean origin had no choice but to accept economic support amidst the intense political confrontation between North and South Korea abroad, ultimately deciding to return to his hometown. It’s noteworthy that there exists a dossier concerning Choi Inhwon in the archives of the Federal Institute of Technology Zurich, primarily consisting of documents related to the financial and other support he received (ETH Library, University Archives, EZ-2.7/1.083. Stipendiendossier Csö, In Huan, geb. 10. 03. 1934, von Ungarn).

Another important incident in Switzerland at the time may have also influenced Choi Inhwon. After he went into exile in Switzerland following the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, and about a year before he first visited the Hungarian Consulate in Bern, a gunfight occurred at the consulate on August 16, 1958. Nagy Sándor and Papp Endre were involved in the incident, which resulted in Sándor’s death and Endre’s imprisonment. Sándor was in close contact with Hungarians who had fled to Switzerland due to the revolution and had interactions with a small number of other foreigners (Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security (Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történeti Levéltára, hereafter HAHSS), 3.2.4. K-84/1. 61). Following the Hungarian Revolution, approximately 13,766 Hungarian refugees were in Switzerland by the end of 1958 (HAHSS, 3.2.5. O-8-95/1. Svájci Magyar Emigráció 58), and even the Hungarian Ministry of the Interior’s Intelligence Department made a file named “Hungarian Immigrants in Switzerland (Svájci Magyar Emigráció)” to monitor and prevent hostile actions (HAHSS, 3.2.5. O-8-95/1-5). The gunfight at the consulate occurred two months after the execution of the Hungarian revolutionary figure Nagy Imre. The incident was significant in Switzerland and was later dramatized in the 2014 film *The Ambassador to Bern*. This led to increased security measures at the Hungarian Consulate and scrutiny of immigrants associated with the revolution, likely influencing how the Hungarian Consulate treated Choi Inhwon.

It is possible that Choi Inhwon’s visit was handled cautiously from this perspective, and the Hungarian Consulate did not complicate matters further with him, instead encouraging his permanent return to North Korea through Hungary. As a third-country citizen who participated in the Hungarian Revolution, Choi settled in Switzerland and acquired South Korean nationality. In order to improve his financial situation, albeit only slightly, he sought support not only from organizations aiding Hungarians in Switzerland but also from South Korea. In this context, he participated in political activities, such as making statements on the

radio in Munich, but it can be assumed that he ultimately decided to return home because he felt tired of being utilized by both Hungary and South Korea.

Conclusion

The case of Choi Inhwan is highly unique and unusual. Initially appearing complex, in reality his actions were a series of very ordinary and perhaps even sensible decisions, leading to outcomes that seem extraordinary. Selected as a foreign student, he excelled academically and dedicated himself to his studies. Amidst this, he found himself swept up in the turmoil of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, standing alongside Hungarians against the Soviet forces. However, when most students were summoned back to North Korea after the revolution's suppression, it would not have been unreasonable for anyone in such circumstances to consider voluntarily withdrawing from the return process, in order to avoid any possible adverse outcomes due to participating in the revolution, or for other reasons. Receiving refugee status in Yugoslavia and seeking political asylum in Switzerland, or seeking economic assistance from South Korea in Zurich, could also be seen as ordinary, sensible choices made by a person seeking a better life. Whether his accounts were factual or embellished,⁸ generally speaking his choices align more with Safran's concept of diaspora rather than being limited to nationality or ideology. Safran defines diaspora as applicable to any expatriate communities possessing several of the following features: dispersal from the place of origin to two or more other places; retention of a collective memory, fantasy, or myth about the homeland; a feeling of not being—and possibly that it is impossible to be—part of the host society; a yearning for the homeland as the true, ideal home and for an eventual homecoming at the proper time; a belief that the expatriate communities should, collectively, be committed to the motherland's security, prosperity, and restoration; an ongoing relationship with the mother country such that expatriates' ethno-communal consciousness and sense of solidarity are strongly

8 There are many inconsistencies in the data concerning Choi Inhwan and his statements across Hungary, South Korea, and Switzerland. One question that arises is whether he actually obtained political refugee status in Yugoslavia. Choi submitted a copy of a document related to his claim for this status to Consul Sohn Won Yil at the South Korean Consulate in Bonn, which is stored in the DAROK. This document is dated December 2, 1957 (DAROK Class No.: 743.73 GE/KN 1957-1959, Film No.: K0001). However, the original document is not included in his materials housed in the archives of ETH Zurich in Switzerland. In the University Archives at ETH Zurich, there is a document dated December 2, 1957 (ETH Library, University Archives, EZ-2.7/1.083, Stipendiendossier Csö, In Huan, geb. 10.03.1934, von Ungarn), but it pertains to a list of items and goods provided to Choi Inhwan. The absence of this original document does not necessarily undermine his credibility, as relevant information may yet be discovered elsewhere. Given the historical context, it is rare for a person's entire past to be completely reconstructed from existing records.

affected by that relationship (Safran 1991, 83–84). However, why did Choi In-hwan ultimately decide to return to his homeland of North Korea, even when it was not at “the proper time”? While we explored the reasons against the backdrop of various historical and political factors in the previous chapters, it could have been a much simpler reason. It may have been especially challenging for Choi to study under the German-language curriculum in Zurich, or his school life and relationships with his peers may have been difficult. Support from the AKF was provided annually, and he might have experienced financial difficulties when this support ended, making his life in Switzerland problematic. Alternatively, and as he revealed in lengthy letters and statements, he may have attempted to realize the possibilities in China for joining a new community, only to be disappointed and ultimately returned to his homeland, even though he knew he could face punishment there (NAH Roll No. 53706. Frame No. 2008 0000 0092-0100). Indeed, it can be speculated that due to the historical and political circumstances of the time he ultimately chose to return home due to exhaustion, a sentiment that can be seen in his emphasis on ideology in all of his statements. In other words, his ideology may not have been as significant to his homeland as it was to himself. Therefore, being anti-socialist and anti-capitalist may not have been extremes for Choie. His choices, influenced by the results of the ideological war within himself and the political and historical circumstances of the time, suggest that in the face of unease at being so far from home for so long, his only remaining choice was to return home. The case of Choi In-hwan is unique and unusual for another reason: when examining the personal microcosm of his actions, the macrocosm surrounding him is revealed. Like a condensed version of an individual, the tumultuous era and flow of world history are manifested in his actions.

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Abbreviations Used in This Paper

NAH: The National Archives of Hungary

DAROK: Diplomatic Archives of the Republic of Korea

KCIA: Korean Central Intelligence Agency

HAHSS: Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security

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A Case Study of Korean Diaspora in Austria

*YUN Sun Young**

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the Korean community in Austria, which began forming in the 1970s. Currently, there are about twenty known Korean organizations in Austria. This study specifically focuses on the Korean Literature-Friends-Club in Austria to gain a deeper understanding of the transnational experiences of people with Korean roots living in Austria.

The findings are based on in-depth interviews, direct observation, published materials, social media, and previous research. Established in 2012, the Korean Literature-Friends-Club was formed by individuals interested in literature and writing, reflecting on their experiences in Korea as well as their immigration to and early years in Austria. Key members of the group are Koreans who emigrated to Europe in the 1960s and 1970s as nurses. Since publishing its first issue in 2013, the group has continued to release a collection of works every two years and organize literary events, serving as a cultural bridge between their host and home countries.

Keywords: diaspora, Korean in Austria, transnational life, literature, senior writing

Študija primera korejske diaspore v Avstriji

Izveleček

Namen te študije je proučiti korejsko skupnost v Avstriji, ki se je začela oblikovati v sedemdesetih letih prejšnjega stoletja. Trenutno je v Avstriji znanih približno dvajset korejskih organizacij. Ta študija se posebej osredotoča na korejski literarno-prijateljski klub v Avstriji, s ciljem omogočiti globlje razumevanje transnacionalnih izkušenj ljudi s korejskimi koreninami, ki živijo v Avstriji. Ugotovitve temeljijo na poglobljenih intervjujih, neposrednem opazovanju, objavljenem gradivu, družbenih medijih in predhodnih raziskavah. Klub korejskih književnikov in prijateljev so leta 2012 ustanovile posameznice in posamezniki, ki se zanimajo za književnost in pisanje ter razmišljajo o svojih izkušnjah v Koreji ter o priselitvi v Avstrijo in prvih letih bivanja v njej. Ključne članice skupine so Korejke, ki so se v šestdesetih in sedemdesetih letih prejšnjega stoletja izselile v Evropo kot medicinske sestre. Od izida prve številke leta 2013 skupina nadaljuje z izdajanjem zbirke del vsaki dve leti, organizirajo pa tudi literarne dogodke, ki predstavljajo kulturni most med državo gostiteljico in matično državo.

Ključne besede: diaspora, Korejke in Korejci v Avstriji, transnacionalno življenje, literatura, pisanje starejših

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Introduction

This paper offers a case study of the Korean diaspora in Austria. The Association of Korean Residents in Europe retraced the footsteps of Koreans in Europe and in 2020 published their findings as *Yuröp Han'in 100 nyön üi paljach'wi* (*The Trace of Korean Life in Europe for 100 years*) (The Association of Korean Residents in Europe 2020). On November 19th, 1919, 35 Korean migrants came to work in the small town of Suippes in the North of France.¹ This was the first Korean migration to Europe, a process that is linked with the history of Korea. During the Japanese colonial era (1919–1945) Korean immigration had the characteristics of an independence movement. From the 1950s on,² the number of students migrating to Europe increased significantly.³ In the 1960s and 1970s, labour migration was predominant, and many Korean miners and Korean nurses went to Germany. On the whole, Korean immigration to Europe began as short-term stays, as migrants came as labourers, students, diplomats, company employees, and artists.

Most Koreans who came to Austria were students. Thus, the Korean community that began to form in Austria centred on students.⁴ They studied in various fields, including music, medicine, art, theology, philosophy, political science, anthropology, German literature and archaeology. While some only studied for a semester or two, others completed their diploma or PhD programmes. However, most of these students returned to Korea after finishing their studies instead of settling in Austria. As such, the Korean community kept changing, until the 1970s when it began to stabilize after 50 Korean nurses arrived in Vienna on August 27th, 1972, following by 50 more Korean nurses the next year, on May 31st. The motives of Korean nurses who came to Austria for two to three years varied from person to person. However, there were mainly economic reasons, such as being able to receive a good salary in order to support the tuition fees⁵ of their younger siblings in Korea.⁶ Besides these two groups, another 28 nurses came to Austria individually.⁷ According to the statistics from the Overseas Koreans Agency, there are approximately 3,000 Koreans living in Austria, with 2,553 in 2017, 2,546 in 2019, 2,720

1 For further details, see Lee Jang Kyu (2019).

2 For the early migration of Koreans to Europe, see Schirmer (2015).

3 For further details, see the work by the Association of Korean Residents in Europe (2020).

4 For further details, see the work by Der Verein der Koreaner in Österreich (2012).

5 At that time, Korea did not have free middle school education, so families had to pay tuition for their children. It was thus challenging for parents to educate all their children, and eldest daughters were often expected to help share the burden.

6 For further details, see Der Verein der Koreaner in Österreich (2012).

7 Some of them returned to Korea. For further details, see the Korean Nurses Association (2022).

in 2021, and 2,681 in 2023. Looking more closely at the year 2023, the total number of Koreans living in Austria was 2,681, with 575 permanent residents, 1,051 regular residents, 494 international students, and 561 individuals with Austrian citizenship (Overseas Koreans Agency n.d.).

As of now, the Korean diaspora in Austria has still not been researched thoroughly. Abraham Hartman (2009) wrote his master's thesis about Korean migration to Austria focusing on family, kinship, networks and occupational clusters. In 2012 Der Verein der Koreaner in Österreich (Korean Association of Austria) published historical documents relating to diplomatic relations between Korea and Austria for the last 120 years, and about Koreans in Austria for the previous 50 years. Vina Yun, a second-generation Korean immigrant, published a comic about the Korean diaspora in Vienna (Yun 2017a; 2017b). Apart from these works there are also four research papers: Lukas Pokorny and Sang-Yeon Loise Sung (2018) explored the history of the first Protestant Korean church in Austria. I myself (2020) examined Korean transnational families living in Austria due to music education for their children. Dukkyu Park (2022) described the status of Korean diaspora literature in Austria and Germany as compared to diaspora literature in Australia, while Nakhyeon Kim (2022) also examined the status of diaspora Korean literature in Austria.

This paper attempts to trace the formation process of a diasporic organization called *Oseuteuria hanin Munuhoe* (Korean Literature-Friends-Club in Austria), explore the migration stories of its members, and examine the current situation. It employs a wide range of methods, including participant observation at events such as a seminar (2018), symposium (2019), special lecture (2023), and a reading by a novelist (2024). Additionally, it analyses the first issue of the club's publication titled *Munjib* (*Collection of Works*) and the following four issues titled *Donau Damso* (*Cozy Talks by the Danube*), various interviews of members presented in articles, archival sources like anniversary books, narrative and semi-structured interviews with five club members and two former *Jidogyosa* (tutors) who advise the members in their literary endeavours, and personal correspondences with the current tutor.

All interviews and correspondence were conducted in Korean. Also attended by the current tutor, the five interviews with members were conducted in casual settings, such as a private house, café, or an office, according to the wishes of the interviewee. The interviews were recorded on video with the permission of the respondents and serve as a resource for this paper. This study sheds light on how the Korean Literature-Friends-Club in Austria has managed to survive, and how it contributes to the Korean community in this country.

The Korean Community in Austria

Since the Korean students in Austria first organized a club called *Haksaenghoe* (Student Council) in 1959,⁸ Koreans have formed several voluntary clubs, groups, or organizations to meet their fellow countrymen. They share interests and experiences with each other or enjoy activities together, thus building a Korean community in Austria. Most of these clubs are formed as non-profit organizations, and seek to strengthen the social networks of Koreans by fostering friendships. According to the Korean Community in Austria website (n.d.), there are at least 20 known Korean organizations and clubs in Austria, excluding religious groups, government organizations, and private enterprises.

- There are nine associations of Koreans with the same occupation: *Bienna UN haninhoe* (Vienna UN Korean Club), *Sangsa hyeobuihoe* (Trades Council), *Segyehaningyeongjein hyeopoe* (World Korean Business Association), *Gwahakgisulja hyeopoe* (The Korean Scientists and Engineers Association in Austria, see KOSEAA n.d.), *Jaeo hanin uihak yeopoe* (Korean Medical Association in Austria), *Hanin ganho hyeopoe* (Korean Nurses Association), *Hanin haksae-nghoe* (Korean Student Council), *Yosigeopoe* (Restaurant Business Club), and *Hanin oseuteuria gaideu hyeopoe* (Korean Guide Service in Austria n.d.).
- There are seven groups for people with the same interests, such as sports, music, literature, and cooking: *Golpeu hyeopoe* (Golf Association), *Taegwondo hyeopoe* (Taekwondo Association), *Takguhoe* (Table Tennis Club), *Teniseuhoe* (Tennis Club), *Bienna hanin yeoseong hapchangdan* (Vienna Korean Women's Choir), *Oseuteuria hanin munuhoe* (Korean Literature-Friends-Club in Austria), *Hanguk jeontong yori munhwa yeonguhoe* (Korean Traditional Cuisine Culture Club).
- There are three institutions aimed at all Korean immigrants, the Korean weekend schools *Bienna hangul hakgyo* (Vienna Korean School) and *Rincheu hangugeo hakgyo* (Linz Korean School), and *Hanin munhwa hoegwan* (Korean Culture Clubhouse, which opened on May 3rd, 2012). This clubhouse has worked to strengthen the solidarity of the Korean community living in Austria.⁹
- There is one group called *Jaeo gukje buinhoe* (International Women's Association in Austria), a community for Korean women who are married to non-Koreans.

8 For further details, see Der Verein der Koreaner in Österreich (2012).

9 For further details, see Korea Kulturhaus Österreich (2022).

The gatherings these groups organize allow the members to share their experiences with new arrivals and help them adjust to life in the immigrant society. Among those groups, I focused on the Korean Literature-Friends-Club in Austria, curious about who initiated it, how, when, and why it got started, as well as who participates in it.

Korean Literature-Friends-Club in Austria

Retracing the Naming of the Club and the Change of Tutors

The suggested name for this club was *Bienna hanin yeoseong munuhoe* (Korean Women Literature-Friends-Club in Vienna) in the text¹⁰ for recruiting members that was written by Choi Youngshik *moksanim* (a minister in charge of Korean Protestant Church, henceforth: Pastor Choi), which ran as follows:

Do you want to be a writer?

[On the Occasion of the Launch of the Korean Women's Literature-Friends-Club in Vienna]

Do you want to write your story? Or write about the world around you?

Do you really have the desire to write, but feel uncertain about your skills?

Here is a great opportunity for you.

We are launching a weekly writing workshop for anyone interested in gathering to write, discuss, and share their work. There are no particular requirements – just the ability to read and write in Korean.

Our group includes passionate students and experienced teachers who are eager to meet you. Even if you have only ever dreamed of writing, this is your chance to start.

Will this workshop help you become a better writer? Of course!

While it may not be easy at first, with consistent effort, you will soon be surprising and impressing not only your family and friends but also yourself. This autumn, you'll go beyond just writing – you will be enriched by the beauty of literature.

Are you worried about starting from scratch? Don't be!

10 The Korean version is found in Appendix 1.

Our caring teachers will guide you step by step, matching your pace and skill level. All you need to do is show up.

Due to space limitations, we can only accept 20 participants.

Spring at the beautifully decorated Korean Culture Clubhouse in Donaupark will bloom brightly with the Korean Women's Literature-Friends-Club in Vienna.

Please join us!

Our workshop is going to invigorate your spirit and enrich your life!
(Pastor Choi, email to the author, March 3, 2013¹¹)

The club's name was then changed to *Bienna yeoseong munuhoe* (Women Literature-Friends-Club in Vienna) in the announcement email¹² for the preliminary meeting by Pastor Choi. In this version, the word "Korean" was omitted from the club's name, as follows:

To all members of the Women's Literature-Friends-Club in Vienna!

You've been waiting a long time, right?

As of yesterday, April 15th, membership recruitment for the Women's Literature-Friends-Club in Vienna is officially closed.

However, if there are other people around you who want to join us, they are always welcome.

We will have a formal meeting when the Korean Culture Clubhouse opens on May 3rd, but before that we would like to hold a preliminary meeting of all members. There we would like to discuss the progress and direction of our club, how we are going to practice our writing, etc.

We hope everyone will attend and enjoy a fun and informative first meeting with the members.

In addition, those who have not yet expressed their intention to officially participate in our club, but are interested in joining, are welcome to come along.

Date: Wednesday, April 18, 2012, 10:00 AM

11 I received this text from Pastor Choi on March 3rd, 2013. He couldn't remember the exact date he had mailed the text to the Korean society in Vienna, but he recalled that it was in February 2012.

12 The Korean version is found in Appendix 2.

Location: AKAKIKO Hietzing (Am Platz 3. 1130 Wien Tel: 057-330-160)

Inquiries: 0676-911-4268 Youngshik Choi

We would appreciate it if you could let us know if you will attend so that the organizer can prepare.

April 15, 2012

Kind regards,

Choi Youngshik, organizer of the literature club

(Pastor Choi, email to all members of the Women's Literature-Friends-Club in Vienna, April 15, 2012)

Later, the name was changed to *Oseuteuria hanin yeoseong munuhoe* (Korean Women Literature-Friends-Club in Austria). From this, we can see that the club was trying to expand beyond Vienna. The first and second issues of the club's writings were published on behalf of the Korean Women Literature-Friends-Club in Austria. Since 2017 the club has published such writings on behalf of *Oseuteuria hanin munuhoe* (Korean Literature-Friends-Club in Austria, henceforth: LFC). The new name indicates that the LFC is now trying to include male members of the community, although as of May 2024 all its members are still female. The LFC now has twelve years of history, and the members meet on Mondays for two hours in the Korean Culture Clubhouse located in the Donaupark, in Vienna's 22nd district. The members of the LFC pay a membership monthly fee, seek donations for larger events if necessary, and make donations to people in need. They take turns introducing their work, then commenting on and revising the texts together.

I personally found out about the LFC when I met the club chair, Ms Hwang, at a reading by a visiting Korean author at the University of Vienna in June 2017. When I was told that a literature seminar¹³ would be held by a professor from Korea in July 2018, I contacted the LFC. By attending the seminar, I got to know Professor Dukkyu Park from Dankuk University and learned that Korean diaspora literature¹⁴ is an important subject for researchers like him. The seminar with Professor Park aroused my interest in diaspora life, and it encouraged me to begin a participant observation by attending their meetings and talking

13 For further details, see Kim (2022).

14 For further details, see the International Association for Literature of Korean Residents Abroad (2022, 69–79).

with the club chairwoman occasionally. I established a close rapport with a few members of the LFC in order to conduct in-depth interviews for this study. Following the literature seminar, an international literary symposium was hosted by the LFC in cooperation with the Society of Korean Literary Creative Writing under the direction of Professor Park in the Korean Culture Clubhouse on July 1st, 2019. I gave a paper at the symposium and most of the members attended as well. The club chairwoman briefly recalled the club's early days at that symposium, as follows: "The Munuhoe is an organization that was formed on April 18, 2012, by Pastor Choi, who had recruited people for a Korean literature class. People who were talented or interested in literature became the core members, and people like me who wanted to reflect on life with pen and paper joined together to form a small group" (The Society of Korean Literary Creative Writing 2019).¹⁵

As mentioned above, Pastor Choi started the LFC in April 2012. He worked from March 2000 until August 2016 for a Protestant Korean church in Vienna, then returned to Korea due to the health issues of one of his relatives (telephone interview with Pastor Choi, March 3rd, 2023). He was well known as a pastor and had a good relationship with the Koreans in Vienna's Korean Community.

From April 2012 to August 2016, he was active as a *Jidogyosa* (tutor) for the LFC in the Korean community. He gave me further details about the early days:

I told the owner of Akakiko,¹⁶ who became the first head of Korean Culture Clubhouse [henceforth: KCC], that to preserve the structure of KCC in the Donaupark several gatherings should be organized, with a fee charged for the use of the KCC. And I told her to let me know if there was anything I could do. I can't donate money, but I can do some cleaning of the structure or work as a janitor. Then she replied to me saying 'we came at a young age to work here and can still communicate in Korean; however, we can't even write a letter in Korean correctly', and she added that it would be nice if I could guide a writing club. We knew each other personally, so the first meeting was held at one of her restaurants on April 18th, 2012. (Telephone interview with Pastor Choi, March 3rd, 2023)

15 For further details, see the Society of Korean Literary Creative Writing (2019, 8–9).

16 Akakiko is an Asian restaurant chain founded in 1994.

Hearing about how they had become self-conscious about their poor Korean writing skills since they had left their homeland many years ago, Pastor Choi¹⁷ thought of starting a literature club. He remembered how he had enjoyed studying German literary criticism before he became a pastor. After getting the idea, he began by recruiting 20 members to support the KCC. He announced on April 15th, 2012, that the first meeting would take place on April 18th, 2012.¹⁸ This gathering named of a group called the LFC would continue to have regular meetings in the KCC. Members of the LFC continued to read, write, and even sing together, accompanied on the guitar by Pastor Choi, who served as their tutor.

The LFC organized the first event¹⁹ titled *Munhakoe Bam* (Evening of Literature) on October 31st, 2013, to celebrate its first publication, titled *Munjib* (*Collection of Works*) (2013), in which fifteen members and the tutor presented their works. The first issue included a total of twenty-one pieces: twelve prose works, six poems, and three essays. One of the fifteen members designed the event poster, another member played the gayageum (a Korean instrument with twelve strings), and nine members presented their works at this event, which was very warmly received in the Korean community in Austria.

The LFC published its second issue with a new title, *Donau Damso* (*Cozy Talks by the Danube*) (2015). Comparing the first and second issues, it is obvious that the membership had changed, as some had left while others had joined the group. In the second issue thirteen members and the tutor presented their works, which included a total of 37 pieces: fifteen prose works, seventeen poems, four short stories, and one travel essay. The LFC held its second *Evening of Literature* on October 31st, 2015.

After Pastor Choi returned to Korea in August 2016, the LFC went on to publish another issue of *Cozy Talks by the Danube* (2017). The task of tutoring was temporarily taken on by Ms Shin, one of the members, who published her works in the second and third issues. Comparing these issues we can see that the membership had again changed, as two members from Graz had joined the LFC. Twelve members published their works in the third issue, which included a total of 46 pieces: one prose work, one prose poem, 27 poems, ten essays, three travel essays, one film review, two children's stories and one short-short story (in the conte genre). It is worth noting that four works written by three students from the Vienna Korean School were also published in this issue. Moreover, a German translation

17 He also wrote in Korean and published a book *Gidoga sijagida* (2012).

18 After the telephone interview, Pastor Choi sent me the recruiting text and announcement per social network service. See Appendix 1.

19 It is composed of readings by authors and music. See Appendix 3.

of four works written by members of the group were published alongside the Korean texts. The LFC held the third *Evening of Literature* on November 4th, 2017, in celebration of its fifth anniversary.

During the time without any tutor, the members of the LFC continued to write and meet in the KCC. In April 2018, Chungkwan Baek *moksanim* (a minister in charge of Korean Protestant Church, henceforth: Pastor Baek) took over as tutor. In his interview on March 13th, 2023, he recalled the time when he decided to join the LFC:

As I came to Vienna as the successor of Pastor Choi, the members of the LFC expected me to tutor the gathering, but I couldn't. Taking care of the church and adjusting to life here left me with neither the time nor the energy to do other things. Also, I had never studied literature. However, after Easter, when one of members told me that there was no tutor for the LFC, I did volunteer temporarily until a new tutor could be found. (Interview with Pastor Baek, March 13th, 2023)

In the summer of 2019, Ms Hong, who continued to publish her works after the first issue was released, won the *Hangyeoremunhak sininmunhak* literary prize for her essay *Nachisonyeo* (*Nazi girl*, 2019), and debuted as a writer in Korea. In the autumn of 2019, Ms Kim also debuted, publishing her first short story, *Merikeuriseumaseu* (*Merry Christmas*, 2019), and winning the *Munhaknamoo* literary prize in Korea.²⁰ The news of these awards was enough to draw attention to the literature of overseas Koreans in Austria. The LFC then published its fourth issue (2019), in which fourteen members including the two winners and the tutor presented their works. The fourth issue included a total of 44 pieces: seven poems on the theme “our beautiful language”, fourteen other poems, seventeen essays, two travel essays, one short story and three contes. They held the fourth *Evening of Literature* on November 9th, 2019, to celebrate the publication.

During the COVID-19 pandemic the members continued their meetings online, and thirteen members published their works in the fifth issue, which included a total of 50 pieces: 27 poems, sixteen essays, one short story, one film review and five contes. The LFC held the fifth *Evening of Literature* on October 14th, 2022, in celebration of its tenth anniversary.

20 For further details, see Unha Kim (2019).

Table 1: The Number and Types of Texts Presented in Each Issue.²¹ The Original Categories are Listed in Italics

Type of writings	1st issue	2nd issue	3rd issue	4th issue	5th issue
<i>Sanmun</i> (prose work)	12	15	1		
<i>Sanmunshi</i> (prose poem)			1	7	
<i>Shi</i> (poem)	6	17	27	13	27
Translation of a poem into German			2	1	
<i>Supil</i> (essay)	3		10	17	16
Translation of an essay into German			2		
<i>Gibaengmun, yeohaengi</i> (travel essay)		1	3	2	
<i>Danpyeonsoeol</i> (short story)		4		1	1
<i>Yeonghwagamsangmun</i> (film review)			1		1
<i>Donghwa</i> (children's stories)			2		
<i>Kongteu</i> (conte)			1	3	5
Total excl. translation	21	37	46	43	50

As indicated in the table above, some members presented their works along with translations of the same. These they translated into German on their own, and presented them in the third issue. According to the introduction to the third issue by the club chair, the reason for translating these texts into German was a desire to share the Korean spirit with Austrians. In the fourth issue, one poem was translated by the author's spouse.

Regarding the tutor, Pastor Baek was only willing to volunteer for a limited time and left this informal position by the end of 2022. In an interview at his office, he expressed his opinion that the LFC needed a new style of tutoring. Fortunately, the group managed to find a new tutor for their meetings, Ms Cheong, who majored in Korean language education at a university in Korea and has lived in Vienna since 2017. Under her tutelage, members not only discuss their own works but also have had time to read and discuss at least one poetry collection every six months.

21 Based on the peer reviewer's suggestion, the cover page and contents of each issue has been included in the appendix. See Appendixes 4 to 8.

Table 2: The Change in Tutors at the LFC

Time period	Name	Sex	Occupation
April 2012 – Summer 2016	Youngshik Choi	male	Protestant pastor
Autumn 2016 –March 2018	K. Shin ²²	female	Missionary
April 2018 –end of 2022	Chungkwan Baek	male	Protestant pastor
2023 –	Hyeonseon Cheong	female	Advertising producer/ copywriter

Life Histories of Five Club Members

In order to establish a better understanding of the LFC, I interviewed five members who had published their works regularly since the first issue. The current tutor was present at the five interviews while I asked how the members had come to Austria, and how and why they had joined the LFC.

Table 3: The Interviewees and Interview Date and Place

Interviewee	Age at the time of the interview	Interview date	Place
B. Hwang	69	Feb 10, 2023	In a coffee house near her home
J. Hong	70	Feb 29, 2023	At her home
Y. Kang	71	Feb 21, 2023	In her medical practice
B. Kim	81	Feb 8, 2023	At her home
Y. Lee	73	Feb 24, 2023	In my office at the university

Based on the semi-structured interviews, the timeline of the respondents' migration to Austria, their membership process, and their contributions to the publications can be summarized as follows. There are three different types of migration history.

From Korea Directly to Austria

Ms Lee was born on January 25th, 1950, and came to Austria to work as a nurse on May 31st, 1973 as part of the second group of nurses through the *Hanguk haeoe kaebal kongsa*²³ (the Korea Overseas Development Corporation, hence-

22 Some members recalled that during this period they did not really have a tutor because the Ms Shin, who was also a member, was absent several times. Unfortunately, I could not interview her, and the members did not want to reveal why she left the club.

23 For further details see *Korea's History of Overseas Employment and Migration* (The Korea Overseas Development Corporation n.d.).

forth: KODC). She still lives in Vienna. She moved to Austria because she wanted to earn more than she did in Korea, and enjoy classical music in Vienna. She got information on the founding of the literature club directly from Pastor Choi. She joined the LFC at the age of 62, participating in her first meeting because she had a yearning for literature and also wrote on her own. She has published four prose works, six essays, and one translation of an essay. Nowadays she no longer wants to write in the LFC, and just enjoys meeting other Koreans and speaking Korean at the meetings on Mondays (Interview with Ms Lee, February 24th, 2023).

From Korea to Austria via Germany

Ms Kang was born on October 11th, 1951. She went through the KODC to work as a nurse in Hamburg in October 1971. After the three-year contract was up, she moved to join her Austrian boyfriend in 1975. She continued to work as a nurse while studying medicine in Vienna after getting married. She is known as Dr Kang²⁴ among the Koreans in Austria. She got information on the founding of the literature club from her friend, the owner of Akakiko, and joined at the age of 61 as she wanted to write letters to a friend in Korea and was aware that she was not able to write in Korean very well. At times she wanted to cancel her membership because writing was a burden to her, but now she wants to keep her membership as long as possible because she likes the friendships she has formed and wants to support the LFC and the KCC. She has published three prose works, three essays, two travel essays, three poems, one translation of a poem by her husband, and one translation of an essay (Interview with Ms Kank, February 21st, 2023).

Ms Hwang was born on July 19th, 1953, and went through the KODC to work as a nurse in Berlin in September 1974. When her three-year contract was up, she got a job as a nurse through friends who had gone to the USA after three years of employment in Germany. However, she had to wait about a year to get a working visa in the USA. In 1977 she thus moved to Vienna while she was waiting for this, because there she believed she could enjoy classical music there while also working as a nurse. Eventually she ended up working in Vienna until her retirement. She found out about the LFC recruiting new members when Pastor Choi sent an email to the entire community through Der Verein der Koreaner in Österreich. She participated in her first meeting at the age of 58 because she wanted to write her life story and get some tutoring to improve her writing. She continues to serve as the club chair and editor for their publications. She has published four prose

24 For further details, see Verein der Koreaner in Österreich (2012).

works, four essays, three poems, one poem on the theme “Our Beautiful Language”, one travel essay, and one film review (Interview with Ms Hwang, February 10th and 16th, 2023).

Ms Hong was born on July 19th, 1952. She wanted to work as a nurse in Germany like her elder sister, who had gone through the KODC to Heidelberg. She therefore went to Germany in April 1981 and began to learn German while looking for a job. When she could not find work, she moved to Austria in 1982 and was employed as a nurse. She read the recruitment announcement for the LFC in a Korean community newsletter, but she did not join by herself because she was not confident in her writing skills even though she liked to read. When Ms Kim—another member of the group who she knew from the same church gathering (see below)—recommended the LFC to her again about six months later, she finally joined at the age of 60. She recalled that Professor Park gave her courage to write at the seminar in 2018. As mentioned earlier, she won a literary prize for her essay in the summer of 2019 and debuted as a writer in Korea. She has published four essays, ten poems, one short story, one prose work, four contes, three poems on the theme “Our Beautiful Language”, and one travel report. She also continues to publish her works in Korea with other diaspora writers who now live in various other countries (Interview with Ms Hong, February 27th, 2023).

Returning to Austria

Ms Kim was born on March 17th, 1941, and worked as a nurse at the Catholic hospital in Daegu. One day she asked a German engineer at her hospital about the possibility of working as a nurse in Germany. Since she was young, she hoped she could live for some time in Bonn or Vienna, since she loved classical music. Though there was no formal recruitment agreement, she got a job through a German colleague at her hospital in Korea, and in August 1965 she arrived in Germany. She worked in Bochum for three years, and then went to join her fiancé—they had got engaged in Korea before she left the country—who was going to study in Munich. After she got married she continued to work as a nurse, while her husband continued to study and care for their child for seven years. She then moved to Vienna because of her husband’s studies, and began to work in that city in August 1976. Her husband then returned to Korea after receiving his doctorate and became a professor at a university there. He suggested she should return, while their daughter stay in Vienna to study. She had worked in Vienna for fifteen years when she eventually returned to her homeland to join her husband in 1991. After her husband passed away, she came back to Vienna in 2005. She had wanted to join a book club or something

similar for a long time because she loved reading and writing. She thus got in touch with Pastor Choi immediately after she got the email asking for members, and joined her first meeting at the age of 70. She has since published three prose works, four poems, seven essays and one poem on the theme “Our Beautiful Language”. Besides publishing in *Donau Damso* (*Cozy Talks by the Danube*), she has also published her works in the collection *Yuerop hanin munhak* (*Korean Literature in Europe*) since 2017.

Based on the interviews with the members and tutors, I gained the following insights about the LFC:

- The members of the club are still mainly Korean women.
- Most of the members work as nurses in Austria.
- They could join this club because they had time to reflect on their past. The members meet at 10 o'clock a.m. every Monday. This time is not optimal for people who still have jobs, as they usually have to work then, making it more suitable for retirees and otherwise unemployed individuals. As a result, there are more elderly members than younger ones.
- The average age at their first meeting was about 60. The club has a history of twelve years, and the age composition has not changed much over this time.
- Most members originally joined to write in Korean and improve their language skills. While they spoke Korean to communicate with their compatriots they lacked confidence when writing letters, invitations, etc., as indicated in the interviews. This was partly because they had not had enough opportunities to use written language in their mother tongue while living in Austria. They also felt they could not be proficient in Korean due to the influence of German, which they had spoken for over 40 years in Austria. Additionally, some members joined the club because they loved literature and wished to write, but had not had the chance to do so in their younger years. Therefore, they were eager to seize the opportunity when they had more time. They began to write about their nostalgia for Korea and their lives in general, although mainly their experiences in the diaspora.
- As for writing, the biggest difficulty was finding the right expressions. Members found it challenging to recall the correct vocabulary in Korean because they had not used those words in a long time. They often engaged in code-mixing in their daily lives: their sentence structure followed the Subject-Object-Verb order typical in Korean, but the core words were in German, with elements like affixes and particles from Korean. Furthermore, orthographic rules posed additional challenges for writing.
- Through regular writing, some members even debuted as writers in their homeland.

- The Evening of Literature event provided members and the whole Korean community in Austria with the opportunity to enjoy Korean literature.
- The club became well known and has been the subject of research for diaspora literature researchers such as Park (2022) and Kim (2022).
- The LFC enriches the lives of Koreans in Austria as well as in Korea.

The Function of Writing and the Meaning of the Club for Members

Each person who writes has their own specific purpose in life, which is closely linked to their motivation to write. If someone does not have such a motivation, he or she will not be compelled to write. Ossner (1995) distinguished between three types of writing intentions or functions: 1) the psychological function, which involves writing for oneself; 2) the social function, which involves writing for and to others; and 3) the cognitive function, which involves writing to gain knowledge and to relieve the burden that would otherwise be on one's memory. Based on Ossner's distinctions, I would like to discuss the function of writing for the members of this group, drawing on the interviews.

As the title of the seminar "Writing in One's Mother Tongue"—held in July 2018 by Professor Park at the KCC—implies, the members wanted to write in Korean for themselves. They joined the club because they assumed that they were not good at writing in Korean since they had been living in Vienna for a long time. This assumption provided the impetus for members with similar backgrounds and has kept them together until now. Some of them wanted to write in their mother tongue in order to communicate with family and friends back home, for example, by writing letters. Others joined because they loved literature when they were young and had a desire to create literary works. For all the members, writing thus serves a psychological function.

As time passed, they also wanted to leave traces of their lives in writing. In particular, they wanted their children and descendants to remember their lives after leaving Korea and settling in Austria. They did not want to be forgotten. As such, writing also serves a social function for the members.

New members who join the group mostly write for themselves. Later, as I have mentioned, their motivation for writing can change over time.

The two functions of coming together in the group for the members are therefore as follows:

- As the first tutor mentioned (see the recruiting text), the members enjoy writing together and knowing that they are not alone in Austria. Just as the tastes

of childhood provide a sense of stability and comfort (Yun 2019²⁵), writing about the memories of childhood, home and the past reduces the sense of loneliness and feeling of disconnection from the homeland.

- Having the KCC as a regular meeting place is important. It is not only a gathering spot for Korean clubs but also a focal point that brings Koreans together. The members value their contribution to maintaining the KCC financially.

Concluding Remarks

The Korean community in Austria is still an unexplored field that has been relatively neglected among historical Korean diaspora studies as well as the study of Korean diaspora literature (Kim 2022). In 2012 there were 10 organizations focused on this community in Austria, but as of March 2023 there were 20. In other words, the number of clubs and organizations for Korean immigrants in Austria continues to increase.

The members of LFC contribute by writing for the newsletter of *Der Verein der Koreaner in Österreich* and the booklet of the Korean Nurses Association in Austria. They share their diasporic experiences in German, too. As such, they do not choose between homeland and host land, but live a transnational life bridging both. The LFC will continue as long as the health of its members permits. But occasionally younger Koreans join the LFC from time to time and so the next generation may well continue the group. However, it will take time for the gaps resulting from differences in age and migration background to close, as they are not easily bridged. A short while ago I was told that a new book club was being formed, and that the members meet at the KCC. The members of this new club are much younger than those of the LFC and they are mainly focused on reading. It thus seems that literary clubs, whether they focus on writing or reading, will continue to exist in Austria's Korean community.

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25 For further details, see Yun (2019, 140–49).

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글을 쓰고 싶으십니까?

(비엔나 한인 여성문우회 발족에 즈음하여)

나의 얘기를 써 보고 싶나요?

아니면 주변에서 일어난 일들을 글로 남기고 싶으신가요?

마음은 굴뚝 같은데 실제 써 보려면 생각만큼 안 되시나요?

그런 분들께 여기 좋은 자리가 마련되었습니다.

일주일에 한 번, 글을 잘 써 보고 싶은 분들이 모여 습작하고 토론하고 이야기를 나누는 글방이 시작됩니다.

자격 요건은 아무 것도 없습니다.

다만 한글을 읽고 쓸 수 있는 것 하나면 그만입니다.

좋은 문우들과 지도 선생님들이 한때 문학소녀였던 여러분들을 기다립니다.

그래서 이 글방 모임에 나가면 글을 정말 잘 쓸 수 있게 되나요?

물론입니다.

처음부터 잘 쓰기는 쉽지 않겠지만 조금씩 써 나가다 보면, 가족들과 친구들은 물론 본인까지 스스로 놀라고 감동받게 될 날이 올 것입니다.

울 가을이면 당신은 글짓기의 단계를 넘어 문학의 향기를 품은 아름다운 분으로 변하게 될 것입니다.

그래도 너무나 기초가 없는 수준이라 망설여지신다고요?

염려 마세요!

당신 옆에 당신의 수준을 알고 도와줄 자상한 선생님들이 계시답니다.

그러니 오시기만 하면 됩니다.

글쓰기의 ABC부터 차근차근 알아가게 될 것입니다.

다만 여러 사정 때문에 인원은 20명으로 제한합니다.

도나우 파크에 아름답게 단장한 한인문예회관의 봄은 우리 비엔나 한인여성문우회와 함께 활짝 꽃피게 될 것입니다.

오세요!

여러분의 삶에 새로운 활력과 풍요함을 줄 글방으로요!

비엔나 여성 문우회 회원 여러분께!

오래 기다리셨지요?

어제 4월 15일부로 비엔나 여성 문우회 회원모집은 마감됐습니다.

그러나 회원 여러분의 주변에 함께 하고 싶어하는 분들이 계시다면 언제나 환영합니다.

이제 5월3일 한인문예회관이 개관되면 정식 모임을 가질 텐데, 그 전에 아래와 같이 예비모임을 갖고자 합니다.

회원 여러분의 적극적인 참여를 부탁 드립니다.

이번 모임에서는 우리 문우회의 진행과 방향, 공부를 어떻게 해 갈 것인가 등등을 토론하고자 합니다.

모두 참석하셔서 문우들과의 재미있고 유익한 첫 번째 만남을 누리시기를 바랍니다.

아울러 아직 문우회에 정식 참여의사를 밝히진 않았지만 가입의사가 있으신 분들은 함께 오셔도 좋습니다.

모임 장소와 시간은 아래와 같고, 주최측의 준비를 위해 참석여부를 꼭 알려 주시면 감사하겠습니다.

2012. 4. 15

문우회 담당자 최영식 드림

일시 : 2012년 4월 18일(수) 오전 10시

장소 : AKAKIKO Hietzing 점 (Am Platz 3. 1130 Wien 전화:057-330-160)

문의 : 0676-911-4268 최영식

Appendix 2: Announcement for the Preliminary Meeting (Email from Pastor Choi).

문학의 밤 프로그램

진행 : 최은주

1. 이진희 -- 피아노 연주
2. 조 현 대사님 축하
3. 홍진순 (시) ----- 어머니
4. 김갑이 ----- 비오는 날
5. 노영숙 ----- 피아노
6. 이희진 (시) ----- 고독
7. 강유송 ----- 아침상
8. 허영애 ----- 가야금 연주
9. 정화자 (시) ----- 안개 때문에
10. 김방자 ----- 노숙자
11. 명경아 ----- (시) 그리운 사람
12. 이영실 ----- 깨어 있는 마음
-
13. 양태중 (Baritone)
14. 회장 인사
15. 합창 - 잊혀진 계절

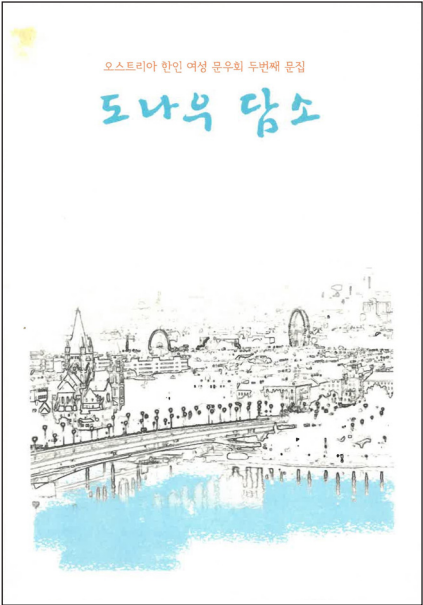


Appendix 3: Programme of the First Evening of Literature and the Related Poster.



- 차례 -

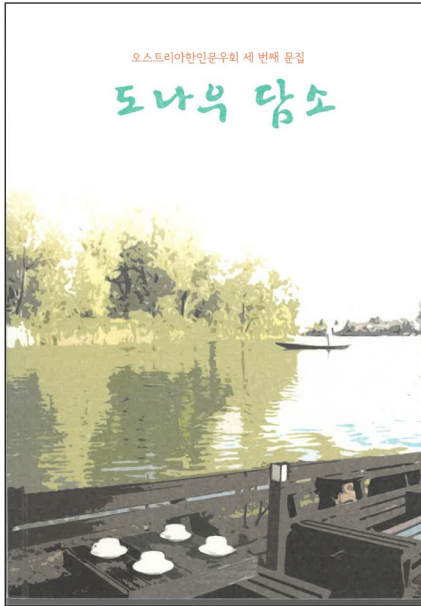
1.	조 현 대사님 축하	04
2.	전 미자 한인 문화회관 판장 격려사	05
3.	황 병진 문우회장 서두	07
4.	시 : 정 화자 (안개 때문에)	08
5.	시 : 정 화자 (들꽃)	09
6.	시 : 이 회진 (정서)	10
7.	시 : 이 회진 (망각)	11
8.	시 : 홍 진순 (호수)	12
9.	산문 : 홍 진순 (첫 성탄 선물)	14
10.	시 : 성 일란 (7월의 노래)	20
11.	산문 : 성 일란 (고양이)	21
12.	산문 : 김 갑이 (비 오는 날)	25
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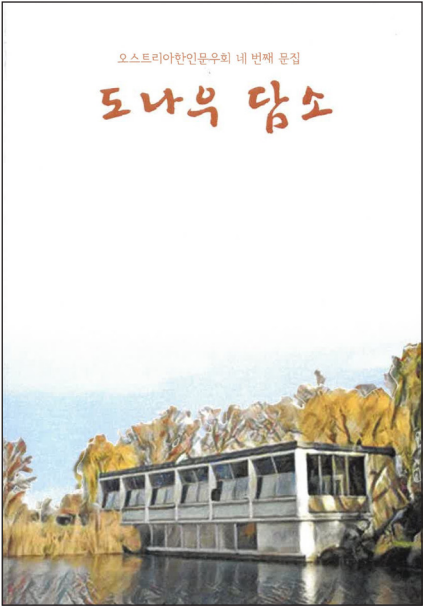
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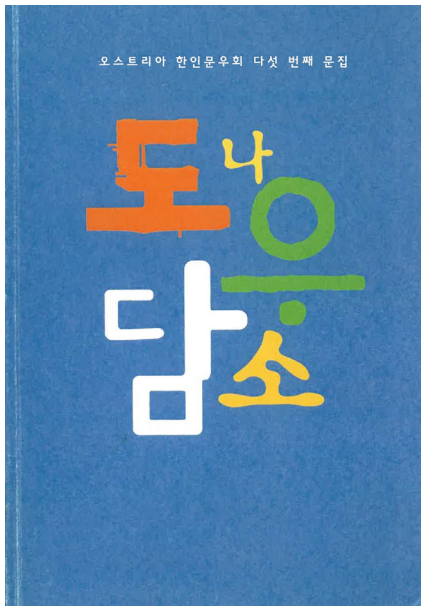


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Missionary Work in Wonsan: A Picture Postcard and Catholic Journals in Slovenia

*Chikako SHIGEMORI BUČAR**

Abstract

In the Cartography Department of the National and University Library (NUK) in Ljubljana, there is a single picture postcard showing a black and white photo of the Benedictine abbey in Tokwon near Wonsan, today's North Korea. The postcard was printed in Slovenia, or by a Slovenian printing house, because the caption is in Slovene. This picture postcard was not mailed, and there is no additional information regarding who possessed the card and when.

In relation to the missionaries posted to Korea during the early twentieth century, it is known that the Vatican divided the Korean region into three, for the French, American and German missionary orders.

In the library NUK, there are many similar missionary postcards from other parts of Asia, particularly from India and Ceylon; that is, showing local scenes in relation to missionary works with captions in Slovenian.

This paper is a report on further research about the activities of Slovenian missionaries. Was there anybody from the Slovenian region stationed in Tokwon in the 1930s? Or perhaps only the printing of the postcards took place?

Keywords: Christian missionary, Tokwon, 1930s, picture postcards, postcard printing in Slovenia

Misijonsko delo v Wonsanu: razglednica in katoliške revije v Sloveniji

Izvleček

Na Oddelku za kartografijo Narodne in univerzitetne knjižnice (NUK) v Ljubljani je ena sama razglednica s črno-belim posnetkom benediktinske opatije v Tokwonu, v bližini Wonsana, v današnji Severni Koreji. Razglednica je bila natisnjena v Sloveniji oziroma jo je natisnila slovenska tiskarna, saj je napis na njej v slovenščini. Ta razglednica ni bila poslana po pošti, zato ni dodatnih podatkov o tem, kdo in kdaj jo je posedoval.

V zvezi z misijonarji, napotenimi v Korejo v začetku 20. stoletja, je znano, da je Vatikan razdelil korejsko regijo na tri dele, in sicer za francoski, ameriški in nemški misijonski red.

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V knjižnici NUK je veliko podobnih misijonarskih razglednic iz drugih delov Azije, zlasti iz Indije in s Cejlona; to so razglednice, ki prikazujejo lokalne prizore v povezavi z misijonskimi deli in imajo napise v slovenščini.

Prispevek je poročilo o nadaljnjem raziskavanju o delovanju slovenskih misijonarjev. Ali je bil v tridesetih letih 20. stoletja v Tokwonu nameščen kdo iz slovenske regije? Ali pa je morda prišlo le do tiskanja razglednic?

Ključne besede: krščanski misijon, Tokwon, trideseta leta 20. stoletja, razglednice, tiskanje razglednic v Sloveniji

Diaspora and Missionary

The word “diaspora” means either the movement of people from any nation or group away from their own country, or the people themselves who have moved away from their own country (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary 2020). The word was first used to indicate the dispersion of the Jews beyond Israel, but today it is used to mean the dispersion or spread of any people from their original homeland. For example, the Korean diaspora usually refers to Korean people who are both descendants of early emigrants from the Korean Peninsula, as well as more recent emigrants from Korea. Today, it is said that the most numerous Korean diasporas are found in China, the United States, Japan, Canada, and former Soviet Union countries such as Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan (National Atlas of Korea 2022). Such modern diaspora movements occur mainly because of economic, social, political, or cultural difficulties experienced by individuals in the home country.

This paper is a case study of exchanges between Slovenia (as a part of Central Europe) and Korea in the years between the First and Second World Wars. The focus is not on the “Korean diaspora” as described above, but about a Central European diaspora in Korea. There were some individuals who were sent as religious missionaries from Europe to Korea in the interwar years. An active and strong diaspora community in the form of Catholic missionary was thus present in Tokwon 덕원 德源 near the port city Wonsan 원산 元山 (or Port Lazarev) on the East Sea (Sea of Japan), but abruptly dissolved as a result of political changes after the Second World War.

Since the focus of attention is on some individuals who moved away from their place of origin with a certain aim to achieve within a set period of time, they may be called “expatriates”, a term that often refers to a professional, skilled worker, or student who intends to return to their country of origin after completing their purpose for residency in another country (Rogers, Castree, and Kitchin 2013, 143). How to define and categorize missionaries within the framework of diaspora is

still not certain. Religion is “a classic form of identity” and “one of the most prominent idioms through which diasporas come to produce shared consciousness, and shared practice” (Hausner and Garnett 2010, 1).

However, “religion has often been a concept ‘set apart’ in the arts, humanities and social sciences, and has certainly received much less theoretical attention in diaspora and transnational studies than the closely related notions of ethnicity, race, nation and hybridity” (McLoughlin 2013, 125) Further, McLoughlin states:

Theorizations of religion and diaspora have often focused on the question of whether a particular religious tradition, type of religion, or religions in general, can properly or usefully be described in terms of the concept of diaspora. (Ibid., 134)

This paper presents some of the facts discovered during my research based on my curiosity triggered by one simple picture postcard found in Slovenia. Since the story is related to the shared consciousness and shared practice of missionary workers, I believe that it can be discussed in the context of diaspora in a broad sense of the word.

Background: Research on Old Picture Postcards

Picture Postcards from Asia

I began my research on picture postcards more than ten years ago when I was invited to present a paper at an international conference on the theme “Koreans and Central Europeans” by the Koreanology of the University of Vienna. Since then, I have learned a lot from picture postcards, with the golden age of these items now more than a century ago, from towards the end of the 19th century to the first half of the 20th century. Even in this small corner of Central Europe, today’s Republic of Slovenia, there are many picture postcards from East Asia from that period, and to date we have identified at least 700 or 800 such postcards from East Asia—that is, from China, Taiwan, Korea and Japan. If we are to include the postcards from South Asia, some 1,000 examples from Asia as a whole can now be found in various archives in Slovenia, mainly in museums and libraries, but some of them are also in private hands. Most of these picture postcards are photographs of landscapes, city scenes and tourist destinations, but there are also ethnographic photos of the local people showing their traditional clothes and activities such as farming, manual work, work in factories and everyday businesses, like small specialized shops. There are also picture postcards of theatre, dance and music performances (Shigemori Bučar and Veselič 2021, 125–27).

Picture postcards offer manifold facts and information. First of all, the photograph or the picture on the postcard offers some information on the scene shown, which was chosen according to some purpose or the demands of the time. The printing technique is also a clue for the approximate time and place of production. If there is a printed caption or explanation on the front and reverse of the postcard then it can help us identify the motivation for the postcard's production, together with some marks or names of the printing house. In the case of Japanese picture postcards, we have also identified the time of production by analysing the orthography, according to the changes in the postal system and the governmental regulations. If the postcard was sent and has writing on one side then it offers much more information: about the person who wrote the message, about the addressee, and about the context in which the postcard was used (*ibid.*, 45–68).

Korea-related Picture Postcards in Slovenia

In some of my past research papers I have classified picture postcards according to the institutions where the postcards are archived, and the individual collectors who collected them. Among the more numerous Japanese and Chinese picture postcards in the museums and libraries, I also found some with Korean motifs. They are in three different institutions: the “Sergej Mašera” Maritime Museum in Piran, the Regional Museum in Celje, and the National and University Library (NUK) in Ljubljana (see Table 1 below for details).

The first contacts between the Slovene ethnic region and East Asia, as observed through the identified picture postcards, were in the context of maritime activities. The first institution mentioned in the above table is the Maritime Museum in Piran, a small town in Slovenia on the Adriatic coast. This museum specializes in the history of maritime activities in the region, firstly in the time of Austro-Hungarian Empire and later in the time of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (later called Kingdom of Yugoslavia), and up to the time of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. What follows are some of the characteristics of these oldest Korea-related picture postcards found in Slovenia, and which were used by officers and members of the Austro-Hungarian navy: the two postcards mentioned in Table 1, used by the navy officer Anton Haus, both showed a hand-drawn map of Korea made in Vienna and used within the Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy (fig. 1); and among the next three in the Koršič collection,¹ one was most probably

1 Ivan Koršič was a military chaplain in the navy. Though he never travelled to East Asia, he received picture postcards from other members of the navy and collected them in albums. See more on this in Shigemori Bučar (2019a; 2020).

Table 1: Korean Postcards Archived in Slovenia (Shigemori Bučar 2019a, modified)

Institution	Collection (collector/ use's name)	Number	Used or collected in	Made and printed in
“Sergej Mašera” Maritime Museum Piran	Anton Haus	2	1904	Austria-Hungary
	Ivan Koršič	3	around 1906	Russia in 1904
			1906	Japan
			sent from Kobe in 1906	photographed in Joseon and printed in France
	Viktor Kristan	4	1908–1909	Japan
Regional Museum Celje	Alma Karlin	18	1923	Japan
NUK, Ljubljana	?	1	not used	made after 1931? in Slovenia
	government (?) of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia	6	1988	Korean Publication Exchange Association, North Korea



Figure 1: The postcard used by Anton Haus. (Source: “Sergej Mašera” Maritime Museum Piran)



Figure 2: Postcard in Korsič collection. (Source: “Sergej Mašera” Maritime Museum Piran)



Figure 3: Port of Chemulpo (Inchon) in Korsič collection. (Source: “Sergej Mašera” Maritime Museum Piran)

made in Russia (fig. 2), the second in Japan (fig. 3), and the last one was printed in France but used and sent from Japan (fig. 4). In case of the Kristan collection, the postcards carry captions in the Japanese language and were obviously made and printed in Japan, or at least printed by a Japanese printing house (fig. 5). In 1908, the Korean peninsula was already in the process of being annexed to Japan, and so the cards could have been printed there.

As for the picture postcards in the Regional Museum in Celje, they are all made in the same format as the ones from the Kristan collection. They were collected and some of them used by the female adventurer Alma Karlin, who stayed in Japan for about a year in 1922 to 1923, and travelled through the Korean peninsula in 1923, when it was under Japanese occupation.²

A Picture Postcard Printed in Slovenia—Tokwon Abbey

In the National and University Library (NUK) in Ljubljana, i.e. the last of the three institutions mentioned in Table 1, I have identified seven picture postcards with motifs from Korea. They are all from a later time period compared to the ones found and archived in Piran and Celje. None of the postcards in NUK have been used for correspondence (and thus there are no traces of correspondence or postmarks). The six of them with the inventory marking “Korean Publication Exchange Association” from the year 1988 were obviously printed in North Korea for propaganda purposes. They are coloured photos of some natural landscapes and city sites in Pyongyang and North Korea.³

There now remains one single black-and-white picture postcard in NUK, which is in focus of my present research (fig. 6). This is the only postcard carrying some printed explanation of the photo on the reverse in the Slovene language (fig. 7), which reads:

Azija, Koreja: Benediktinski samostan v zimskem miru (Asia, Korea:
Benedictine monastery in winter peace)

The postcard is a photograph of the monastery in snow. After some research, it became clear that the photo is of Tokwon Abbey near Wonsan in today's North

2 Details about these older picture postcards are in my research papers, see Shigemori Bučar (2019a; 2019b; 2020).

3 The Potong River in Pyongyang, Pison Falls in Mt Myohyang, Lake Samji, “The Water of the Fatherland”, Pyongyang Department Store, and Chilsong Gate of Moran Hill (Shigemori Bučar 2019a, 160).

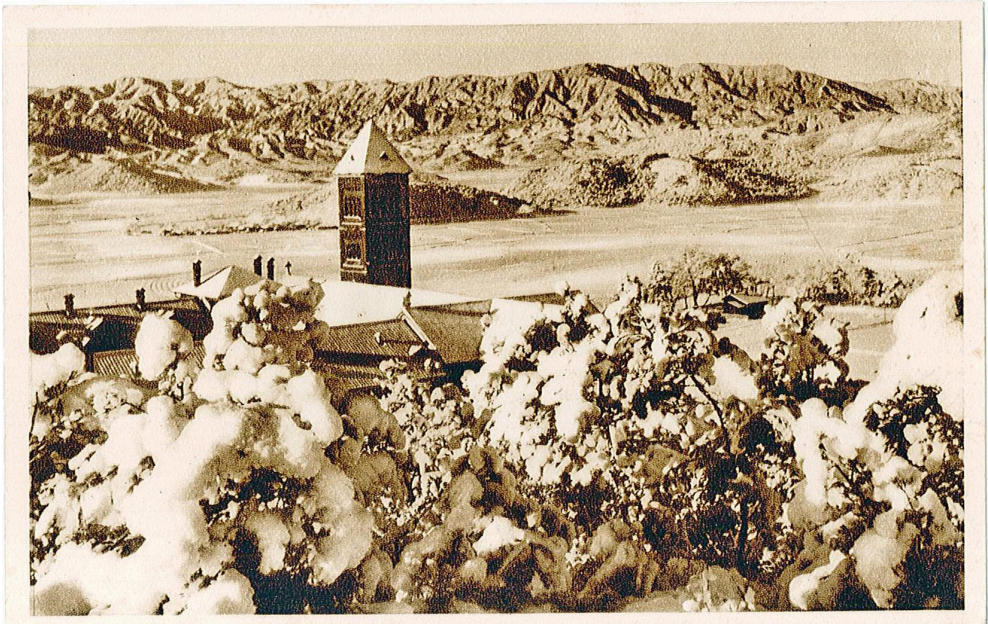


Figure 6: The black-and-white picture postcard in NUK. (Source: NUK)

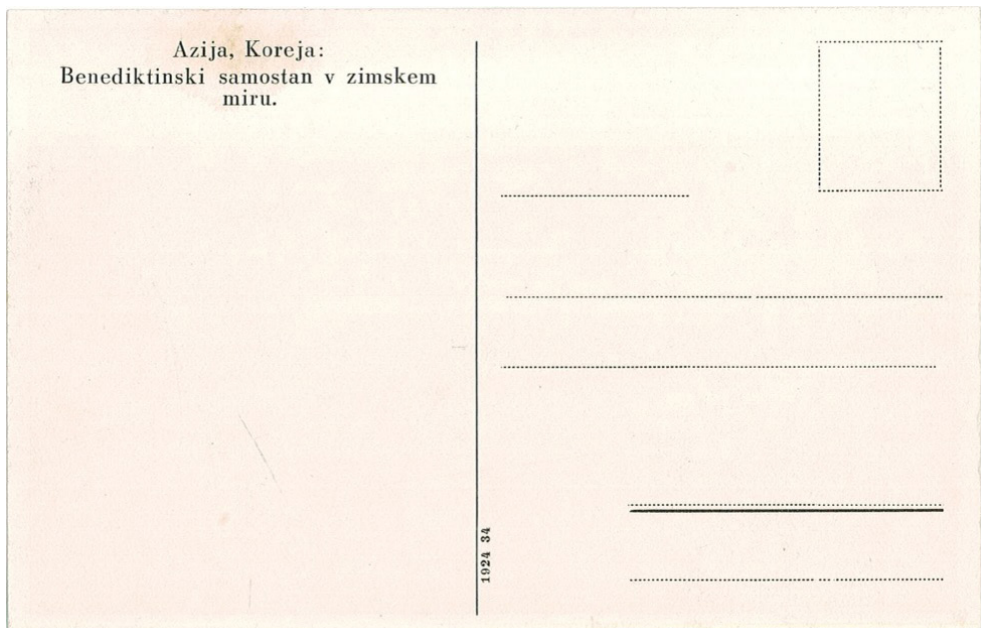


Figure 7: The reverse of the postcard of figure 6. (Source: NUK)

Korea.⁴ Our postcard in NUK has not been used, and according to the library there is no additional information regarding who possessed the card and when. There is not even an inventory stamp or other marking from the library, although one of these is usually made when objects are registered.

Tokwon Abbey was constructed in the years between 1927 and 1931. So, we can guess that our postcard was printed most probably in the 1930s. This abbey, due to the political conditions during and after the Second World War, ceased to function in 1949 (Mahr 2009, 22–52).

In relation to the missionaries posted to Korea during the early 20th century, in his article about Austrian missionaries Koidl states, based on his careful research, that:

The Vatican had carved up Korea amongst various missionary orders, with French missionaries responsible for the southern regions of the peninsula, Americans for the northwest, and the German Missionary Benedictines for the northeast, in addition to southeastern Manchuria. [...] In 1927, they [the Germans] moved their main abbey from Seoul to the newly built headquarters in Tokwon, near Wonsan. (Koidl 2020, 30)

There are many similar missionary postcards from other parts of Asia in NUK in Ljubljana,⁵ particularly from India and Ceylon: they show local scenes in relation to missionary work with captions in the Slovene language. The existence of these picture postcards suggests that some Slovene Christian organization published postcards of various missionary-related scenes, including monastery buildings, perhaps as curiosities for the Slovene public, particularly in the context of Christian churches, in the days before the Second World War.

In the context of East-West exchanges, this unused black-and-white picture postcard raises many questions, such as the following: (1) Was there anybody from the Slovene region stationed in Tokwon in the 1930s? Or perhaps the postcard was only printed there? (2) Who took the photo used for the postcard? And who printed the postcard and where? (3) Are there other picture postcards from Tokwon printed in the same manner? (4) How close and how concerned were the Slovene missionary workers with the missionary work in Tokwon, or in Korea as a whole?

4 A photograph, also black and white, on the Internet site of the B.C. Catholic and titled “North Korean Abbey Speaks Through its Architecture” shows the same building in summer (without snow) and with the same shapes of hills in the background (Sonnen 2018).

5 Four postcards showing China (with the name of the printing house “p. Domžale” on the reverse), 11 showing India, Bengal or Ceylon (with the inventory marking “Prinesel Fr Dobrovoljc, 1.XII 1950” or “Brought back by Father Dobrovoljc”), all with captions or explanatory text in Slovene.

Missionary Centre and Slovene Missionary Journals

Missionary Centre in Ljubljana

In order to answer at least some of these questions, I contacted the Missionary Centre (*Misijonsko središče*) in Ljubljana.⁶ In response to my explanation of the background of this project and my list of questions, I was told that there is no exact list or data about all past missionaries from the Slovene ethnic region, but perhaps I should look through the journals *Katoliški misijoni* (*Catholic Missions*) and *Misijonski koledar* (*Missionary Calendar*) from that period.⁷ These are general yearly journals about missionary work published in interwar years, with the subscription for *Misijonski koledar*, for example, being 12 Yugoslav dinars per year at the time. These journals in the interwar period contain many photographs from Asia and Africa, where the Catholic Church and its missionaries from Slovenia were quite active.

We can find a complete set of both journals in the library of the Missionary Centre in Ljubljana. They are written entirely in the Slovene language and there are many photos, drawings and maps, probably in order to educate and attract the attention of lay readers. Some of the articles are translations from German and/or other European languages in which some missionaries wrote to European missionary centres. There are reports on Christian missionaries from all non-Christian parts of the world, about their histories, current situations and activities, as well as simple descriptions of local life and customs from various regions of the world. In each journal excerpts of missionaries' letters are printed, and China, India and Africa are mentioned in particular as places where the Slovene missionaries are active. As for Korea and Japan, most of the news stories are translations from German or English missionaries. It is also mentioned in the colophon of one of the editions of a journal that it includes photos sent by missionaries (*Misijonski koledar* 1930, 78). It may be that these journals were written and printed in a hurry or with only a few editors, as I often noticed inconsistencies or mismatches between the text and photos, and many of the images were inserted into pages where they do not illustrate what is written there. I also noticed that some photos were used repeatedly in other editions of the same journal just to make each one more interesting, but without necessarily illustrating the accompanying text.

6 I am grateful for Dr Helena Motoh's help in this context, as she advised me to contact the Missionary Centre and gave me some preliminary information.

7 I am also grateful for the prompt reply to my e-mail messages from Ms S. Žuntar of the Missionary Centre and the possibility of research in their archive.

Reports and Photographs from Korea and Wonsan

However, among photographs which illustrate the missionary work in China and Japan or more generally in the Far East, four from Korea were found in the journal *Misijonski koledar*.

One is a photo of a festival procession in Korea⁸ (fig. 8), inserted into a longer description of the religious situation in China (*Misijonski koledar* 1927, 63). Three more photographs from Korea are found on pages where a longer Japanese story is written (*ibid.*, 1934). Both instances are the typical mismatch between the photos and the text in this journal. However, these three photos are obviously important for the present research, since they show some scenes of Christian churches in Korea at the time of publication.

One is a scene inside a church, most probably the church in Tokwon, with men and women on both sides of the aisle facing the altar (fig. 9). The Koreans are all clad in white, the women with veils over their head, the men with the typical Korean hat but in white. Another photograph shows the first Christian church meeting in Korea in the year 1931⁹ (fig. 10). On the left side of the photo is Bishop Mutel¹⁰ speaking in front of European and Korean men. The last of the four photos shows six young Korean men practicing music in a seminary room in Wonsan (fig. 11). The caption under the photograph says "Wonsan, Korea: A music group of the pupils of the theological seminary"¹¹ (*Misijonski koledar* 1934). After a careful search, I found a few paragraphs about the general situations in Korea and Japan, separated by a few pages from these photos: the text mentions the first meeting in Korea as well as the death of Bishop Mutel. A photo of Korean students with musical instruments and sitting arranged like a small orchestra was found on the calendar page of *Misijonski koledar* much later, for March 1940. The caption says: "Missionary students' band in Korea"¹² (fig. 12).

We can read some short reports on the Benedictine missionary in Wonsan in some numbers of the other journal, *Katoliški misijoni*, published in years 1930–1931, 1931–1932 and 1933–1934. For example, in edition No. 5 of the year 1930–1931, we can read that the first Korean students completed their studies in Tokwon. On the same page it is mentioned that Fr Leopold and Fr Fabian are visiting

8 "Prizor iz praznoverskega sprevoda na Koreji" (A scene from a superstitious procession in Korea).

9 The caption says "Prvi cerkveni zbor na Koreji l. 1931; govori škof Mutel". (The first church assembly in Korea in 1931; Bishop Mutel speaks).

10 Gustave-Charles-Marie Mutel (1854–1933), the Apostolic Vikar of Seoul between 1911 and 1933. He was criticized for condemning An Chunggun for assassinating Itō Hirobumi in 1909.

11 In Slovenian: "Vonsan, Koreja. Godba gojencev škofijskega semenišča."

12 In Slovenian: "Godba misijonskih gojencev na Koreji."



Figure 8: Festival procession in Korea. (Source: *Misijonski koledar* 1927, 63; Missionary Centre in Ljubljana)



Figure 9: Inside the church most probably in Tokwon. (Source: *Misijonski koledar* 1934, 57; Missionary Centre in Ljubljana)



Figure 10: The first church assembly in Korea in 1931; Bishop Mutel speaks. (Source: Misi-jonski koledar 1934, 72; Missionary Centre in Ljubljana)



Figure 11: Young Korean men practicing music in a seminary room in Wonsan. (Source: Misi-jonski koledar 1934, 58; Missionary Centre in Ljubljana)



Figure 12: Missionary students' band in Korea. (Source: *Misijonski koledar* 1940, 8; Missionary Centre in Ljubljana)

outposts in the region almost every month. The number of outposts had increased to 22 by then, and almost every one had an evening school, similar to an elementary school in a small, simple room owned by a local convert. Some advantages of these evening schools compared to the local public schools are also mentioned.

A few photos introducing Korean traditional customs were also found, titled “In Korea, the bride is carried to the wedding in a carrier”¹³ and “A young Korean Catholic newlywed with gifts from relatives and friends (Wensan)”.¹⁴ There seems to be a mistake in the latter caption, as “Wensan” should be “Wonsan”, the place where the wedding took place.¹⁵ The same place name is sometimes spelled Vonsan in the Slovenized spelling.

Finally, on page 95 of edition Number 6 of the year 1932–1933 of the journal *Katoliški misijoni*, I found exactly the same photo as that of the picture postcard archived in the Ljubljana National and University Library, that is, the photo of the Benedictine monastery in snow. The caption to the photo in the journal says: “Benedictine settlement of Wonsan, Korea (Winter picture from the month of Dec.)”¹⁶ (fig. 13).

13 In Slovenian: “Na Koreji nesejo nevesto k poroki v nosilnici.”

14 In Slovenian: “Mlada korejska katoliška novoporočenca z darili sorodnikov in prijateljev (Wensan).”

15 This is most probably the wedding reported by Kwon in 2020.

16 In Slovenian: “Benediktinska naselbina Vonsan, Koreja (Zimska slika iz meseca dec.).”

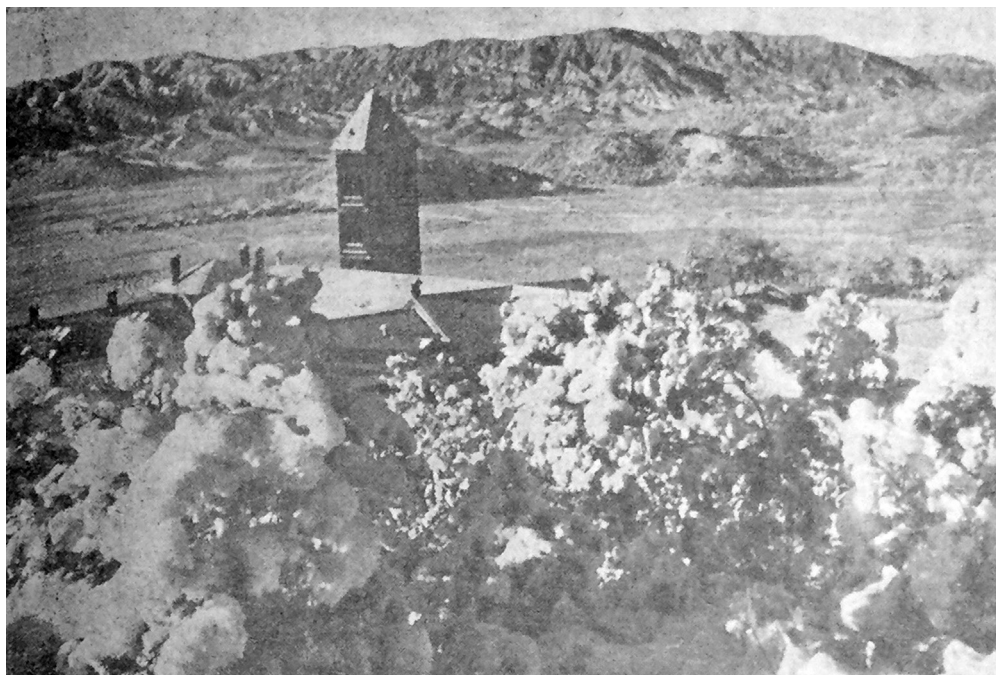


Figure 13: Photograph in Journal *Katoliški misijoni* (1932-1933). (Source: *Katoliški misijoni* 1932-1933, 95; Missionary Centre in Ljubljana)

To our disappointment, the photo is inserted into a longer description of the missionary work in India, another mismatch of the photo with the text. The printed photo is a lower quality reproduction than the picture postcard.

The Roman Catholics started their missionary work in Korea much earlier than the Protestants (Yun 2004, 7). In the Slovene Catholic journals, the 100-year anniversary of the establishment of the Korean Catholic Church in September 1931 is mentioned. Though there was no Slovene-speaking priest in Korea, the Slovene missionary journals were eager to report some news from the peninsula. Most probably the Missionary Society translated the news and missionary reports that were sent from Korea in the German language. From today's point of view, some of the news with photos were not very accurate, but the general Slovene public could still read interesting stories from this distant land, together with some visual information. The photos of the seminary and landscape from Wonsan were taken most probably by the German or Austrian priests and sent to the St Ottilien convent near Munich. We may guess that these were then sent further to Ljubljana to be used for the Slovene journals.

The Printing Office in Groblje

The printing office of the Missionary Society of Lazarists (Misijonska družba lazaristov) was quite active in interwar years. In 1920, the Missionary Society moved into the old gothic castle in Groblje in Domžale, not far from the city of Ljubljana, and in 1929, the missionary editorial office and its large library also moved into the complex in Groblje, where it operated until the end of the Second World War. It is said that the period between the wars was the most flourishing time for missionary work in Slovenia (Kolar 1998, 10, 186).

Since we have found the same photo of the Wonsan monastery in snow in the journal as well as on the picture postcard, and because similar postcards were printed with the abbreviation of the printing house “p. Domžale”, we may conclude that these are the products of the active Missionary Society in Ljubljana, Slovenia, during the time of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

Tokwon Abbey

With regard to Tokwon Abbey, and as Koidl (2020) also uses as one of his references, there is a three-volume book published by the St Ottilien Benedictine Congregation in Upper Bavaria, Germany, which was founded in 1884 and is still active today.

The Congregation of Missionary Benedictines of St Ottilien arrived in Seoul in 1909. In 1920 the Vatican created the Apostolic Vicariate of Wonsan, with the monastery as its administrative and spiritual centre. The priests chose a beautiful location near Tokwon in today's North Korea for the new abbey, a rural area very close to the Sea of Japan (the East Sea), with a view of cropland and mountains to the west and the sea to the east. The monks constructed a suitable four-storey monastery complex with a matching neo-Romanesque chapel, which they completed in the early 1930s. The property included a seminary and a nearby convent, along with a carpentry shop and a trade school. The parishioners of the monastery chapel were local farmers and fishermen, while the monks and nuns came from various countries, including Germany and Switzerland (Sonnen 2018).

The second volume of the previously mentioned publication with the title *Dissolved Houses: Benedictine Missionaries in East Asia* (*Aufgehobene Häuser: Missionsbenediktiner in Ostasien*), written by Johannes Mahr (2009), carries the subtitle “The Abbeys of Tokwon and Yenki”. Already in the first pages of the work Mahr describes, on the basis of church records and letters from the missionaries at that time, all the details of the plan, negotiations, and actual work to build the

monastery with a seminary in Tokwon near the port of Wonsan. All the names of the monks who were involved in this project are mentioned in the description of how they decided on a certain style and plan for this new abbey. Although there are no names of Slovene origin among these, there is one surname of Belgian origin, d'Avernas, for two brothers, Kanut and Leopold d'Avernas, from a family who resided in Apače, or in German Schirmdorf, in 1870s and 1880s.

Due to the circumstances at the end of the Second World War, all the missionary workers in Tokwon had to flee from the monastery. The Soviets then entered North Korea and occupied the monastery for a short time. In May 1949, it is said that there were 60 monks and 20 nuns at the monastery, but the North Korean secret police invaded the monastery and arrested all of them. Some of them were executed after having been sent to prisons and internment camps. Those who were killed in confinement or died of starvation or illness or in hard labour in the camps in Korea are now in the process of beatification, which started in 2007. One of the priests listed today as one of the "Martyrs of Tokwon" is Fr Kanut, whose full name is Benedikt Graf des Enffans d'Avernas, born 11 March 1884 in Schirmdorf or Apače in Slovenia (Hagiography Circle n.d.).

Fr Kanut Born in Apače

My research around a picture postcard led me to a person who was born in a small town in what is today Slovenia, a place now called Apače, but once known as Schirmdorf when it was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. I have further looked into the history of this place, and the biography of this man, who was born there in 1884.

The small town of Apače is just on the south side of the river Mura (German: Mur) in today's Republic of Slovenia. According to Ščap (2018), the settlement "Scirmdorf" was first mentioned in a written document in the year 1124. Before the year 1615, the mansion (or a small castle) Freudenau in Apače was still under construction (Ščap 2017).

The d'Avernas family, as their surname suggests, came from Brabant, today's Belgium (Wiesflecker 2004, 21). Adrian des Enffans d'Avernas (1771–1863) came to settle down in Steiermark in the Habsburg monarchy in 1805. He served as the imperial and royal treasurer (*k. und k. Kämmerer*). His descendant Heinrich Graf (Count) des Enffans d'Avernas and his wife Anna (born Countess Plaz) had five children, of which three became Catholic priests. Their second son, Benedikt, later with the missionary name Kanut, was born on March 11, 1884 in the mansion Freudenau.

In those years in the beginning of 20th century, the parish was a part of Austria-Hungary, with most of the inhabitants being German-speaking. According to sources (Ščap 2018; Wiesflecker 2004), Fr Kanut's parents, Graf Heinrich de Avernas and Anna Plaz, were married in 1876 in the chapel of the mansion Freudenau in Apače. According to the records from the year 1880, the village had 413 inhabitants and all declared that they were Christian. Of these, 393 of them were German speaking, and three were native speakers of Slovene. Ten years later, in 1890, the records say that there were 439 inhabitants, all Catholic, 410 of them declared to be German speaking, and eight were Slovene speaking (Ščap 2018, 135). Those were the days when the family d'Avernas resided in the mansion Freudenau and where Benedikt (later Fr Kanut) was born. It is also known that the mansion was sold to a new owner, Franz Pfannl, in 1885. This may mean that the d'Avernas family did not stay in this place for a long time, and moved to somewhere else in Central Europe. It is said that our central figure, Benedikt (later Fr Kanut), received his education in the Jesuit gymnasium Stella Matutina in Feldkirch in Vorarlberg, then in the Lycée in Dillingen, and at the University in Munich. He was admitted to the St Ottilien order in 1911. The family may have changed their place of residence so as to enable a good education for their children. Benedikt had a younger brother, Klemens (Fr Leopold), who also joined the St Ottilien convent and was sent to Korea a little before him. In January 1921, the older brother was also sent as Benedictine priest to Seoul (P. Kanut d'Avernas OSB). The brothers worked in the same monastery in Tokwon from the very beginning in 1928, but the younger brother died in 1944 due to a fall on an icy road during his journey to the outposts in the northeast Korean missionary area (Koidl 2020, 31). Fr Kanut continued with his missionary work in Wonsan and eventually had to flee from the monastery at the end of Second World War.

It is thus confirmed that there was at least one person who was born in today's region of Slovenia and was later active as a missionary in Korea, firstly in Seoul and later in Tokwon Abbey. But the postcard archived in NUK was not brought back by this person. Fr Kanut was unwell in those difficult years, and after his escape over the river Yalu to China he broke down in captivity in Manpo, and died on November 6, 1950.

In May 2007 the beatification process began for the 36 monks and nuns from Tokwon Abbey who were martyred during the wave of anti-Christian persecution under the rule of Kim Il Sung. Father Kanut d'Avernas is found on the list of martyrs from Tokwon (St Ottilien) and is remembered in prayers among Slovene Catholics as one of the priests from Slovenia. (e.g. a notice of the diocese Župnija Škofljica 2022)

Conclusions

I have also looked into several written sources in order to understand the position and circumstances of the Catholic missionary work that took place on Korean soil, work which was carried out under great pressure due to the social and political situation on the peninsula. Catholic priests (or any missionary workers) usually have certain ideals and goals with regard to carrying out their activities in the region they are sent to. They also have to deal with the local and the national governments of the country, and often need to make compromises.

However, the Slovene Catholic journals hardly mention the difficulties the missionaries faced in relation to the political situation in Korea. The Koreans were not happy with the Japanese colonial government's policy, and the Christian Church helped the Koreans to raise their national spirit under some challenging conditions (Yi in Yun 2004, 63–69). The compulsory worship of Shintō shrines in the 1930s also caused many conflicts. The Benedictine missionaries had to deal with the Japanese officers and local government officials on one hand, and with the lay Koreans on the other. Around 1940, as one of the difficult compromises that was made, the missionary workers and seminary students made field trips to Shintō shrines, and organized Shintō ceremonies in the seminary (Mahr 2009, 324–27).

In fact, both social and political conditions were changing quickly at both ends of the world. The Missionary Society with the printing office in Slovenia was confiscated by the Nazis in 1941, and though the Slovene journals were still published for three more years on a smaller scale, communication with other missionary centres was not possible (Kolar 1998, 188–89).

It should be concluded that while the Slovene public was informed of various missionary activities around the world, little information was available with regard to the work in Korea. After the Second World War, the editorial office of the Missionary Society went into exile, first to Rome, and later to Argentina (*ibid.*, 189).

Among the questions I raised in relation to the picture postcard of Tokwon Abbey, I am able to answer the first, and partly also the second.

The main discovery so far is the fact that there was at least one person who was born in the Slovene region and became active between 1921 and 1949 in Tokwon. His activities in cooperation with other monks from other European regions, along with Koreans, are described in the existing literature, particularly from the St Ottilien order in Germany, but less accurately in Slovene Christian journals. In the course of this research, I have also become aware that the printing office of the Missionary Society of Lazarists in Slovenia was quite active in the interwar years.

The journals and other Christian materials were printed there, and most probably all or most of the missionary picture postcards I have seen so far.

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THEMATIC FOCUS:
KOREAN DIASPORAS

Diasporic Identity and Community Adaptation

Readers' Response to a Korean Diaspora's Webtoon: The Case of the *Dailylifetoon Murrz*

Eva VUČKOVIČ*

Abstract

A *dailylifetoon* is a genre of webtoon that is getting more attention since it reflects the author's life and readers can easily identify with the storyline. At the same time, it is quickly spreading on social media platforms, thus becoming more accessible. Korean diaspora's *dailylifetoon* artists portray their own lifestyles, which is seen as a blend of two cultures. This paper examines the webtoon *Murrz* which depicts the daily life of a Korean-American webtoon artist and her family. Through narrative analysis, we can learn that the author, the main character of the webtoon, adheres to an American way of living, but knows Korean culture and traditions thanks to her parents who migrated to the US as young adults. Her parents are, in the eyes of the webtoon author, "the others", and therefore she ascribes certain of their behaviours as universal to Koreans.

In this regard, the reader's role becomes important. Readers' reactions are shown in the comments section of every episode. Most of the readers will relate to the story and share their own experiences in this section. However, some readers will challenge the author's opinion while commenting that certain situations, which in the author's view are distinctly Korean or Asian, occur in other cultures too.

In this article, we investigate how the Korean diaspora is portrayed in the webtoon *Murrz* and how the artist presents herself and her parents. Further, we discuss the role of the readers of this Korean diaspora webtoon and the impact of the comments section.

Keywords: Webtoon, readers' response, online comments, *dailylifetoon*, Korean diaspora

Odziv bralstva na spletni strip o korejski diaspori: primer stripa *Murrz*

Izvilleček

Spletni strip o vsakdanu je žanr spletnega stripa, ki dobiva vse več pozornosti, saj izraža avtorjevo oziroma avtoričino vsakdanje življenje, zato se bralke in bralci zlahka poistovetijo z zgodbo. Ta vrsta stripov se hitro širi na platformah družbenih medijev in postaja dostopnejša. Tudi v korejski diaspori najdemo ustvarjalke in ustvarjalce omenjenih spletnih stripov, ki prikazujejo svoj življenjski slog, prepreden z elementi dveh kultur.

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Ta članek proučuje spletni strip *Murrz*, ki prikazuje vsakdanje življenje umetnice korejsko-ameriških korenin in njene družine. S pripovedno analizo ugotovimo, da je avtorici, glavni junakinji tega stripa, bližje ameriški način življenja, kljub temu pa pozna korejsko kulturo in tradicijo po zaslugi svojih staršev, ki so se v mladih letih preselili v ZDA. Avtoričini starši so v njenih očeh »drugi«, zato jim pripisuje določena vedênja, ki bi jih sicer imeli za univerzalna.

V članku raziskujemo, kako je korejska diaspora prikazana v spletnem stripu *Murrz* ter kako umetnica predstavlja sebe in svoje starše. Nadalje razpravljamo o vlogi bralk in bralcev spletnega stripa in njihovem odzivu, ki je prikazan v razdelku s komentarji pod vsako epizodo. Večina bralcev in bralk se poistoveti z zgodbo in deli svoje izkušnje. Nekatere pa opozarjajo, da se določene situacije, ki so po avtoričinem mnenju korejske ali azijske, dogajajo tudi v drugih kulturah in so univerzalne.

Ključne besede: spletni strip, odziv bralstva, spletni komentarji, korejska diaspora

Introduction

“Webtoon” (*weptun* 웹툰) is a Korean English compound word, made from the words “website” and “cartoon”, and means cartoons or comics published online. Jin (2023, 30) claims that the term “webtoon” was used in written form for the first time in the newspaper *JoongAng Ilbo* on June 22, 1999, specifying “newly created manhwas [the general Korean term for comics and print cartoons] for the web” (Chung 1999, cited in Jin 2023, 30). The early 2000s are therefore considered the beginning of the webtoon era.

Webtoons emerged for several reasons. For one thing, the South Korean cultural industry began to expand in the 1990s, and as the government supported the export of cultural products, the market for Korean comic books was developing, but also had to compete with the market for Japanese comics (Bak 2018, 2–3). At the same time, digital technology systems developed and this influenced the expectations of comic book (*manhwa* 만화) readers. They followed the new technological inventions and wanted to read *manhwa* on a computer (ibid., 4). Therefore, the need to change paper books into digital products emerged. Artists started to scan their works and upload them to their personal websites. In 2003, the portal site Daum (*daeum* 다음) opened a corner in their “News Section” called *The World of Comics* (*Manhwawasoksang* 만화속세상). This is today seen as the most important step in the development of webtoons, since it facilitated certain technological advances in their production, such as the scroll function which made the reading of webtoons on a computer (or later mobile phone) more interesting and convenient (ibid., 10). Two years later, in 2005, the website Naver (*neibeo* 네이버) also provided a similar service for webtoon artists, and they began to rise in popularity. Due

to rapid production, the quantity of published webtoons increased and various genres began to emerge based on the content of the storyline (romance, action, fantasy, horror, etc.). Website also started to analyse the attitudes and preferences of readers, and so developed in such a way that made it easier for the readers to access their favourite webtoons (based on the reader's gender, age, preferred content, and even preferred drawing style) which, in turn, also helped the artists to develop strategies for making more appealing webtoons.

Despite their short history, webtoons have already managed to cross the borders of South Korea. In 2014, Line Webtoon (the name later changed to WEBTOON) launched its English platform to expand the culture of webtoons to other parts of the world (Jang 2014). It offered several translations of well-known Korean webtoons and allowed foreign artists to join the community and publish their own works on the site. Today, WEBTOON supports authors creating in different languages, such as English, Japanese, Chinese, Spanish, French, and Thai. Moreover, there is a “Canvas corner”, which gives new artists the opportunity to upload their webtoons and present their work to a large audience.

The number of webtoons keeps growing, and artists are getting more and more subscribers with each passing day. In 2022, Naver Webtoon announced that it had grown into a global platform with 180 million monthly active users (MAU) around the world, which includes readers of Naver webtoons and Naver web novels (Bak 2022). The number of users increased dramatically from the year 2020 to 2021, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

One of the specific features of webtoons is that artists can create their work anonymously. They do not need to publish their work in print, so they can create a webtoon account under a nickname and publish it online. Many popular artists are unknown and are not willing to show their faces, and it is sometimes impossible to find information on the nationality, age, or gender of the artist, especially if they create webtoons in English, as is common for the Korean diaspora. Therefore, the research on Korean diaspora webtoon creators is challenging, especially since prior research is scarce.

However, there is a genre of webtoon that developed based on the artist's personal experiences and daily life, called *dailylifetoon*¹ (*ilsangtun* 일상툰), and this is popular with Korean diaspora webtoon creators. These artists create webtoons closely

1 There are different terms used for this genre of webtoon in Korean, such as *ilsangtun* (일상툰), *saenghwaltun* (생활툰), *deillitun* (데일리툰), *daieoritun* (다이어리툰), *eseitun* (에세이툰), *gamseongtun* (감성툰), *gamjeongtun* (감정툰) etc. The English translation of *ilsangtun* on the portal WEBTOON is *slice of life*. The better term for this genre would be the compound word *dailylifetoon* (which can already be seen as a hashtag on social networking platforms), because it reflects the content of this webtoon genre (which deals with the daily life of the author) and it keeps the last syllable of the word *cartoon*.

related to their lives, which are a mixture of Korean culture and the culture of the country where they are living.

In this article, our intention is to research the content of one Korean diaspora webtoon and its reception. We will focus on the webtoon *Murrz* by Mary Park, who was born in the US to Korean immigrant parents. *Murrz* is a *dailylifetoon*, an autobiographical webtoon based on her life. In this, Murrz portrays herself and the people around her. Since she is the daughter of Korean immigrants, she grew up between both cultures. Her lifestyle is closer to the American one, but due to her family background she knows the Korean lifestyle as well.

Murrz is published online, and every episode has a corner where readers can comment, exchange opinions, and communicate with others. The comments section is an important part of every webtoon. With their comments, readers can react and express their thoughts or feelings, and authors can then take these into account and adapt their work, if wanted. Other readers can also learn things if they read the comments, and thus each episode's comments section can be seen as a part of the whole webtoon story.

The research questions are as follows:

- (1) How is the Korean diaspora portrayed in the webtoon *Murrz*? How does the artist present herself, and how does she portray her parents?
- (2) What is the role of the readers of this Korean diaspora webtoon? What is the impact of the comments section below each episode?

In this article, we will first analyse the *dailylifetoon* genre since it is relevant for the research on Korean diaspora webtoons due to the prevalence of autobiographical stories. After this, we will analyse the webtoon *Murrz*, focusing on the episodes which show the author's family life and her family members (specifically her father). Narrative analysis will be used for this, as through it we can learn about the feelings and lifestyle of the Korean diaspora in the US. Narrative analysis will also be applied to the study of the readers' reactions. Lastly, we will analyse the comments published in the comments section of the three episodes which show *Murrz* and/or her father. Through the analysis of the comments, the role of the readers can be determined.

Autobiographical Webtoons

There is no clear definition of the webtoon genres and their categorization, and every author chooses the category they want to publish their work under. In

“Canvas corner” of the site WEBTOON, which provides guidelines for new artists, they suggest six steps to publish the webtoon. The second step reads: “STEP 2 Select a Genre: Pick up to two genres that match your series well” (WEBTOON CANVAS n.d.). We can see that there is no clear guidance on how to choose the genre, and every author can choose two for the same webtoon.

For this research on Korean diaspora webtoon artists, we will investigate a specific genre called *dailylifetoon*, which has recently become more visible on webtoon and social media platforms, such as Instagram. *Dailylifetoon* is a genre that is mainly based on the author’s own daily life, where the author portrays themselves through the main character (Kim Keon-Hyung 2018, 123).

Dailylifetoon’s characters usually have a very simple appearance, drawn in a few of lines. The authors portray their lives and different situations which happen to them during the day. That is why the *dailylifetoon* storylines are closely connected with the author’s workplace and family. Often, however, the main characters are not portrayed as human beings but as animals (e.g., dogs, cats, bears, rabbits), which gives the webtoon a humorous note. The background of the *dailylifetoon* is not always specified. If a webtoon is published in English, it is hard to even know the nationality of the author, if they do not choose to reveal it.

There is usually no running story in a *dailylifetoon*. Every episode shows one situation, from the beginning to the end, and only rarely the stories continue in a following episode. This type of webtoon permits the reader to start following artists at any point in time, as they do not need to catch up in the story. However, the characters and background are usually the same.

Dailylifetoon creators are notably dependent on their readers. If the readers do not react through the comments section or through a *like* button, the artists might ask the readers for support. Some authors even try to communicate with their readers by replying to their comments. This gives readers another motivation to support their favourite artists in an active way.

Recently, *dailylifetoon* have been spreading on social media platforms, especially on Instagram, which is becoming more popular among webtoon readers. The Korea Creative Content Agency ran a survey among webtoon readers between July 2022 and May 2023 which showed that Instagram ranked fifth among the most-used platforms used to read webtoons (Lee 2023). The most common webtoon genre present on Instagram is actually *dailylifetoon*, which are, due to the platform’s name, also called an *instatoon* (in Korean *inseutatun* 인스타툰). However, several artists who publish their creations on Instagram also publish the same content on the Naver Webtoon platform, which is why *instatoon*

might not be the most appropriate term to use in our research of the webtoon genre.

There are several reasons for the appearance of *dailylifetoon* rather than other genres on Instagram. First, Instagram has a limitation on the size of the uploaded picture, so webtoon artists who like to draw detailed characters and backgrounds and use more colours in their drawings (which is common for other webtoon genres) will not post their creations on Instagram, but *dailylifetoon* artists will. Second, Instagram determines which posts will appear in its user's feed according to that user's activity (posts the user liked or commented on in the past), which means that a long-form continuous webtoon story (common for genres such as *action* and *fantasy*), where the reader needs to know what happened in the previous episode, would be inconvenient for readers since they might not see certain episodes when published. Third, webtoons on Instagram are free and available to read at any time. Fourth, readers on Instagram are more exposed (by their profile photo and biography on their Instagram profile), which creates a stronger sense of community among the readers.

Dailytoon *Murrz*—Narrative Analysis

The webtoon *Murrz* is a *dailylifetoon* created by Mary Park, a Korean-American designer based in Los Angeles. As she explains in her face reveal video on YouTube (WEBTOON 2018), *Murrz* is also her nickname. *Murrz* was published on the platform WEBTOON in June 2017, and the episodes were continuously posted till February 2022. She published 606 episodes and a final Q&A episode where she answered questions asked by her readers. She also published the webtoon *Murrz* on Facebook and Instagram, where she is still posting new episodes. The Instagram and Facebook episodes are shorter, normally created in four cuts, while the ones posted on WEBTOON are longer and adapted to the scroll function.

Murrz is an autobiographical *dailylifetoon*—its female protagonist being Murrz herself—and is, as Mary Park says in YouTube titled “Face Reveal: Murrz” (WEBTOON 2018), “loosely based on my life with my cats and my boyfriend, stupid relationship things that happen or just day-to-day funny things”. In an interview with *HuffPost Deutschland* (2017), she explained: “Murrz and her boyfriend are goofy and easy-going, because that’s really how we are in real life [...] We’re just two big kids who are trying to ‘adult’ together!”

In the narrative analysis, we will focus on the main character and her father. Focussing on the two characters will allow us to analyse the diasporic aspects of the webtoon.

As we will see, Murrz and her father represent two generations of the Korean diaspora who differ in many respects, especially in how they live. Murrz's lifestyle is close to the American one, while her father came to the United States as an immigrant, so his lifestyle is closer to the Korean one. Under each episode there is a comments section in which certain aspects of the episode are discussed. To understand the readers' reactions, we must first understand how the characters are portrayed.

The Main Character (Murrz)

Murrz is the main character of the webtoon, and she is drawn in a simple way, not revealing any physical features of the author. When *Murrz* was first published on WEBTOON and Instagram, the identity of the main character and the author were not revealed. Even with the background, which shows Murrz, her boyfriend and cats at their home, it was impossible to guess her identity. The first time readers on WEBTOON could find out more about her identity was in the 46th episode (published on April 10, 2018, see Muritz 2018a), when Murrz's father spoke Korean (he says: "*Jahl-haes-sub*" 잘했어, meaning *you did well, good job*), which revealed his ethnicity. In the reader comments section, we can read such comments as "Ohhh you're Korean" or "Wait Murrz is Korean?" which emphasizes the fact that, until that moment, the webtoon was drawn in a way the readers could not know the identity of the main character at all.

On June 15, 2018, the author was invited to a "Face Reveal" YouTube show where she introduced herself with her real name. Later, in one of the episodes, Murrz also presents herself as a "first generation Korean American" (the episode was published on Instagram on July 23, 2021, see Murrz (@murrzstudio) 2021a).

In episodes 503, 504 and 505 on WEBTOON, Murrz shares her personal story about her family. Her parents moved to the States when they were young—her father attended college in the US—and she and her older sister were both born there. Therefore, her parents are first generation Korean-American immigrants, and even though Murrz was born in the US, she identifies as Korean-American.

Referring to Barth (1981, 202), a person's identity is formed according to two categories: self-categorization and categorization by others, particularly by the dominant group. In Murrz's webtoon, we rarely see how society views Murrz. The two episodes that show this were published on WEBTOON and Instagram at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. They portray her fear of being insulted or discriminated against due to her Asian appearance. Most stories are told from her own perspective; therefore, we can only grasp how Murrz sees herself and how she sees others (mostly other members of her family).

Murrz places significant emphasis on the use of language and the ability to speak Korean, which is commonly seen in children of immigrants. Such children quickly become fluent in the language of their environment, which, in Murrz's case, is English. From a very young age the children of immigrants play a pseudo-parental role in the family, as they help their parents adapt to a new lifestyle through communication with English speakers (Yoo and Kim 2014, 2). They thus work as language brokers, and translate, interpret, and even write legal letters and contracts on behalf of their parents (*ibid.*, 6). Even though they perceive these situations as "normal" and something that must be done (*ibid.*, 31), language brokering plays a significant role in the lives of immigrant families because it fosters mutual dependence between parents and children (Dorner, Faulstich Orellana and Jiménez 2008, 533). The role of Murrz as a language broker in her family is seen in a few episodes, such as number 495, where Murrz is applying for her dad's health insurance by phone, and 428, where Murrz is calling the bank on behalf of her mother.

However, language is not just a tool of communication but is also closely connected to its speaker's identity. As Baker (2006, 51) says: "Sometimes identity is via dress, religious beliefs, rituals, but language is almost always present in identity formation and identity display. Language is an index, symbol and marker of identity." Especially for members of a diaspora, language is an important factor in the formation of identity and serves as an indicator of cultural differences (Kasinits, Waters and Mollenkopf 2009, 243). Children of immigrants in the English-speaking environment become fluent in English at a young age, and in many cases, it becomes their dominant language (Park and Sarkar 2007). That is also the reason why children of Korean immigrants struggle with their identity formation. Since they are more fluent in English than Korean, they are often judged and criticized for their lack of language ability by other Korean immigrants who are fluent in the language (for example by their peers who spent half of their lives in Korea and moved to the US when they were teenagers or young adults) (Yoo and Kim 2014, 75).

When Murrz announced that she was Korean-American, the story, published on Instagram, July 23, 2021 (Murrz (@murrzstudio) 2021a), was specifically about language. She is proud because she can speak, read, and write Korean (which is, as she says, her "second language"), however, she feels overwhelmed when she needs to speak Korean with native Koreans and cannot understand everything the other person is saying. In such cases she can feel her "American side shine bright like a diamond". We can deduce that even though she can speak Korean, she perceives herself as more American than Korean because she faces some difficulties when communicating with native Korean speakers. It is also interesting that, in this episode, she portrays her interlocutor as an older Korean man, probably a similar in age to her father.

Considering Murrz's overall lifestyle, it seems that she is more connected to American culture than the Korean one. She enjoys American traditions through celebrations of American holidays—such as Thanksgiving, Halloween, and Christmas. She mentions problematic events that happened in the US—for example, mass shootings, racism and racially motivated hate crime (e.g., the killing of Ahmaud Arbery), social inequality, high education fees which make students take big loans, and so on. She also mentions some daily life events which happen in the US, like being called to jury duty. America is not her “hostland”, it is her homeland, and readers are reminded of her Korean identity only in the episodes that feature her parents.

The Other Character (Murrz's Father)

Murrz's father represents a different generation of Korean immigrants, and his lifestyle is closer to that of a Korean, rather than an American. First, the most obvious divergence is the language. He came to the States as an adult and attended college there, but he is not a native speaker of English. He uses a mix of Korean and English when talking to his daughters and has difficulties with the pronunciation of some English words, especially ones which contain the consonants (f) and (z), for example, he pronounces the word “zero” as “jero”, and “five” as “paibe” (as depicted in an Instagram post published on December 22, 2020, see Murrz (@murrzstudio) 2020).

He also cannot sense all the nuances of English. In an Instagram post published on September 1, 2023 (Murrz (@murrzstudio) 2023b), Murrz's father is seen trying to open a bank account and he needs to provide his email address, which was made for him by his elder daughter (Murrz's sister) in the late 1990s. His email account is *fatboy@email.com*. When the bank assistant asks him to provide his email address, he does not seem embarrassed. However, the person sitting next to him in the bank (most probably his elder daughter, who chose this address) and the bank assistant feel embarrassed—his daughter freezes and would like to disappear, the bank assistant just smiles awkwardly. The father probably knows the meaning of “fat boy” but is not aware of the inappropriateness of providing this kind of email address in an official situation, such as opening a bank account.

Murrz portrays her parents as “others” through the use of language. Language as a tool for portraying others is observed in other Korean diaspora literature, for example, in Chang-rae Lee's novel *Native Speaker*. For the main character of the novel, Henry, language is like a mirror through which he can see himself and portray others depending on how well they use English (Kang 2022, 144). Murrz also

portrays herself and others through language—her English is perfect, as opposed to that of her father. In this regard, her father becomes “the other”.

Second, Murrz's father is portrayed as someone who makes sacrifices for his family (shown in an Instagram episode, published on July 6, 2022, Murrz (@murrzstudio) 2022). As a first-generation Korean immigrant in the US, he is the provider for the whole family, and he wishes for his daughters to have a better life than himself. When it comes to clothing, he provides nice and expensive clothes for his daughters, while wearing the cheapest or even free clothes himself.

Third, Murrz's father is portrayed as strict. He had a lot of problems with the elder daughter when she was young because she was rebellious. He did not allow her to talk to her male friends, he did not allow her to stay outside the house after 8 pm, and he did not allow her to pierce her ears (depicted in an Instagram post published on August 1, 2021, see Murrz (@murrzstudio) 2021b). When the daughters would not obey or would talk back to him and their mother, he would use a stick (*mongdungi* 몽둥이) and spank them (Episode 161, published on WEBTOON, see Murrz 2019).

Fourth, he is old-fashioned. When Murrz's baby tooth was wiggly, he used an old method of removing the tooth—by tying it to a door. The artist titled this episode “Korean Tooth Removal”, as if this method was unique to Korea, because it was used by her father who is Korean (Episode 113, published on WEBTOON, see Murrz 2018b).

Fifth, her father follows Korean cultural norms and etiquette. The episode about “Korean Dads Go Out to Dinner”, published on Instagram on August 16, 2023 (Murrz 2023), shows Murrz's father having dinner with his Korean friend in a Korean restaurant. When they finish their meal they both want to pay for it and fight over the bill. The episode was published on Instagram in collaboration with the Korean Cultural Center New York in order to promote Korean culture and etiquette.

Murrz portrays her father as “other” not only through the use of language but also through his character and lifestyle. In the last three mentioned stories (the one about spanking children with a *mongdungi*, the episode about removing a tooth and the one where her father and his friend fight over the bill in a restaurant), she specifically mentions her father's Korean (or Asian) background with “growing up in an Asian household”, “Korean tooth removal”, and “when Korean dads go out to dinner”, which emphasizes the “otherness” as if these kinds of stories are impossible to find in the American society which is better known to her.

The reason for seeing her father as “the other” lies in the acculturation gap between him and the author. Her father was born in Korea and moved to the US

when he was already an adult. On the other hand, the author was born in the US and exposed to American culture since childhood. Children born in the US to immigrant parents are more likely to have undergone greater acculturation into American society compared to their foreign-born parents (Harris and Chen 2023, 1751). Since the author's parents were immigrants, she could grasp the differences in cultural values and practices from an early age, noticing those at home and the ones she experienced outside her home (at school, at the playground, at her friend's home, etc.). These differences led her to feel her father is different from her and also different from the adults she met in the US. He is not different from her only because of the age gap but also because he was raised in a different cultural environment. That is why the author connects her father's behaviour with Korean or Asian culture.

Readers' Reactions

Since the comments section is an important part of a webtoon, we will investigate the readers' reactions. Reading is not just an individual act but can also be a social one (Rehberg Sedo 2011, 2). With the development of new technologies, social reading, where readers interact with each other, has moved to the online space. Webtoon readers can interact and exchange their ideas in the comments section under each episode.

A reader can also become an important part of the whole process. Kim Joohee (2018, 24–32) analysed the readers' comments section of the webtoon *Navillera* and summarized them into six kinds:

- comments which share knowledge and are educational,
- comments sharing personal experiences of the readers,
- comments proving the immersion of the reader in the story (readers express their feelings toward the characters in the story),
- comments in which readers suggest creating a TV drama or movie based on the webtoon,
- comments expressing the reader's motivation for self-development after reading the webtoon,
- comments sharing the reader's indirect experiences.

Through their comments readers interact with each other, exchange ideas and, in numerous cases, influence other readers, as well as the author who further develops the storyline based on this feedback. There are also cases of indirect influences where readers' comments encourage production companies to turn a successful

webtoon into a movie or TV drama. Therefore, these reader responses should not be ignored.

Reader response theory developed at the end of the 1960s, as a reaction to the New Criticism, which neglected the role of the reader (Lee 2001, 64). The reader response theorists suggested that the text is not complete without the reader, and that every work has two poles—the artistic pole (created by the author) and the aesthetic pole (reader's realization) which complement each other (Iser 1978, 21). The reader and their interpretation of the text are a part of the work's creation. The reader reads the text and interprets it according to their "horizon of expectation" (Jauss 1982, 23), in other words, according to their previous knowledge—the books they have read before, the knowledge they acquired about literature during their schooling and from the society in which they grew up. Each reader has their own interpretation and each interpretation (even when made by the same reader) can be different and change with time. That is why some works that are not successful when first published can find success years later.

The first generation of reader response theorists (Jauss 1982; Iser 1978; Eco, 1979) mainly focussed on abstract terms and constructions which could not be tested or measured (Pianzola, Rebora, and Lauer 2020, 2). However, with online comments sections readers' responses can now be researched. They allow us to see the immediate audience reaction to each episode or chapter separately, not only to the work as a whole. Readers' comments can be seen as a part that completes the work, which is why we are interested in the comments section of *Murrz*.

Selection of Webtoon Episodes

For the analysis, we will focus on the last three above-mentioned episodes, those that portray Murrz's father.² The main criterion for this choice was the use of the words "Korean" and "Asian", with which the author emphasized the fact that in her view the situations described are unique to Korean or Asian culture.

The first example is episode 161, titled "Mong Doong Ee", published on WEBTOON on January 8, 2019. In this episode, Murrz explains about "Asian household upbringing". She portrays herself and her sister as young children. If they misbehaved, they were beaten with any objects their parents would be able

2 Episodes are available on the following pages: Episode 161 "Mong Doong Ee": https://www.webtoons.com/en/slice-of-life/murrz/ep-161-mong-doong-ee/viewer?title_no=1281&episode_no=161 (see Murrz 2019); Episode 113 "Korean Tooth Removal": https://www.webtoons.com/en/slice-of-life/murrz/ep-113-korean-tooth-removal/viewer?title_no=1281&episode_no=113 (see Murrz 2018b); Episode about "Korean Dads": <https://www.instagram.com/p/CwBKtaxO0M6/> (see Murrz 2023).

to find in their surroundings, but mostly they were beaten with a stick called a *mong doong ee*. The episode has 1,182 comments and 46,328 likes.

The second example is episode 113, titled “Korean Tooth Removal”, published on WEBTOON on April 15, 2018. It portrays a younger Murrz with the typical bowl hairstyle. Her tooth is wiggling. Her father removes the tooth by tying it to a door. The episode has 1,911 comments and 52,436 likes.

The third, unnumbered episode was published on Instagram on August 16, 2023 (Murrz (@murrzstudio) 2023a). It portrays Murrz’s father having dinner with his Korean friend in a Korean restaurant. When it comes time to pay the two men fight over the bill. The episode has 22,844 likes and 91 comments. The episode was published in collaboration with the Korean Cultural Center, New York. The caption under the episode is “The honorable check duel: Korean Version!” Its hashtags are: #오빠, #koreanetiquette #koreanculture.

Since the last episode chosen for the analysis was published on a different platform than the first two, it is relevant to point out the differences between the platforms and clarify why the episode was selected despite being on a different platform. Social media platforms, such as Instagram, allow readers to comment, share their experiences, and tag their friends to involve them in conversations. Tagging friends creates a sense of community among the users of social media platforms (Oeldorf-Hirsch and Sundar 2015, 246), but this is not possible on WEBTOON.

The second difference between the platforms is that readers are more exposed on social media platforms, since their profiles might include their real name and profile picture. Therefore, webtoons published on Instagram have fewer comments than those on WEBTOON, where users can be completely anonymous.

In the case of *Murrz*, the number of comments on webtoons published on Instagram is significantly lower than the number of comments on WEBTOON. However, the content of the comments on the selected episodes is similar across both platforms. The author herself created a community by replying to the comments on Instagram (since there are fewer comments to reply to) and replying to the readers on WEBTOON through special Q&A episodes and appreciation posts. We can conclude that *Murrz*’s readers on Instagram and WEBTOON might not be the same, but the content of their comments is similar and thus suitable for analysis in this article.

Comments Analysis

Based on the content of the comments from the three mentioned episodes, we can categorize them into the following three groups:

- (1) Comments where readers relate to the story and share their own experiences,
- (2) Comments where readers correct the author's perspective,
- (3) Comments where readers criticize the author.

Readers Relate to the Story and Share Their Own Experiences

For all three episodes, we can find comments where readers relate to the story.

For the episode "Mong Doong Ee", many readers remember their childhoods. Some specify that they were also raised in an Asian household and the story is very familiar to them. Other readers sympathize with Murrz's older sister who got all the beatings.

Very similar reactions of the readers can be seen in the comments section of the episode "Korean Tooth Removal". Readers share their experiences of when they had their teeth removed as children. Some of them explain in detail how their parents would remove their teeth; others simply said that they could relate to the story. Readers also sympathise with Murrz and remember the pain.

The comments under the episode "Korean Dads" similarly reveal Readers' personal experiences where they encounter Koreans who want to pay for the meals of others (either for their colleagues, friends, or their family members).

Table 1: Readers' Experience Sharing

“Mong Doong Ee”	Relate to the story	<p>velvetcakeu: ours in the Philippines, the most powerful weapon is the broom 😊</p> <p>Lhasa Apso: I am also an Asian. I am an Indian. I can understand it in my bones 🙄 🙄 🙄</p> <p>Nicole Caswell: so I'm halve Korean and I also had a beating stick called a “meh meh stick” it was one of those sticks that u paint the walls with but 2 times thicker. Sometimes I still get hit with it. XD</p> <p>cartoon-ish: Being an Asian, I 100% painfully relate. :) flip flops are a good weapon too. Lol</p>
	Sympathizing with Murz's sister	<p>ComiK_ch@n: I, the eldest sibling of my asian house, relates to this episode on a godly level</p> <p>tired_abyss: Asian, the older sibling with a younger sister, and used to get hit on the arse with either a belt, a metal stick (ihdk where it came from or what it was for but it was there) and the absolute bane of my life, my grandparents' whip.</p> <p>Vampishly: omg i was the older sister 🙄 🙄 🙄</p> <p>Anna Frąckiewicz: poor older sister 🙄</p>
“Korean Tooth Removal”	Sharing similar experiences	<p>webtoon is for life: based on literal experience. when I was a kid, my mom accidentally took out my tooth when she was wiping my face with a towel after I took a bath</p> <p>Akari_Maya_Koyuki_10: My Dad did that to all my younger siblings still waiting for the youngest one though.</p> <p>mizuzu21 Aa: my dad did something similar, only instead of a door knob he tied it to the dogs collar then threw a ball. the dog was a great dane.</p> <p>Dino nuggies for all: Same thing happened with me as a child but my dad just pulled it out with his hands</p>
	Remembering the pain	<p>James Feww: The trauma is real.</p> <p>Engagedtobefree: My dad's friend pulled my one loose tooth out with a tool (pliers I think) and I remember it hurt really bad. No idea why adults do stuff like this 😊</p> <p>JuicyBuns🙄: ahh yes... the very first trauma everyone goes through</p> <p>Lily_~: reading this I re-experience the pain when my grandma pull outmy first tooth, at first it was fine then seconds later ow,ow.....OWWWWWWW!!!!!!</p>

<p>"Korean Dads"</p>	<p>Sharing similar experiences</p>	<p>heretickemyst 22w: While I was stationed in Korea, we had a Mr. Kim who worked at the battalion command team's driver/translator/general fixer. He's super cool and nice, and he'd pull this crap every time we'd be out 😊 If you don't see him, he's 100% getting the check!</p> <p>thederpdaneel 22w: I remember seeing this from my dad as a kid, I swear even tho I didnt rllly notice at the time I could just feel auras emmitting from my dad and the other dad right before the bill came out 😊</p> <p>kitsune_yokai5 22w: My husband is Korean and he always did this when we went out eating with my parents. So they'd really surprised how he could be so fast and sneaky in paying 😊 now they know, when he says he wanna use the bathroom my mom says no 😊</p> <p>xoxo_avallure 22w: 😊😊 working at a comfy Pocha in the city, I've been in the middle of this so many times! 🍷</p>
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Readers Correct the Author's Perspective

Since Murrz mentions the word "Korean" in the episodes "Korean Tooth Removal" and "Korean Dads" and the word "Asian" in the episode "Mong Doong Ee", some readers comment about it. Readers either expose their nationality and say that the same situation happens in their own country, or they simply comment that the three situations are not exclusively Korean or Asian.

Table 2: Readers' Corrections

<p>“Korean Tooth Removal”</p>	<p>Evena Paul: that method is universal</p> <p>RonsFury: basically all asians, all of em</p> <p>Farin Vienna: It's not only Korean style, I think this happens in the whole world.</p> <p>GEASS LORD: I'm from India and I can say it's the same method here. the pain murzz , the pain 😊</p> <p>Milijan66408683: lol same in Serbia</p> <p>daysofdead: Ohh my god. Every Asian Dad ever 😊😊😊😊😊</p> <p>theskintylegend: Literally my Hispanic dad</p> <p>♡Strawberry__peach♡: that's not just a Korean thing my dad did that to me, and I'm american</p> <p>Kitty1601: Everybody do this, I'm black and my mama did tht 🙋😂most terrifying thing in my life</p>
<p>“Mong Doong Ee”</p>	<p>Tiramisu Espresso: yeah, switches were a thing in 'murican culture until a few decades ago, thankfully I'm too young, for me it was a wooden spoon and occasionally a plastic vacuum cleaner attachment</p> <p>nuggets(๐ ๓ ๐): oof I can relate but my mom is Mexican so she has the MONG DONG EE or THE SLIPPER the slipper hurts more</p> <p>Vhaemera 🗡️: In alot of black households we call them a switch, and whoever was gonna whoop us with the switch made us go and pick our own. 😊</p> <p>LoafOfBread 🍞: In Texas we call that a switch. My brother got them a lot. He was always in trouble and picking on me an eventually when I would tell on him I'd say “momma want me to get a switch?!” 😊😂</p> <p>CindyreallyCinderely: I'm not Asian but I can relate in a Hispanic house hold.</p> <p>Mayamad: I'm African but I can relate soo much</p> <p>mimi_eubi: I'm positive every culture has a “whooping stick”. Mine was called “the switch”</p> <p>jwwia: here in Portugal, atleast where I live we have the famous “Colher de Pau” which means Wooden Spo0n</p> <p>Allie: i was born in russian family but we had the same stuff 😊</p>

"Korean Dads"	<p>zilajevsky 22w: Austrian people are the same, gosh. I've witness so many fights over bills over the years 🤔</p> <p>t.nilk 22w: LOL all Asian culture! I'm Thai, in my family all the women fight for the bill. 🤔</p> <p>scociro_ 22w: @veronicagiallongo la Corea in realtà è la Sicilia</p> <p>sahill_is_a_genius_12 22w: This is the case with Indian parents too 🤔</p> <p>brownieenextdoor 22w: Asian version*.. even in Pakistan, its such a great battle 😊😊 n when out with adults, we younger ones actually enjoy it.. 😊😊</p> <p>beauty.of.speed 22w: Haha, my childhood (but with Swiss dads)</p> <p>katieyossarian 21w: My mum (white British) used to do this, too. I remember my ex-bf getting so frustrated he left money for my mum in a book in her house, she found it and snuck it back to him 😊</p>
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Readers Criticize the Author

Comments that criticised the webtoon were rare. However, in the comments section below the episode “Mong Doong Ee”, which portrays Murrz and her sister being beaten by their parents when they misbehaved, some readers commented that this is child abuse and should not be portrayed as comedy. Readers also expressed that the webtoon made them uncomfortable because they had suffered child abuse.

Table 3: Readers' Criticism

"Mong Doong Ee"	<p>happyturtle5: omg thats not funny thats child abuse!</p> <p>myshi: i don't understand how this is considered "comedy" this is straight up child abuse. the fact that you're making light of it is disturbing. You're basically telling all your young viewers "your parents beat you? not only is that completely normal, but you should be fine with it!" just because you turned out "normal" (which, btw, you didn't seeing as you think it's funny to beat kids with a stick) doesn't mean that doing this shit is okay. i was hit as a kid and i turned out pretty messed up.</p> <p>Azifri: Sorry Murrz, but jokes about child abuse are not even close to my definition of funny.</p> <p>ottocea: as an Korean-American who suffered abuse like this --- this comic is awfully condoning this abusive parental behavior. the fact that it's being portrayed as something of a joke is even worse.</p>
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Discussion

In the comments section of all three episodes, most readers related to the story. They either shared their own experiences or they simply commented: “Relatable”.

In the first episode (“Mong Doong Ee”), readers shared their own stories from their childhood and mentioned how they got the beatings from their parents or grandparents if they did not obey or if they did some mischief. Most comments specify the tool with which they were beaten—a stick, flip flops or sandals, a hanger, belt, or any other object that the parents could find around them. Readers also shared that they had to pick the stick outside and bring it to their parents. Most readers found the webtoon funny and wrote that beatings were part of the upbringing that made them behave better and therefore allowed them to become better people. The readers under this episode also mentioned the relationship between the older and younger sister. One of the three top comments opened a debate about how the older sister always got all the beatings. Comments showed that readers sympathized with the older sister.

In the comments section of the episode “Korean Tooth Removal”, readers share their experiences. They either comment about their own fathers who also tricked them and said it would not hurt when he removed a baby tooth, or they describe the method of removing the tooth in more detail. Readers remember the pain and share their own feelings. Some readers comment that they still have trauma because of the pain they experienced when their teeth were removed.

The readers of the episode “Korean Dads” also share their personal experiences. Some readers remember their Korean relatives or co-workers using the excuse of going to the bathroom and then secretly paying for everyone’s meal. Other readers could understand the situation due to their experience working in Korean restaurants.

Readers of all three episodes offer a new perspective and try to correct the point of view of the author. In all three episodes, the author mentions the words “Korean” or “Asian”. In all three episodes the author portrays her father. Since she sees her father as someone who is different from her, because he is a Korean immigrant and did not grow up in the US, she ascribes all three situations to Koreans or to Korean culture. However, reading the comments we can see that while readers relate to the story, in many cases they share their own nationality and let the author know that the same situation happens in their country as well. Through the comments section, we can learn that the use of *mong doong ee* is common not only for Asian households but can also be found in the US where the stick is called a “switch”. It also exists in Portugal where they use a wooden spoon (“Colher de

Pau”), as well as in Hispanic households. According to the comments, the “Korean” tooth removal method also happens in Malaysia, Serbia, India, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and other places. Through the comments for the third episode, about “Korean” dads, we learn that paying for the meal of a friend and fighting over this is common not only in Korea but also in China, Japan, India, Vietnam, Italy (Sicily is singled out), Greece, Great Britain, France, Portugal, and Austria. This means that readers can relate to the story, but at the same time they correct the point of view of the author. The authors of the comments share their nationalities and let the author know that the same can happen in other corners of the world, and that these situations are not uniquely Korean but universal.

There are very few comments criticizing the mentioned episodes of the webtoon *Murrz*. However, the episode “Mong Doong Ee” did get some critical comments in which readers express their feelings about beating children. Overall, there are ten comments that touch on the topic of child abuse. Five readers comment that portraying child abuse as comedy is not funny and that beating children can cause trauma. One reader says that the episode is condoning abusive parental behaviour, which is uncomfortable because they themselves suffered from such abuse. Two readers comment that it is interesting that child abuse is normalized in Asian society, while two other readers say that the situation portrayed in the episode is not abusive but part of disciplining children. Seven of the critical comments got a few replies, but they did not initiate any further debate, which means the topic of child abuse was not one that many readers wanted to engage with.

Conclusion

This article focussed on an autobiographical webtoon called *Murrz*, created by the Korean-American artist Mary Park, and tried to investigate the characteristics of the Korean-American diaspora and the depiction of the author and her family members by using the narrative analysis approach. This article discussed examples taken from the webtoon where the artist presents herself as someone who was born in the US, and thus familiar with the American lifestyle, in contrast to her father who is portrayed as someone very different from the author because he was born in Korea. In addition to this there is a significant generation gap. This makes the father the “other” in the author’s Americanized eyes. Furthermore, the results of an investigation into the role of the reader were discussed, with respect to Korean diaspora webtoon artists and based on reception theory. This article found that the comments section is a very important aspect of webtoons as it provides a space for interactions among the readers and between the readers and

the artist, with both sides important for this new medium. The readers encourage the author to produce more creative content, and they also relate to the story, as well as criticize and, sometimes, correct the artist for their vague representation of a (certain) culture or character. This article concluded that “correction” is the most important feature of the comments in the case of the analysed webtoon. The artist placed her father as “the other” and his behaviour as typical of a Korean or Asian parent. However, the readers responded to this by mentioning that the same situations also happen in their (non-Korean) countries. They thus corrected the artist by asserting that the cultural phenomenon that the artist showed in her webtoons is not only a Korean one but can be observed in other cultures as well. Finally, this makes the comments section relevant for the interaction between the reader and the artist, where both the artist and the reader can share their opinions.

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사분석과 독자 반응 연구: 웹툰 나빌레라를 중심으로 (An Analysis of the Narrative and Readers' Response to Dance in Webtoon: Focusing on the Webtoon Nabillera)." *The Korean Journal of Dance Studies* 68 (1): 19–35.

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Cultural Adaption of Koreans Residing in Hungary—Changes in Daily Life and Customs

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Abstract

The present paper explores the social changes embedded in the lives of Korean expatriates in Hungary. Since this is a relatively new phenomenon, mostly produced by the intensive economic cooperation between the two countries in the past decade, the topic has been insufficiently researched so far.

According to my preliminary findings, the population of Koreans has been increasing thanks to the significant investments made in Hungary by Korean firms and the comfortable lifestyles they can enjoy, and thus expatriate employees of Korean companies and their family members often decide to stay in the country for several years. They naturally need to shape their lifestyles according to the local environment, and the cultural differences that exist between Korea and Hungary can present some challenges, especially if the Koreans try to maintain the habits and customs of their homeland. Furthermore, in addition to those in employment and their family members, there are also many Korean students attending university in Hungary, and they also experience differences compared to their lives back home.

My study investigates the adaptation process of the Koreans living in Hungary, including the experiences not only of company employees, but also restaurant owners, missionaries, students and interpreters, arguing that the social and cultural differences they face compel them to partially change the habits and customs that acquired in Korea. The research is based on in-depth personal interviews I conducted with Koreans currently living and working or studying in Hungary, as well as on statistics issued by related Korean ministries and Hungarian institutions. The paper contributes to a growing body of expatriate and diaspora studies, highlighting the social norms and transformations that shape communities adapting to a new environment.

Keywords: Korean expatriates, economic cooperation, K-culture, cultural adaptation

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Kulturna prilagoditev Korejk in Korejcev, ki živijo na Madžarskem – spremembe v vsakdanjem življenju in običajih

Izvleček

Pričujoči članek raziskuje družbene spremembe v življenju korejskih izseljenk in izseljencev na Madžarskem. Ker gre za razmeroma nov pojav, ki je nastal predvsem zaradi intenzivnega gospodarskega sodelovanja med državama v zadnjem desetletju, je bila tema doslej premalo raziskana.

Po mojih preliminarinih ugotovitvah se število Korejk in Korejcev povečuje zaradi znatnih naložb korejskih podjetij na Madžarskem in udobnega načina življenja, ki ga lahko uživajo, zato se izseljenski delavci in delavke korejskih podjetij ter njihove družine pogosto odločajo, da bodo v državi ostale več let. Seveda morajo svoj življenjski slog prilagoditi lokalnemu okolju, kulturne razlike med Korejo in Madžarsko pa lahko predstavljajo nekaj izzivov, zlasti če Korejci oziroma Korejke skušajo ohraniti navade in običaje iz svoje domovine. Poleg zaposlenih in njihovih družin je na Madžarskem tudi veliko korejskih študentk in študentov, ki obiskujejo univerzo, in tudi oni se soočajo z razlikami v primerjavi z življenjem v domovini.

Moja študija raziskuje proces prilagajanja Korejcev in Korejk, ki živijo na Madžarskem, vključno z izkušnjami tako zaposlenih v podjetjih kot tudi lastnic restavracij, misijonarjev, študentk in tolmačev, pri čemer trdim, da jih družbene ter kulturne razlike, s katerimi se soočajo, silijo k delni spremembi navad in običajev, ki so jih pridobili v Koreji. Raziskava temelji na poglobljenih osebnih intervjujih, ki sem jih opravila s Korejkami in Korejci, ki trenutno živijo in delajo ali študirajo na Madžarskem, ter na statističnih podatkih, ki so jih izdala povezana korejska ministrstva in madžarske institucije. Članek prispeva k naraščajočemu številu študij o izseljenstvu in diaspori, saj poudarja družbene norme in transformacije, ki oblikujejo skupnosti v prilagajanju novemu okolju.

Ključne besede: korejski izseljenci in izseljenke, gospodarsko sodelovanje, K-kultura, kulturno prilagajanje

Introductory Remarks

South Korea and Hungary celebrated the 30th year of their diplomatic relationships in 2019 with various events and have now reached the 35th year of the establishment of their official diplomatic relations. Hungarian interest in Korea and K-culture—a phenomenon known as *Hallyu*, or “the Korean Wave”—started to increase at the beginning of the 2010s, and nowadays it attracts thousands of Hungarians. Thanks to the current intensified economic and cultural cooperation between the two nations, especially in the last four or five years, more Koreans have now moved to Hungary and become long-term residents, coming for work or study purposes. These distant cultures share some common features, and they can relate to each other based on some shared historical background, too, but of

course there are unavoidable cultural differences when it comes to cooperation in the workplace or daily life. This paper explores how Koreans adapt to life in Hungary, mainly based on personal interviews. It includes a short discussion of the changes they have to make with regard to traditional Korean customs and habits, and insights on how Koreans in Hungary sometimes need to live a double life, based on the experiences of students, workers and their families, and detailing both their satisfaction and dissatisfaction with their lives in this part of Europe.

The primary aims of the research are to find out to what extent the Hungarian environment influences the daily lives of Koreans who live there, and thus what things do they do differently, especially focusing on their lives outside of work or school. A preliminary assumption is that their lives are quite well-adjusted to the local practices, but they might experience difficulties with regard to bureaucracy or educational administration. Another assumption is that they do not insist on strictly following Korean habits and customs but are still fond of Korean cuisine and prefer to eat it every day.

Research Methods and Goal

To date, the South Korean diaspora in Hungary has still not been examined thoroughly, as earlier publications on Koreans living abroad has focused on the main destinations, namely China, Japan, partly East Russia, the USA and Canada, as noted in Yoon (2012). While there have been discussions on the Korean diaspora in Europe, for example in the work by Kim Jihye and Ahn Yonson (2023), these do not include Hungary, but instead focus on western and northern Europe. Much the same is true for the workshop titled “Korean Migration in Europe: Challenges and Impacts” organized by the Interdisciplinary Centre for East Asian Studies at the Goethe University in Frankfurt am Main in 2022. A recent paper that draws on statistical data, “A Study on Korean Diaspora and Population: 1910–2019 and Into the Future” by Lee Sang-hyop and Kim Hyun-kyun (2024), covers Europe in general but does not provide specific details by country, while there seem to be no publications in Hungary that examine the recent wave of migration and lives of Koreans residing there.

The quality and intensity of life in a foreign country can depend on several factors. Student life and working life, as well as the days of a tourist or a housewife, all differ significantly, and their priorities and challenges are not the same. In order to explore the Hungarian lives of Koreans I conducted individual in-depth interviews with 20 of them, with the participants having different family backgrounds, different workplaces and different ages (Table 1). The interviews were conducted partly between

2022 September and 2023 March,¹ and partly between 2023 September and 2024 July. It is important to note before the analysis that my research conclusions cannot be considered representative of all Koreans living in Hungary, but based on these preliminary findings I attempt to form some hypotheses or main statements regarding this group, as supported with quotations from the interviews. My qualitative method was performed in two ways: if the conditions for taking part were met, I had long in-person interviews (80%) using a list of previously prepared questions, and complementary inquiries were added if certain topics were more relevant, or the interviewee had more stories to tell. Where an in-person conversation was not possible, I sent the questions via email or KakaoTalk (a messaging and video calling app) to the interviewees (20%). In total I had 12 female and eight male respondents. Nine of them had been living in Hungary for more than 10 years, nine for three to five years, and two for less than three years. The participants' details are shown in the following table.

Table 1: Participants' Demographic Details

	Age group	Gender	Occupation	Length of residence	Interview
A	30s	male	chicken sexer	3–5 years	in person
B	30s	female	housewife	3–5 years	in person
C	60s	male	minister	more than 10 years	in person
D	30s	female	athlete	3–5 years	KakaoTalk
E	30s	male	tourist guide, volunteer	less than 3 years	in person
F	20s	male	interpreter, human resources	more than 10 years	in person
G	50s	male	restaurant owner	3–5 years	in person
H	30s	female	restaurant owner	3–5 years	email
I	30s	female	restaurant manager	3–5 years	in person
J	40s	male	restaurant owner	less than 3 years	in person
K	30s	female	company employee	more than 10 years	in person
L	30s	female	restaurant manager	more than 10 years	in person
M	50s	female	university teacher	more than 10 years	in person
N	40s	female	housewife	3–5 years	in person
O	60s	male	missionary, teacher	more than 10 years	in person
P	50s	female	institute employee	almost 10 years	email
R	10s	male	high school student	3–5 years	in person
S	30s	female	interpreter	more than 10 years	in person
T	50s	female	consultant, language teacher	more than 10 years	in person
U	30s	female	physician (previously a medical university student)	3–5 years	KakaoTalk

1 Information based on this first round of interviews was presented at the International Conference of Korean Studies in Ljubljana (ICKL) 2023 on the Korean and Asian Diaspora, on the 14th April 2023. The author continued the research with the second round of interviews.

Most of my questions were related to the participants' personal experiences while living in Hungary, especially focusing on the difficulties induced by cultural differences, and I additionally attempted to examine how the expatriates relate themselves to traditional elements of Korean culture while living abroad. The main questions were as follows:

1. How long have you been living in Hungary?
2. What made you come to Hungary? Personal or professional reasons?
3. What was your first impression of Hungary?
4. What are the conveniences and inconveniences you have experienced while living in Hungary?
5. Do you face any difficulties living in Hungary?
6. Do you experience cultural differences living in Hungary?
7. What kind of things do you keep the same as you did when you lived in South Korea? (e.g. daily habits, traditional holidays and celebrations, the use of certain services, cuisine)
8. To what extent are you trying to keep the traditional Korean customs during your stay in Hungary?
9. In your opinion, what are the main reasons or motivations for Koreans to move to and live in Hungary?

Based on the experiences that were related and my preliminary findings, my hypotheses are as follows: South Koreans are able to adapt to the daily life in Hungary quite easily, the cultural differences they experience are not very significant, and they do not have to endure much discrimination. Those who arrive with their families find it comfortable to settle down, and there are services that have been specially developed to meet their needs. Traditional customs and celebrations are not so important in the average Korean family as they were some decades ago, so the effects of living in a foreign country are not too important in this regard.

I had opportunity to conduct interviews with teachers, a professional athlete, missionaries, native interpreters, company employees, restaurant owners and students. I examined their answers to identify common experiences regarding the above-mentioned questions, and occasionally I will quote the participants to illustrate the findings (the interviewees' names will be not revealed, but they are indicated with initials). Thanks to the wide age range of the participants, I can describe expatriate life in the 1990s (early experiences) and beginning of the 2000s and compare it to today. I will then compare the collected opinions and experiences with the core points of the background research on cultural adaptation, and examine if the participants use the recommended techniques to overcome the

difficulties in the adaptation period. Finally, I will try to answer the question of whether Koreans can now adapt easily to life in Hungary.

Migration to Hungary

In the 2010, Korean expatriates in Hungary were mainly comprised of students and a small proportion of employees. In a report by the KSH (*Központi Statisztikai Hivatal*—Hungarian Central Statistical Office), in 2010 971 South Korean citizens were residing in Hungary, which had risen to 1,405 people in 2015, 1,437 in 2017 and 1,737 in 2019 (Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2021, 24). Another report states that the number of Koreans who had valid work permit in Hungary was 156 in 2015, which had risen to more than 600 in 2018, was almost 1,000 in 2019, then over 2,500 in 2020 and more than 3,000 in 2021. This means that in less than 10 years the population of Korean workers active in Hungary increased six- to seven-fold, and it is still growing (Máté 2023). According to the Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, there were more than 4,500 Koreans residing in Hungary in 2021, about half of them living in the capital city of Budapest. Among the others, there were about 140 to 170 Korean residents in the cities of Debrecen, Szeged and Pécs, which are famous for their universities, especially for medical training, so we can assume this reflects the number of exchange students enrolled in these schools.² This number is significant, because it shows a 161% percent increase compared to the data from 2019 (Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2021, 284). Moreover, of the more than 4,500 Koreans residing in Hungary in 2021, only 692 were registered as students, 400 people as permanent residents (*yeongjugwonja*), and more than 3,400 were categorized as regular residents (*ilban cheryuja*) (ibid., 38). As for 2022, the total number of Koreans living in Hungary was more than 5,200 (*Jó napot, Korea!* 2023, 1), and thus we can see that their number has been increasing rapidly, and we can expect that it will keep growing. The primary reason for this is the expansion of Korean businesses in Hungary, as South Korea became Hungary's leading non-EU investor in 2019, a position it also held in 2021 and 2022. The number of Korean companies operating in Hungary was around 90 in 2018, and this rose rapidly to over 200 by 2022 (HIPA 2021). The total amount these firms invested in Hungary was €2.8 billion in 2022, and they created around 25% of all new jobs in the country (HIPA 2023). Many of these new projects and businesses are located in rural areas, where it might be easier to purchase land or buildings, as well as easier to recruit new

2 The author could not get current data about the exact number of enrolled Korean students, because Hungarian universities have a policy of confidentiality with regard to this information.

personnel due to the higher unemployment rates in such areas, since there are fewer career opportunities in the countryside compared to in and around Budapest. SK Innovation established its first site in Komárom,³ Komárom-Esztergom county, where the unemployment rate was 9% in 2009, but it dropped to 1.1% in the last quarter of 2019, and it was 1.4% at the end of 2022, too. SK Innovation is now in the process of recruiting staff for another site, located in Iváncsa, Fejér county, 60 km from Budapest. There are also many other Korean companies now active in Hungary, such as Samsung Electronics in Göd; Hanon Systems in Székesfehérvár, Pécs and Rétváros; EcoPro BM in Debrecen; Nice in Gödöllő and Vác; and W-Scope in Nyíregyháza.

Based on the latest report from the Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the number of registered Koreans in Hungary was 6,352 in 2023. Of these, 816 were students, 509 had permanent resident permits, and 5,020 were categorized as regular residents (Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2023, 38). Among them, 3,768 Koreans lived in Budapest, 147 in Debrecen, 108 in Pécs and 143 in Szeged, with these last three being the sites of medical universities. More than 2,000 people lived in other regions of Hungary, another indication of the growing number of Korean residents thanks to the investment and business developments outside of the capital city (*ibid.*, 290).

To sum up, the majority of the Korean expatriates in Hungary are there for work purposes, as sojourning employees sent by their headquarters (usually manufacturing companies or their subcontractors), or they applied for a job in Hungary from South Korea (as is the case for the chicken sexer 병아리 감별사).⁴ There are also Korean residents in Hungary who are self-employed as leaders of small and medium-sized businesses, and their aim is to become a subcontractor to the bigger Korean enterprises or to play the role of a mediator company for them. Nowadays, there are a growing number of Koreans operating and working in restaurants and accommodation facilities, and their target market is partly Koreans living and working in Hungary, because it is a good investment to improve the services offered to this community, including food, accommodation, car repairs, and even dentistry. And while not in the business field, we can also add churches

3 This is located 93 km far from Budapest, at the Slovakian border.

4 According to the Kim So-yeon (2021), 60% of chicken sexers in the world are Koreans. They work in various countries, and their incomes are relatively high. Certification is needed to obtain such employment, and until 1993, the Korea Poultry Association offered its professional education. Now, some related cram schools (*gambyeolhagwon*) and research institutions in South Korea offer courses to achieve this. The job is also depicted in the film *Minari* (Kim 2021). The main countries that recruit chicken sexers are the USA, Spain, Denmark, Belgium and Hungary (Kim 2018). When Germany implemented new laws regarding chicken farms there was no longer any demand to chicken sexers, and at present France is also planning to introduce similar measures.

or other religious communities that have been established to cater to the growing number of Koreans in Hungary. In the case of a short stays for work in Hungary, these employees arrive alone. In the case of longer stays, meaning three or four years or more, many of them arrive with their families.

The other main reason for Koreans to spend more time in Hungary is the medical training on offer in Hungarian universities. Not only Semmelweis University in Budapest, but also the medical departments in Debrecen, Szeged and Pécs are appealing to Korean students. The tuition fees are lower compared to Korean or American institutes, but Hungary is famous for its well-developed medical treatment. If someone gets a degree there, it is acceptable in other countries of the EU, as well, so it is easy to find employment in Europe. Since there are many foreign students applying for medical training, the main universities offer courses not only in Hungarian but also in English. Already at the beginning of the 2000s there were 30 to 40 Korean students studying at these Hungarian institutions (Dailymedi 2009). Even though the Korean students have to take another examination in South Korea if they would like to practice medicine in their home country, the results show that the graduates of Hungarian institutions can successfully pass this. Moreover, Koreans are obedient and hard-working students, according to their Hungarian professors (Dailymedi 2022). Moreover, the economic departments of Hungarian universities and the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music also attract Korean students, and in the 2010s these numbered more than 300 (Yonhap News 2014).

Additionally, Koreans who want try life in a new, perhaps better environment are arriving into Hungary in a growing number. In the 2000s and 2010s in particular, Hungary was a preferred destination, because of the relatively low cost of living, good public safety, convenient environment for childrearing, easy procedure for visa and permits, and accessible housing. The welcoming environment was also appealing, as Hungary was known as a place where Asians did not have to face severe discrimination. Many of the participants in this study shared joyful stories about everyday encounters where they experienced the open-mindedness and helpfulness of Hungarians. Respondents S and T also added that the nature in Hungary was very appealing to them, and they enjoy the size of the available green areas even in the big cities, which is refreshing compared to the main Korean cities. Social inclusion mechanisms can also mean a lot for new residents, and respondent N stated that “here I like that I am called by my own name. In Korea, I was always someone’s wife or mother”.

Theoretical Background

Several American universities⁵ have already addressed the issue of cultural adaptation because there are various nationalities in their student bodies. With their own adaptation programmes and guidelines posted on their official websites they attempt to prevent any conflicts and inconveniences which might originate from cultural diversity. Unfortunately, as I examined the above-mentioned Hungarian universities' online materials, I could find only a limited number of similar contents, such as short online posts and guides. As for the first type, the University of Debrecen has posted a short promotional text to invite international students, as well as a text on cultural adaptation and the positive environment for foreign students in Hungary (University of Debrecen Regional Office South Asia 2023). Some international students wrote about their experiences with culture shock in blogposts shared by the International Centre of the University of Pécs (Foster n.d). As for guides, a non-Hungarian agency that helps students to study abroad has uploaded a set of guidelines for international students about life in Hungary, with a focus on cultural adaptation. They suggest learning some Hungarian and tasting the local dishes, because this will help them to make new friends, and also advise being open-minded, respectful, and adaptable (AK Consultants 2023).

According to the definition on Investopedia, “an expatriate, or expat, is an individual living and/or working in a country other than their country of citizenship, often temporarily and for work reasons” (Kagan 2024). It is a common practice for Korean companies to send large numbers of expatriates to branches opened in foreign countries, because they prefer to staff the leading management positions with Koreans rather than promoting local employees, as several Hungarian workers also confirmed. For expatriates, these positions can have many advantages, because they usually earn more than at home and enjoy other benefits, for instance relocation assistance and a housing allowance. The company's HR assistants help with the administration of visas, permits, bank accounts and other things. Professionally, it is a great opportunity to gain foreign experience and career advancement. On the other hand, as an expatriate they might encounter difficulties because of the tax system, language barrier, cultural differences and lack of social network (ibid.). If an expatriate only has the possibility to move alone and not to bring his/her family members, or the family decides to stay at the home country,⁶ difficulties might arise due to isolation and lack of contact.

5 For example: Berkeley, McGill, Northeastern, Maine, Illinois, etc.

6 In the case of South Korea, there is a term that refers to fathers who are sent to a far destination (or stay in the homeland while the family moves abroad), which is *gireogi appa* (기러기 아빠) or goose father in English, and *gireogi gajok* (기러기 가족) or goose family in English to refer to the whole

In general, arriving in a new environment because of a job or in order to study puts a person into an unknown world, where they must adapt. The time needed to reach an optimal adaptation level can vary for each person. The first period may be positive thanks to all the new and exciting experiences, but soon it comes to a phase where one must deal with everyday problems, including administration, living arrangements for a longer period, eating habits, health care and other services—and these are usually very different to in one's homeland. This can cause stress and frustration, and without proper help or guidance it can become a permanent source of negativity, influencing a person's level of achievement and social relations, and might lead to depression, a sense of failure, and even illness. To avoid this crisis or overcome it more quickly, an expatriate should keep in contact with others from their homeland, because they share the same cultural background and can be more understanding with regard to the problems they face, and if they have been living in the destination country longer, they can also share experiences and tips to solve certain difficulties. It helps if one can acquire some level of the local language, so it is possible to participate more in the local environment and have social network that includes the native population. Meanwhile, many people living abroad prefer to follow their homeland cuisine and customs, as these can be a source of daily comfort (UC Berkeley n.d.). Studies⁷ on cross-cultural adaptation suggest that if there are huge differences between the home and host countries, then this can increase the difficulty of adapting. Such adapting can be divided into sociocultural adaptation and psychological adaptation, and the examination of these is usually also distinguished in the literature, but both can be related to life satisfaction, academic performance, cultural distance and perceived discrimination (Yerken, Urbán, and Nguyen Luu 2022, 867–69). However, sociocultural adaptation is related to a person's choices and behaviour while living in a foreign country and is more about the practical adaptation to daily life (Demes and Geeraert 2014, 12). Given this theoretical background and the information collected so far, the findings of the present paper should be seen as related to sociocultural adaptation and are not extended to the psychological aspect.

family with this lifestyle. When a father is relocated far from his family then he often experiences financial difficulties, poor nutrition, lack of emotional support, loneliness, and frustration, which can lead to depression, or in severe cases even suicide. Of course, other family members also feel the disadvantages of these separated lives and experience negative effects, and sometimes this also leads to divorce (Im 2014).

7 See for example Berry (1997); Furnham and Bochner (1986); Searle and Ward (1990).

Life for Koreans in Hungary

Some of my interviewees arrived in Hungary for the first time at the end of 1990s and beginning of the 2000s, so their experiences show the changes in the Hungarian environment as well as in the services available for Koreans over more than two decades. Their stories described difficulties with regard to bureaucratic issues, shopping for food, communication with Hungarians and with their family members who were left in South Korea. One of my interviewees was a teacher, J, who is a special case because she is fluent in Hungarian, already had a chance to visit Hungary in the 1990s, then in the 2000s and again at the end of the 2010s, and currently living there with her family, including her spouse and two children. She summarized her experience as follows: In the 1990s, the technological development of Hungary was fascinating compared to Korea at that time, and Hungary gave the impression of a clean and organized country with regard to education and cultural facilities. The majority of Hungarian society seemed to be in the middle class, living a decent life with cultural, medical and social opportunities. She then returned to Korea in 2011, where she saw how quickly her homeland had changed in terms of society, technology, services, and so on, a process that continued throughout the decade. She then went back to Hungary in 2019, where the pace of change was much slower, and in fact it felt like Hungary was now frozen in time. That said, the atmosphere was less stressful than in South Korea. In her opinion, Hungarians do not rush to change, and this is exactly what can make some Koreans annoyed there—the relaxed mood and slow speed administrative processes make some Koreans uncomfortable and more impatient in some cases, but, as pointed out before, the lack of constant pressing demands, and stress are attractive for many others.

For younger Koreans, there are now two educational options available in Hungary, both located in Budapest: the Hungary Budapest Korean School (한인 학교 *Hanin hakkyo*) and Korean Learning Centre (한글배움터 *Hangeul paeumteo*). The Korean School was established in 1990, and it now offers classes for several age-groups between preschoolers and the second grade of middle school, as well as accepting an adult group, usually parents who are eager to learn about Hungary or a little bit of the language. According to the current website, more than 100 Korean pupils now attend one of the classes, with a teaching staff of 12 (*Hanin hakkyo*). The primary goal for these pupils is to keep up with the learning material of the Korean schools even if they are now enrolled in Hungarian ones, because they are planning to return to Korea someday and they do not want to fall behind when they will have to meet the Korean standards or take Korean examinations. Knowing how important education is for Korean families, it is no wonder they send their children to this school on Saturdays. At the classes they use textbooks

originally used in Korean institutions, so they have a chance to learn at least some of what students of their age learn in South Korea. The Korean Learning Centre is a new institution, its first classes started in February 2023. It is supported by the Korean Embassy and the Sejong Institute, among others, and its classes are focusing on Korean culture, language, and history rather than an academic curriculum. It targets children who might not return to South Korea and will continue to get education in Hungary, or who are children from multicultural families, aged between 6 and 12 (Embassy of the Republic Korea to Hungary 2023).

Based on my personal encounters, I had a chance to collect information about families who arrived in Hungary with school age children. As for elementary school students, the usual choice is to attend a local Hungarian school, while for middle or high school age children international schools can be an option, too. But in the afternoon and evening hours, these families arrange offline additional lectures with private tutors for the Hungarian language, English practice, and classical music training, or online courses with native Korean educators so that their children will be able to keep up with the learning process in their homeland. Education and its accessibility depend on several factors. To start with, since the classes in the local schools are in Hungarian and most of the teachers who are not responsible for teaching English cannot communicate well in English, Korean students cannot really understand the classes and cannot participate actively at the beginning of this process. As a result, they cannot take specific tests or entrance exams for high school, their evaluations for most of the classes are restricted to “participated” or “not participated”, and do not include the level of achievement. This can cause stress and struggles as an outsider. Those who are younger, in the first or second grades of elementary school when they started attending a Hungarian institution, have a better chance to learn Hungarian, and consequently they have better understanding and involvement in class, so can take tests and get better grades, and, of course, make friends. One of my interviewees, N, is a mother of three boys between the ages of 11 and 17 and reported mixed experiences with the Hungarian educational system. Her oldest son decided to travel back to Korea to take the high school entrance exam, because he is planning to apply to a Korean university, and studying in Hungary would not prepare him for that important exam. But her youngest child is enjoying his everyday life in a Hungarian school in the countryside, participating in the local youth soccer team, learning not only Hungarian but also English well, and planning to continue foreign language learning with German or another language,⁸ given the opportunity to get

8 Middle schools offer various languages available in the regular courses, such as Italian, French, Spanish or Russian, so it provides an opportunity to learn a foreign language without attending cram school or private classes.

those classes are basic in many Hungarian schools. All the three boys have (or had, for the oldest) private classes, too. The amount and frequency of those lessons differ in each family, but the Korean “education fever” can be detected here as well.

Korean parents face difficulties in their communication with Hungarian teaching staff. As mentioned above, there is a language barrier because of the lack of English knowledge in almost every educational institute, and even if a teacher can speak English the parents may not be able to do so to a sufficient degree. Parent Teacher Association meetings can thus be complicated, and participating in school events or networking with other parents is not easy. Cultural differences are not the main factor here, as most of the obstacles originate from the language barrier. Most Hungarian adults who are now in their late 30s or older did not have many opportunities to learn English when they were children, as their language education consisted of German and Russian classes. Those whose work was not strongly related to international business and operations and/or did not have any additional chances to improve their English skills also tend to be unable to communicate with English speakers. Consequently, meeting with foreign parents like Koreans, especially in the countryside, might cause a lot of stress. However, the Koreans I interviewed generally did not complain about the helpfulness of Hungarians. Despite the difficulties due to the language barriers, they tried to involve the Koreans and cooperate with them.

As for the expatriate employees, the differences in work ethic and culture and difficulties with building a community can be a challenge. Korean employees usually seek to rent flats or houses near their workplace, but their social network is usually limited, they rarely bond with their Hungarian neighbours or colleagues outside their place of work, and even if they have the desire to do so the language barrier can hinder this. Moreover, the social networks of those without children attending a Hungarian school can be even more limited. However, since their company supervisors and colleagues are partly or mainly Koreans, adjusting to the working environment is rather easy, and they usually maintain the Korean work ethic and culture, although this can make it more difficult to connect with Hungarian coworkers and deepens the gap caused by other cultural differences. Korean employees tend to prefer the Korean working schedule over the Hungarian ones, which means a longer lunch break, later end of office hours, accepting overtime and having dinner with coworkers in the evening. In short, working with Hungarians can be problematic for Koreans because of the different views on working culture. Traditionally, Koreans work for several decades at the same company, but for Hungarians it is usual to switch workplaces if the conditions are not up to their standards or if they would like to have new experiences, challenges, or opportunities to be promoted. Korean company culture still operates on the basis

of a clear hierarchy, but Hungarian workplaces are based on a more horizontal approach. Age differences are also less important among Hungarian employees, which is awkward for the Koreans and can induce conflicts in work teams.

There are, of course, groups of Korean employees who spend most of their time together at work and who might also share accommodation, but outside the workplace they do not really have an active social life. For leisure, they prefer to spend their free time in nearby countries like Croatia or Austria, while for holidays they visit some of the bigger European countries. Local casinos also welcome Korean guests, especially at the weekends, and some of my respondents also told me about sports activities such as hiking, football, or tennis, as well as visiting spas. Many Koreans like the cultural facilities and opportunities in Hungary, because they are not so expensive and there is a huge variety, and thus the opera, musicals, and spas are all affordable forms of entertainment compared to South Korea.

It was interesting to learn that those who are working under Korean management, both expatriates in companies or employees in the service industry, stated that their life is barely different from that in South Korea, because their bosses are Koreans, they are asked to follow the Korean working conditions, they have limited free time, and they also spend their free time alone or with others Koreans. As such, they do not take full advantage of the leisure or cultural opportunities in Hungary, do not make an effort to build connections with locals, and do not need the Hungarian or English language. While living a Korean life in Hungary might make expatriate life easier, such individuals have failed with regard to escaping the pressure of Korean society or experiencing a foreign life.

We now turn to those Koreans who first tried living in Hungary for a short period and then decided to stay there permanently, as was the case for S and T. South Korea is famous for its stressful lifestyle and high expectations based on gender, educational background, and career, and the relatively low tolerance for single mothers, divorcees, mixed raced children, and adoption. The combination of Confucian values and their strict standards with the changes of modern life and various new ideologies is a very complex phenomenon that makes it difficult to meet the expectations of one's community and can widen the gap between age groups. The idea of collectivism⁹ means giving the group priority over each individual in it, and this still dominates many aspects of Korean life. However, more

9 According to the definition in the Encyclopaedia Britannica (n.d.), "the individual is seen as being subordinate to a social collectivity such as a state, a nation, a race, or a social class. Collectivism may be contrasted with individualism (q.v.), in which the rights and interests of the individual are emphasized". In Korean it is *jibdanjuui* (집단주의), it is seen as the opposite to individualism, because collectivists prioritize the needs of their community and make efforts with cooperation and interactions to help its development.

and more people, especially from the younger generation, have decided to leave this demanding society behind, and continue living in a Western country. Earlier destination countries tended to be already well-developed ones like those in North America or Northern Europe and Australia, but recently smaller countries with a more relaxed local environment have also become popular. In last 15 to 20 years, South Korea has faced several social, economic and political challenges, and the effects of these have had a huge impact on the lives of the young.¹⁰ Hungary is seen as a good place to live because it is relatively cheap compared to other countries in the EU, and currently offers good job opportunities for Koreans. Interviewee T summarized this by saying “a lot of young Koreans are looking for work-life balance, which they cannot get in South Korea. They would like to enjoy the long summer holiday options, which are provided in Hungary”. Thanks to continued economic investment, services for Koreans are also improving in Hungary, so medical care, accommodation, food and administrative issues can be solved more and more easily. Last but not least, the location of Hungary is advantageous, because several countries can be reached within a day by car, bus or train, which my interviewees also highlighted as a positive feature. Koreans are used to the fact that if they want to go abroad, they must take the plane (or at least a ship), so a transportation network in the middle of Europe is appealing to them. Respondent T noted the convenience of the transportation facilities in Budapest and said that she always advises other Korean women to choose public transport, because many Koreans, especially mothers who must take their children to school, rely on cars to get around. And although a car is comfortable, in several districts in Budapest it is difficult to find parking places and people waste a lot of time in congestion. Using trams or subways is easy and cheap, and the connections make it convenient. Moreover, those Koreans who are planning to live for a long time in Hungary make the effort to master the language, usually with private tutors

10 Since 2009, the term *Hell Joseon* (헬조선) has been used by some Koreans for their own homeland, a term that expresses the idea that despite the modernization and development of South Korea, the life for most people is just becoming more difficult and they cannot enjoy the benefits of any such “progress”. There is even a term *tal-Hell Joseon* (탈헬조선), which means to escape from South Korea (Lee 2017). Other neologisms have also emerged to express the sacrifices young people must make to survive in the country. First *samposedae* (삼[3]포세대), then *oposedae* (오[5]포세대), and finally *Nposedae* (N포세대), which all refer to a number of important things that are seen as unattainable. The expression containing three refers to dating, marriage and childbirth. The one including five contains two more, interpersonal relationships and one’s own place to live. N is for any number, meaning the many items which they must give up, including career advancement, health, hobbies, good appearance, holidays and so on. Young people must find their own ways to deal with this personal crisis (Jang 2022), and a desire to escape can lead many young people to choose immigration, because they seek alternatives and better options to live in Korea and are confident enough to take on this challenge to try and adapt in a culturally new environment.

or attending the classes of Balassi Institute,¹¹ and to build a social network with Hungarians, too (by joining sport clubs, looking for friends online, attending language exchange meetings and so on). They find the Hungarian education system to be less stressful for their children and see foreign language education¹² a benefit. Furthermore, the shadow education system (i.e. cram schools, private tutors, and so on) is not so depressing, and the market for a university place or job is not so competitive. This means that people have more free time for their personal goals, more opportunities to enjoy hobbies or community life, and more space for self-development. Parents—and of course their children—like the chance to participate in after-school activities beyond going to cram school.

There were some missionaries among my interviewees who were satisfied with life in Hungary. According to their experiences, it is not so difficult to connect with Hungarians, so they can build their own social circle peacefully and successfully, with both Koreans and locals. One Protestant minister (participant C) stated: “In my opinion, Hungarians and Koreans can match emotionally, we are like brothers and sisters”. Usually these religious communities are Protestant, although of no particular denomination, and have regular meetings every weekend, and sometimes during the week. They mainly have services in Hungarian, because the ministers or community leaders can use the language. They are also active in working as interpreters if newcomers to Hungary have difficulties with personal issues, and participate in occasional missions away from home, right now mainly helping the Ukrainians and Romani people in north Hungary. They are transmitters of Korean culture as well and organize summer camps and cultural events or presentations on the topics of Korean history, company culture, traditional or modern pop culture. Respondent C said the following: “I think development is now embedded into Korea, and the Korean wave [*Hallyu*] is God’s gift for us. Thanks to that, the general knowledge about South Korea is spreading and it helps human relationships.” The organizers of events on Korean history and culture note that the popularity of South Korea in Hungary has had a strong influence on the number of participants, and they are happy to welcome people without a religious motivation. That said, these events offer the possibility to learn about Korean culture and Christianity at the same time, and the lectures with various different cultural components provide insights and learning opportunities for those who attend them.

11 This nonprofit cultural organization spreads and promotes the Hungarian language and culture abroad and welcomes foreign students in Hungary to learn the language and culture.

12 Hungarian schools teach at least one foreign language in elementary school, which is English or German in most cases, but several institutions offer both. Middle schools and high schools also provide language classes in Italian, French, Russian or Spanish.

The inconveniences that the respondents mentioned with regard to living in Hungary include the slow, outdated bureaucratic procedures in terms of obtaining residence permits and visas, and the fact that they are not able to communicate very well with the staff who work in the related offices—mainly because the latter cannot speak English. Issues with visas became even more difficult in 2024, because the government implemented stricter regulations on foreign workers and their family members. In some cases, this has made Koreans leave Hungary, even if they had been operating their own small business there. Secondly, half of the interviewees mentioned visits to hospitals or doctor's office as problematic, because of the language barrier, lack of proper service and poor communication. The medical system is also seen as too complicated, the waiting lists even for general examinations are too long, and private treatment options are too expensive. As company employee K stated, "if you get sick in Hungary, there is nothing left but to die". Of course, this is an exaggeration, but it is true that many Koreans in Hungary worry because of their health, and so if they can afford to they travel back to Korea to get rapid treatment in a safe, familiar environment.¹³

Customs and Changes in Korean Habits, K-food in the Spotlight

Koreans in general like Hungarian food, because there are commonalities with Korean food, such as using red peppers and other spicy ingredients, adding garlic, and eating soup with almost every meal, but they also stated that Hungarian dishes can be too salty and greasy, and that there are too many meat- and flour-based courses, compared to the vegetable- and rice-based Korean dishes. "I can get vitality only if I eat Korean food," said interviewee M. "Even though I have been living in Hungary for a long time, I eat mainly Korean food. Personally, I have some flour- and meat-related allergies, so I enjoy food which matches my physical constitution," stated interviewee P. She also added: "As I am living here, one thing I feel more and more is that the selection of vegetables is rather limited compared to what we can see in Korea, and personally this is a bit difficult." Almost all the interviewees had the same answer regarding Korean cuisine, that at least once a day they must eat Korean food, preferably homemade. Back in the 1990s, it was impossible to buy authentic Korean food in Hungary, so those who became temporary or permanent residents had to prepare their meals using local ingredients. Nowadays, it is easy to go to a Korean restaurant, as not only in Budapest but also in smaller towns we can also find places offering *hansik*, or Korean

13 As for relaxation, many choose to stay at their accommodation because they have no company to go out with, or they prefer to watch Korean channels and enjoy shows in their native language rather than participating at a local event of cultural festival with an unknown language and customs.

food. In the last five years the number of Korean restaurants has grown rapidly, and now there are more than 20 in Budapest alone,¹⁴ and several have opened in Komárom, Iváncsa, Debrecen and Tatabánya.¹⁵ The owners and/or the chefs are mainly Koreans, who are partly targeting expatriates like themselves. According to my interviews with restaurant owners and workers, their customers are mainly Koreans working in Korean companies and studying here as exchange students, with a smaller number of Hungarians who are interested in Korean cuisine. Those owners whose basic motivation was not to service expatriates but to start a business in a foreign city stated that they are eager to attract many Hungarians and other foreign nationals as well, and they are happy to see growing numbers of customers from such groups. These customers have different levels of knowledge about Korean cuisine, as those who are already interested in Korean culture usually know the famous dishes and can decide what to order alone, but those who are just curious to try something new or are from the older generation nearly always need some help when choosing what to eat. Their menus are printed in Korean and English or Hungarian, and to help people understand what is on offer the often include photographs of the dishes. They usually face difficulties when recruiting new staff (local or non-Korean), because the cultural differences and lack of common language make it hard to work together efficiently. Many of the Koreans who are in a leadership position in such restaurants are working hard to learn the Hungarian language but find that this takes too much time. Some of these places focus on catering to Korean companies,¹⁶ and are only open for lunch (e.g. 11 am – 2 pm) and dinner (e.g. 5 pm – 9 pm) according to the working schedule of the companies located nearby. They also adjust their menus according to the feedback from or needs of companies. For celebrations like Chuseok or Seollal, some of the restaurants prepare special meals for their customers, including typical holiday dishes and sweets like *tteok*, because they know how difficult it is for most Korean expatriates to travel back home for the holidays.

In addition to going to restaurants, the interviewees said that cooking Korean food is very important to them, and owning an electric rice cooker is essential. They enjoy eating fermented food, such *kimchi*, and even claim their cuisine is much more diverse than local European-style foods. One problem they noted

14 The number for Budapest might not seem so significant if we compare it that seen in other large European cities, like Vienna, but the rapid rise in the number of Korean restaurants in the countryside is notable.

15 These towns have all seen investments from Korean companies since 2019.

16 Because of the limited opening hours and some restrictions on entry, these restaurants are sometimes criticized by the local Hungarian residents. This happens especially in the smaller towns, because Korean restaurant owners purchase what were once Hungarian restaurants and sometimes only serve the staff of Korean companies.

was the lack of quality seafood, because Hungary is a landlocked country, and so all seafood has to be imported. Another issue is that stores selling Korean items are expensive, because these have to be imported. Moreover, the range of items on offer is considered rather limited compared to that seen in Korean supermarkets. For this reason, both restaurant owners and other Koreans in Hungary often travel to Austria or Slovakia, because there are Panasia supermarkets close to the Hungarian border that have lower prices, a more diverse selection of products, and even high-quality seafood. Such stores offer a delivery service, but many of the respondents are happy to spend the time needed to visit them in person.

Interestingly, snacks were also mentioned as a type of cultural difference. Koreans like to share snacks like biscuits, candies, and chocolate when they have a gathering or a group activity, but this is uncommon among Hungarians. As S stated during an in-depth interview:

Some years before, I used to work as a Korean language teacher for Hungarians. Among the participants there were various age groups represented, from teenagers to adults. Before classes, I usually prepared some easy things to eat, like Korean meat balls or I peeled and cut apples. At the beginning, they kind of refused to eat a lot from it together, which was a bit saddening for me. Especially, when I saw a student getting their own apple or snack and eating it all alone, not sharing with me or with the others. I had to understand that this is a cultural difference.

Another respondent talked about food and outings, such as picnics, which Koreans usually take rather substantial meals to, either homemade or bought from restaurants. Interviewee T attended similar gatherings in Budapest, where she was surprised by the rather light food her Hungarian friends brought, such as crisps, soft drinks and sandwiches. She added:

With my Korean friends, who live in Hungary, we sometimes have a picnic on Margaret Island, but we bring chicken and beer with us. A lot of people stare when they pass by, but some of them get interested and once they even asked us: “Where did we get that food delivered from?”

However, other representative elements of Korean traditional culture, like customs are not so well protected and maintained. While a sense of collectivism influences the lives of expatriates, there is still only a relatively low level of community organization in Hungary, which keeps them from celebrating holidays and spending time together. All of my interviewees had joyful memories of holidays from 20 to 30 years ago, before they moved to Hungary. They shared their

personal experiences of games, family gatherings, visits to graves, making food, personal greetings or wearing *hanbok*. “When I was a child, we always visited my grandmother’s house and spent hours with the preparation of *jeon* and *twigim*. I remember the smell of cooking oil and that we were so tired. Even though me and my mom are Christians, we went to help my grandmother, because that’s the tradition,” said T. But nowadays, they realized, even people who still live in South Korea are not so eager to follow these traditions, so the lack of them in Hungary is no great surprise. Most of the interviewees see this as a natural process, as a result of modernization and the domination of the online world, but all of them expressed a kind of sadness (*aswium* 아쉬움) about it. Many parents pay attention to explaining traditional Korean customs to their children, and if there is a chance they take them to festivals or events related to them, but in their own homes, within their nuclear families, they do not follow them very closely. In Hungary the main Korean celebrations are usually on ordinary workdays, so there’s no special, festive atmosphere. They might contact their relatives in Korea by phone or text messages, but there are no other gestures. Interviewee I phrased this as follows: “I think Korean festivals might give a false picture about Korean customs, because in real life there is much less interest in those things.”

Community Formation?

Even though the number of Korean residents in Hungary is now almost 6,000,¹⁷ and they use various communication channels to exchange news, helpful information and announcements, to date a real Korean community has not yet formed in the country, and thus there is no central group which would take the lead in organizing meetings and events. Instead, Koreans in Hungary rely on group chats, usually with the KakaoTalk service, where they share information about local issues, advertisements, buying and selling items, or seek help. There are also smaller communities based around social events or religious groups.

In addition to various KakaoTalk groups, Koreans in Hungary use other platforms to share information. One of them is an online publication with the title *Jó napot, Korea!* (요나쁜뜨코리아, or “Good Afternoon, Korea”), which was originally posted on the Naver Café app created for expatriates living in Hungary. It started in 2021, and its last issue was posted in 2023. The target readers were Koreans residing in Hungary, and the contents were created to help them to understand specific features of Hungarian customs and habits, and to advertise various services for Koreans. The main topics of the published issues included special holidays

17 Some online articles mention around 10,000 people, but without any supporting data.

and celebrations, seasonal festivals, elections, rubbish collection, pharmacy and emergency room visits. Some articles dealt with cultural differences, for example etiquette about sneezing and using zebra crossings. There were also recommendations about certain Hungarian products, such as herbal medicines or spices, useful applications, along with recipes. There were also notes on useful Hungarian expressions and space for advertising services which can be helpful for Koreans, such as Korean restaurants, administrative assistance, car repairs, airport pick-up, interpreter services, and dentists.

In April of 2024, an unofficial community portal was launched, called *Hungary Korean* (*heong-galikolian* 헝가리코리안), although there was also an earlier such site with the name *Hair Style* (*meorippal* 머리빨), which started as a way to connect South Koreans with salons that know how to style Asian hair, as well as offering translations so that customers could get what they wanted. Eventually the people behind this site decided to start a broader one that covered more topics, and this was the motivation to launch *Hungary Korean*), although as yet it has a rather small user base.

The latest development in the Korean community is the establishment of the Korean Association in Hungary, which had its inauguration ceremony in June 2024. To celebrate the 35th year of the diplomatic relationship between Hungary and South Korea, this official organization was formed to with the aim of offering Koreans help in adapting to life in this country, both personally and professionally, as they often need help with official documents, handling accidents or other problems, educational administration or the lack of adequate services (Hankyung Korea 2024; Lee Seok-ho 2024).

Conclusions

Based on the definition of cultural adaptation explained above and the factors of migration decided by Koreans, we can attempt to form an overview of Koreans residing in Hungary.

Firstly, thanks to the economic cooperation between the two countries, the growing number of Koreans residing in Hungary is a result of investments and the policy of Korean companies to send expatriates and, most importantly, managers to their Hungarian sites. Because of the distance between the two countries such appointments are for longer periods, so these employees come with their families, which helps them to avoid some of the negative effects of living abroad. This situation gives a chance for Koreans of different age groups to experience

Hungarian life. As for cultural adaptation, employees of Korean firms are in a rather lucky situation, because they can maintain their Korean way of life and thus do not have to deal with culture shock in this regard, as they have a similar working environment, daily personal contact with family members, Korean food, the use of their native language, and are kept up to date with matters in their homeland. On the other hand, these individuals also miss the positive effects of possible cultural adaptation, as their contact with locals is limited, they do not experience a new culture and a new way of life very deeply, and so the excitement of the first phase of cultural adaptation is limited. Since they do not need Hungarian or sometimes even English in their everyday lives, they do not feel motivated to learn the language, which further hinders the possibility of local relationships. Consequently, differences emerge between family members. The children and wives of expatriates must adjust to the Hungarian way of life to a certain extent, especially school life. This means that they need to learn Hungarian, so both children and usually their mothers do so by attending classes in school and/or with private tutor, although this obviously costs money. The education requirements and levels in Hungary are different to those in South Korea, and those parents who are planning to return to South Korea after a few years usually send their children to additional private classes so they can eventually take entrance exams in Korea. However, these parents also realize there is an opportunity to give their children a more carefree childhood away from Korea, and they let them to take part in activities like local soccer teams or other hobbies which can help their personal development and self-realization. Naturally, these children experience culture shock harder, because they must live among Hungarians on a daily basis, they attend Hungarian institutions, and they need to understand their regulations and customs. They can also have difficulties with bureaucracy due to the different systems and the language barrier. Although their cultural adaptation may take longer, it can also be more successful, and so they can eventually enjoy the benefits of adaptation. Korean children and their mothers usually have a broader social network with locals. They are more involved in local customs and get to learn about the traditions, while having the chance to preserve their Korean way of life at home by eating Korean food, watching Korean television and speaking Korean to each other.

As for those who choose Hungary as a destination country in their escape from Korea, cultural adaptation is also easier because they are eager to fit in into the new environment where they expect their lives to be different, and ideally less difficult than it was in their homeland. Usually, they can find acceptable accommodation quickly and have jobs, either as an employee or entrepreneur. Cultural adaptation for them is more complex and important compared to expatriate families, as these

Koreans need the Hungarian language and a local network or must build relationships with other Korean residents. They must be well-informed about Hungarian administrative processes, because they must take care of their own bureaucratic issues. Culture shock can be hard for them to overcome, but once they are over the adaptation period they usually state that they find life in Hungary to be comfortable. They feel much less stress than in South Korea and enjoy the benefits of living in a Central European country. They visit South Korea rarely but use the internet to communicate with their family members back home. They do not find it important to keep their Korean celebrations, and usually learn about Hungarian holidays, but these are also not so important for them either.

Thirdly, Korean exchange students or medical university students are in a unique situation. Their classes are offered in English, so they must be able to use English at a high level, but since their classmates are mainly fellow foreigners, and the university administration is prepared for them with staff who can use English, there is no significant language barrier in this context. They can enjoy the positive sides of cultural adaptation with a lot of stimulation and excitement, but as time goes by they also have to endure the negative aspects of living abroad, although this depends on how well they are able to broaden their social network. If they arrive alone, and do not make friends among the foreign or Hungarian students, they will experience loneliness and helplessness, which can cause changes in mood or even depression, which then affects their academic achievements. If they are not able to find their preferred meals or cannot be involved in leisure activities, then this can cause physical and mental health problems. Fortunately, the students I interviewed said they were able to overcome the hard phase of cultural adaptation quite quickly, that they use enjoy the cheaper lifestyle in Hungary (compared to Korea and other Western countries) and travel a lot inside Europe thanks to Hungary's central location. They are also satisfied with the education offered at their chosen university, and the medical students like getting their diplomas in Hungary as it will enable them to work elsewhere in Europe. However, cultural adaptation among students can differ a lot, based on the individual involved.

Of course, cultural adaptation is a two-way street. Hungarians have mixed feelings about the Koreans nowadays, but usually based on economic factors and the Hungarian government's practices, not from their personal experiences with Koreans. Hungarians find it more demanding to work with Koreans because of certain cultural differences, which can cause conflicts and lack of understanding. Korean companies sometimes do not follow official regulations and thus sometimes must pay fines, which could be avoided if they paid more attention to warnings from their Hungarian employees. Accidents at Korean companies often make the news and, based on the limited information presented in the reports, negative

judgments can quickly arise towards Koreans. But on a personal level, those who are open to deeper cultural adaptation, on both Korean and Hungarian sides, can have rewarding relationships. They can their free time together, enjoying leisure activities like soccer or golf together, or sharing meals and thus having a chance to bond and learn about each other's cultures. People who are willing to learn each other's language, even just a small amount, are more engage in the process of cultural adaptation. Some of the biggest Korean companies are located near small towns or even villages. According to the local feedback, Hungarians accept Koreans living among them, because they are peaceful, do not cause disturbances, obviously work a lot, and are respectful. However, there are also some negative opinions, such as when Koreans take over Hungarian restaurants, are seen a pushing up the cost of real estate or are involved in traffic accidents due to being unfamiliar with the regulations. This last issue is one of the biggest reasons for conflict, because it can put people's lives in danger, although it could be avoided by proper education on the Hungarian traffic rules.

Closing Remarks

This paper has highlighted some issues based on interviews with Koreans now residing in Hungary, but a more thorough examination is still needed to derive some clear (and less personal) conclusions, preferably with the involvement of more respondents in order to get representative research results. However, it should be noted that in the past three or four years there have been huge changes in the lives of Koreans residing in Hungary, with more services being developed for them, as well as greater interest in Korean culture and Korean workplaces, all of which can help with cultural adaptation. Even though there are protests and demonstrations against some Korean firms because of the dangers of battery production and environmental issues, it is undeniable that the economic and cultural interactions between Hungary and South Korea are continuing to grow significantly. In further research it would be worth observing the related activities of the Korean Cultural Centre of Budapest and the two educational institutions mentioned earlier, the Hungary Budapest Korean School (한인 학교 *Hanin hakkyo*) and Korean Learning Centre (한글배움터 *Hangeul paeumteo*). Visiting Korean firms and examining their efforts to bond with Hungarian employees could produce some interesting findings.

As for the Koreans residing in Hungary, we can conclude they might encounter certain difficulties due to the cultural differences and language barriers, but when it comes to daily life it is not so difficult for them to adjust to Hungary and they

are happy to share their own culture with Hungarians, even though they are not so keen about keeping their own “old” traditions. The process of community formation has also started to accelerate, so we can imagine that in the near future many of the problems cited in this paper will be solved more easily and in a more structured manner, and that with the growing numbers of Hungarian-Korean interpreters and consultants, the cultural differences between the two communities can be resolved more readily.

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American Protestant Missionaries in Korea between 1884 and 1942, from the Perspective of Immigration

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Abstract

Between 1884 and 1942, about 1,000 American Protestant missionaries came to Korea. Most of them were young, religious, and educated people from various socioeconomic classes. It was their enthusiasm for overseas missions that made them decide to be missionaries, but it was the economic stability provided by the boards of foreign missions which allowed them to actually live as missionaries for a long time in Korea. Overseas missionary work was both a calling and a well-paid job, and therefore, missionaries' lives in Korea were far from lived in hardship. They built their own communities, maintained the American middle-class lifestyle, and enjoyed a model family life with many children. Adopting the Korean way of life was considered unhealthy or inappropriate. Their lives were criticized by non-missionary Westerners, and sometimes by themselves, for being too luxurious, but it enabled them to engage in missionary work for a long time. Of course, they did not always live comfortably and freely throughout their time in Korea. When Japanese rule began, they also came under Japanese control and interference. Some were arrested, imprisoned, and even tortured. However, instead of returning to the US, they lived in Korea for as long as possible, sometimes for generations. In short, from the perspective of immigration, American Protestant missionaries were immigrants who came to Korea in search of a better life. There they experienced the joys of God's work that they could not enjoy in the US, and not as poor and lonely missionaries, but as middle-class professionals with families and financial stability.

Keywords: American Protestant missionaries, immigration, missionary salaries, middle-class lifestyle, family life

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Ameriški protestantski misijonarji v Koreji med letoma 1884 in 1942 z vidika priseljevanja

Izvleček

Med letoma 1884 in 1942 je v Korejo prišlo približno 1000 ameriških protestantskih misijonarjev. Večina jih je bila mladih, vernih in izobraženih ljudi iz različnih družbenoekonomskih razredov. Za misijonarstvo so se odločili zaradi navdušenja nad tujimi misijoni, vendar jim je ekonomska stabilnost, ki so jo zagotavljali sveti tujih misijonov, omogočila, da so v Koreji dejansko dolgo časa živeli kot misijonarji. Prekomorsko misijonarsko delo je bilo hkrati poslanstvo in dobro plačano delo, zato življenje misijonarjev v Koreji še zdaleč težko. Zgradili so svoje skupnosti, ohranili življenjski slog ameriškega srednjega razreda in uživali vzorno družinsko življenje z veliko otroki. Sprejemanje korejskega načina življenja je veljalo za nezdravo ali neprimerno. Njihovo življenje so zahodnjaki, ki niso bili misijonarji, in včasih tudi oni sami kritizirali, da je preveč razkošno, vendar jim je to omogočilo, da so lahko dolgo časa opravljali misijonsko delo. Seveda pa niso ves čas bivanja v Koreji živeli udobno in svobodno. Ko se je začela japonska vladavina, so tudi oni prišli pod japonski nadzor in vmešavanje. Nekateri so bili aretirani, zaprti in celo mučeni; vendar so, namesto da bi se vrnili v ZDA, v Koreji živeli čim dlje, včasih tudi več generacij. Skratka, z vidika priseljevanja so bili ameriški protestantski misijonarji priseljenci, ki so prišli v Korejo iskat boljše življenje. Tam so izkusili radosti božjega dela, ki jih v ZDA niso mogli uživati, in to ne kot revni in osamljeni misijonarji, temveč kot strokovnjaki srednjega razreda z družinami in finančno stabilnostjo.

Ključne besede: ameriški protestantski misijonarji, priseljevanje, misijonarske plače, življenjski slog srednjega razreda, družinsko življenje

Introduction

Korea's last dynasty, Joseon, concluded treaties of amity and commerce with several Western countries, starting with the Joseon-United States Treaty of May 22nd, 1882. A small number of Western diplomats, custom officers, and merchants thus began living in Korea in 1883, and in September of the following year, Horace N. Allen (1858–1932), an American Northern Presbyterian missionary arrived in Korea as a doctor at the US Legation. Afterwards, many other Americans came to Korea to spread Protestantism, and achieved unprecedented success in Asia. Due to that and the influence of various historical events, Korea still has a large number of Protestant believers, churches, seminaries, and related institutions.

From September 1884, when Horace Allen's family first arrived in Korea, to June 1942, when all American missionaries were repatriated, how many did Protestant missionaries come to Korea from the US? Kim and Park (1994, 4–5) estimate the total number of Protestant missionaries who came to Korea before liberation at

the end of World War II to be 1,529, with most (1,059) being American.¹ This number includes American missionaries to other countries who briefly visited Korea and clergy and laypersons related to Korean missions, and there are a few cases where the use of both maiden and married names means that some women are counted twice—for example, Annie J. Ellers (1860–1938) is also Mrs. Bunker, Ethel Van Wagoner (1888–1949) is Mrs. Underwood, and Elizabeth B. Woods (1908–2002) is Mrs. DeCamp. Whatever the exact figure, American missionaries were nonetheless the largest group of Westerners in Korea at the time.

Many studies of American Protestant missionaries in Korea have been carried out by researchers trained in seminaries, and are mostly about the noble lives and accomplishments of individual figures. They focus on missionaries as people who brought the gospel to Korea, and are not accustomed to or comfortable with analysing them as secular beings. Meanwhile, most historians are not very interested in studying missionaries. They study Japanese and Chinese people who settled in Korea, but not Western residents, and they leave the missionaries, who made up the largest portion of the latter, to seminary-trained researchers. Moving away from these two stances on American Protestant missionaries, namely mythological understanding and indifference, the author seeks to understand them historically.

What then is the identity of American Protestant missionaries as members of human history? Ryu Dae-Young's (2001) answer to this question is that they were members of the middle class. He examined the socioeconomic status, religious tendencies, and lifestyles of missionaries who arrived in Korea from 1884 to 1910, and argued that American overseas missions of the time were middle-class operations, and that the missionaries were people with middle-class characteristics (Ryu 2001, 48–55). This study agrees with some of this, but also proposes that above all else these missionaries were immigrants.² Although it seems that no one has yet considered these individuals as immigrants,² the author understands that immigration is the only concept that describes the departure of approximately 1,000 well-educated people from the US over a period of about 60 years, and their decades of life in Korea. This view will become even clearer when one includes the thousands of missionaries who went to other countries in Asia and Africa.

1 199 (13%) were British, 98 (6.4%) were Canadian, 85 (5.6%) were Australian, and 88 (5.7%) were from other countries or of nationality unknown (Kim and Park 1994, 4–5).

2 But it is not unfamiliar in Korea to call not only missionaries but also any other foreigners who lived in Korea in the late 19th and early 20th centuries immigrants. Japanese people who lived in Korea are called *Jaejo ilbonin* (재조일본인; 在朝日本人), Chinese who lived there are called *Hwagyo* (화교; 華僑), while Westerners are called *Jaehan seoyangin* (재한서양인; 在韓西洋人), although they are not studied as much as their Japanese or Chinese counterparts.

Instead of the myth that American Protestant missionaries gave up everything and sacrificed themselves in Korea, the current study shows that they were immigrants who came to Korea for a better life. The most important element of the better life they sought was, of course, the joy of overseas missionary work, but most of them also pursued a stable income, enjoyable meals, comfortable housing, and a happy family life. First, this work analyses their background and characteristics, and emphasizes that the stable payment of wages played a significant role in missionaries choosing to go to Korea. Secondly, the study investigates what these people ate, what they wore, where and how they lived in Korea, and argues that they lived comfortably in their own mission compounds instead of enduring the inconveniences of living among ordinary Koreans. It also examines their family life and their children's education, and reveals that they worked to have idealized American families and cooperated to provide their children with the privilege and benefit of higher education. Finally, the author reviews the missionaries' long-term stays in Korea and their descendants' visits to Korea, arguing that Korea was not just a place where they did missionary work, but a new home and foundation for their lives.

Missionary as a Paid Job for Educated Christians

American Protestant missionary work in Korea was started in 1884 by the two boards of foreign missions based in New York: the board of the Northern Presbyterian Church (NP) and that of the Northern Methodist Church (NM). In July, Robert S. Maclay (1824–1907), who had been a missionary in China from 1848 to 1872 and in Japan since 1873, received permission from King Gojong (1864–1907), the 26th monarch of the Joseon dynasty, for missionaries to build schools and hospitals in Korea, with the help of Kim Ok-Gyun (1851–1894). It resulted in the arrival of the first NM missionaries to Korea in the first half of 1885. In the case of NP, an adventurous doctor named Horace Allen, who was a missionary to China, entered Korea while hiding his missionary status in September. From this time until 1892, missionary work in Korea was mainly carried out by NP and NM missionaries. From 1884 to 1892, about 50 married and single missionaries arrived in Korea.

Who were these missionaries? First, they were mostly born and raised in the Northern United States,³ with only a few coming from the Southern States. John W. Heron (1856–1890), born in England and raised in Tennessee, was determined

3 Among them there were very few people from New England, such as Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Rhode Island, which shows that they did not belong to the upper class of the US at the time.

to serve overseas after interacting with an NP missionary, and there was no way to be appointed as a missionary to Korea while living in the Southern States. So, he and his wife, a Tennessee native, applied to the NP board of foreign missions, and arrived in Korea in June 1885 (Park 2015, 164). Secondly, the majority of the missionaries were married couples and single women. Single men rarely came to Korea, and even if they did they soon got married with a single female missionary.⁴ Thirdly, the missionaries were usually in their twenties. Mary F. Scranton (1832–1909), a widow in her fifties who came to Korea as a missionary with her son's family in June 1885, was an extremely rare case. Finally, the missionaries were not just devout believers interested in spreading their religion overseas, but highly educated people. Indeed, a high level of education was essential for this post, because they would work as pastors, doctors, and teachers in Korea. The boards of foreign missions thus required them to be educated, and therefore they generally had a college degree or higher education, and very few missionaries had only graduated from high school.⁵

In the 1890s, NP and NM missionaries continued to enter Korea, while missionaries from the Southern States also started to be sent there. At the end of 1892, seven people—called the “pioneer band of Seven”—established the Korea Mission of the Southern Presbyterian Church (SP) in Seoul (Ryu 2001, 11–12), and started their work in the southwestern region of Korea called Jeolla-do around 1896. In the case of the Southern Methodist Church (SM), Clarence F. Reid (1849–1915), a missionary to China, first visited Korea to open its mission in October 1895, and established the first church in Goyang, Gyeonggi-do in May 1897 (Committee 2022, 265). SP and SM missionaries were not much different from NP and NM ones, except that they were mostly from the Southern States: they were young, pious, and well-educated people, like their northern counterparts.

The Russo-Japanese War broke out in 1904. In November of the following year Korea became a protectorate of Japan, the winner of the war, and came under direct Japanese rule in 1910. However, missionaries continued to enter Korea regardless of the political situation on the peninsula, with about 135 people entering the country from 1905 to 1909, and things did not change much during the Japanese colonial

4 For example, Horace G. Underwood (1859–1916) married fellow NP missionary Lillias S. Horton (1851–1921), G. Heber Jones (1867–1919) married fellow NM missionary Margaret J. Bengel (1869–1962) (Kim and Park 1994, 325, 506).

5 Heber Jones was one of the few who did not have a college degree. According to Cho Hye-Ra, he gave up going to college because of financial problems or illness. However, the NM board of foreign missions made an exception for him because there was an urgent need to send missionaries at the time, and he would work as a mathematics teacher at the Pai Chai School, not as a pastor or doctor (Cho 2015, 12–14).

period, nor did the backgrounds and characteristics of the missionaries themselves. Although they began to come from the Western States as well as the North and South, such as Ralph O. Reiner (1882–1967), born in Nebraska and raised in California,⁶ missionaries were essentially the same as they were in the late 19th century or the first half of the 20th: they were devout, educated young people.

What was the socioeconomic status of American Protestant missionaries before they came to Korea? Some researchers are quick to assume that they came from prominent and wealthy families, because they enjoyed the privilege of higher education.⁷ Even Ryu characterized them as middle-class people who could afford a college education, as lower-class people did not have the financial means to receive this, even if they wanted to be missionaries (Ryu 2001, 46). However, in the US of the time a person's educational background and socioeconomic status were not necessarily aligned. While it was not easy for poor people to go to college, it was not completely impossible either, if they were willing to study and work hard. On the other hand, upper class men could not only graduate from college but also study abroad in Europe, although women of their class were still not allowed to receive a college education. Overall, however, while higher education was one of the privileges of the upper class, it was also a method that many ordinary people employed to achieve a better life both socially and economically.

Still, it is true that some missionaries came from famous and wealthy families. For example, Homer B. Hulbert (1863–1949), an NM missionary from 1893 to 1897, was one of the few missionaries from New England. He was the second son of Calvin B. Hulbert (1827–1917), a Dartmouth graduate, well-known Congregationalist minister, and President of Middlebury College. Homer, like his father, graduated from Dartmouth College, which had in fact been founded by his maternal ancestor Eleazar Wheelock (1711–1779), a Congregational minister and educator (Weems 1962, ED24). However, most of the American missionaries in Korea were children of ordinary people instead of well-known clergy or politicians, and there were a quite a few who received a college education despite their economic difficulties. Arthur L. Becker (1879–1979), who was an NM missionary from 1903 to 1947, was from a working-class family in Michigan, and was admitted to Albion College on the condition that he cleaned the windows of the school buildings (Thompson and Blackwood 2006, 3). George S. McCune (1873–1941)

6 He and his wife, Jessie M. Reiner (1882–1962), who was born in Michigan and raised in California, were appointed NP missionaries to Korea. His younger sister, Ella M. Reiner (1884–1962), also served in Korea as an NP missionary from 1916 to 1923 (Committee 2022, 144).

7 For example, Park Hyoung-Woo noted that Horace Allen was from a wealthy, prestigious family in Vermont, one that helped achieve America's independence, even though he knew that Allen himself graduated from an unknown college without parental support (Park 2014, 194–95).

and many other missionaries graduated from Park College in Missouri, which allowed its students to work in exchange for no tuition being charged. In summary, the socioeconomic status of the missionaries varied greatly. Some were born and raised in wealthy or at least comfortable families, while others were so poor that could barely graduate from high school. At least economically, it is difficult to characterize the missionaries as middle class.

Thus, while there is no doubt that many educated, devout Americans came to Korea for the purpose of spreading the gospel, the promise of a stable income also attracted people to live as missionaries in a foreign land for decades. A lot of money was needed to build and operate churches, hospitals, and schools, as well as to pay the missionaries. The latter was especially important, because most missionaries planned to get married and have children while in Korea, and so needed some financial security. Fortunately, the missionaries did not have to raise this money themselves, as the board of foreign missions that appointed them financed all their missionary work and general expenses. In other words, they were paid employees of the board of foreign missions dispatched to a foreign land.

Several figures have been presented regarding the annual salaries of missionaries. Ryu noted that in the late 19th century single Presbyterian missionaries received \$700–900 per year and married missionaries received \$1,100–1,200 as a couple, while Methodist ones received less (Ryu 2001, 80). According to Cho Sun-Hye, in 1888, married NP missionaries received \$1,400 as a couple, single men \$900–1,000, and single women \$700–800, while married NM missionaries received \$1,000 as a couple, with an extra \$100 per child, single men received \$800, and single women \$700 (Cho, 2020, 212–13). Here we can quote some figures from the records of Allen and Underwood, the two pioneering NP missionaries who wrote the following regarding salaries in letters sent to the NP board of foreign missions:

Dr. Allen gets here today amounts to as much. Salary 1,200.00 (gold), allowance 2 child 200.00. (Underwood, December 27th, 1886, in Kim 2007a, 659)

All I can tell you that it is impossible for a man to live out here on \$800.00 a year. I know your rule about unmarried men's salaries being two thirds that of a married man. (Underwood, March 5th, 1888, in Kim 2007a, 703)

Take Mr. Appenzeller of the Methodist Episcopal mission. He receives \$1,200 gold per annum and the same child's allowance that our people receive. (Allen, October 26th, 1893, in Kim 2007a, 923–24)

According to the figures and records above, early NP and NM missionaries received \$1,200 per couple and \$100 per child, per year. It is estimated that single missionaries received \$800 if they were men, and \$700 if they were women. As will be covered in detail in the next chapter, these were not small amounts. To put it crudely, pastors were paid more for working as missionaries in Korea than they would get for the same work in America (Ryu 2001, 81–82). Doctors and teachers also received higher salaries in Korea, unless they achieved great success in the US.

However, the author's argument is not that these people chose to be missionaries merely for money. Missionary salaries were not small, but they were not large enough to attract those who were indifferent to the work itself, especially in the early days. In addition, non-religious people who only chased after money were unlikely to maintain their positions even if they were appointed as missionaries, because the boards of foreign missions had the power to recall those who were negligent or caused any trouble. On the other hand, for young people who were deeply religious and interested in living in overseas, missionary positions were the ideal way to realize their ambitions, and at the same time a decently paid job. Such factors were not relevant to the upper class, who had a lot of money and opportunities, but held strong appeal for young people with a poor socioeconomic status and otherwise mediocre prospects. For such people it was perhaps better to go to a new country and start churches, hospitals, and schools rather than compete with others in America. In summary, the approximately 1,000 American Protestant missionaries who went to Korea in the period being examined were mostly young people of with strong faith and a higher education. And while it was their enthusiasm for overseas missions that undoubtedly made them decide to be missionaries, it was the economic stability provided by the boards of foreign missions which allowed them to actually leave the US and live for a long time in Korea.⁸

A Pleasant and Convenient American Way of Life

American Protestant missionaries, like Catholic missionaries or Protestant ones from other countries, did not live in the foreign settlements in Korea. With the

8 William B. McGill (1860–1918) and Elizabeth J. McGill (1854–1922) were among those who gave up their missionary work for economic reasons. They were successful in both medical work and evangelism in Gongju, but when Bishop Merriman C. Harris (1846–1921) instructed them to do only medical work, they went on leave to the US in 1905 rather than follow his order. They were very enthusiastic about their missionary work, and the Koreans in Gongju wanted them to return, but they could not receive any money from the NM board of foreign missions without following Harris' instructions. They eventually gave up their mission in Korea, realizing they could not return to the country without financial stability (Committee 2022, 341–43).

protection of the American Legation and the financial support of the boards of foreign missions, they established their own communities called mission compounds,⁹ first in Seoul and later in various cities around the country. Early missionaries put a lot of effort into securing suitable homes and better land, and sometimes were very competitive in trying to obtain them.

Although the boards of foreign missions provided homes, it was not easy for foreigners to live in Korea, with food one of the biggest problems. Missionaries, like other Western immigrants, preferred to eat American food, but in the 1880s there was no flour, butter, or milk in Korea, and the beef was not tender. Moreover, most of the fruits and vegetables produced in Korea were unfamiliar to the Americans (Cho 2020, 219–20). Another problem with food was that although the missionaries could import anything they wanted through China or Japan, it was very expensive because of freight costs and customs duties. In addition, not only food but also almost everything else—from coal to shoelaces—had to be imported, so the early missionaries were financially strained even though they received considerable salaries. They thus often asked for higher salaries or an additional allowance.

I must tell you that this is a very expensive place to live in. [...] I do not intend to ask for an increase of salary but I must ask you to pay my customs duty and freight from Shanghai which will place me nearer on an equality with the China and Japan missionaries. (Allen, October 8th, 1884, in Kim 2007a, 498)

Things are very high indeed here as almost everything that we get has to be imported from Japan or Shanghai and even what native things we can use are to be had only at a very high price. We have thought it necessary to draw the Japan salary at least. (Underwood, July 6th, 1885, in Kim 2007a, 614–15)

We have asked for the same salary we have received this year and also for the continuance of the allowance for freights from Japan and China and duties here. We find this is necessary as living here is very expensive. (Heron, February 1st, 1886, in Kim 2007b, 183)

9 The Korean government established foreign settlements near the open ports for foreigners who wanted to reside in Korea. There were three types of foreign settlements: Japanese-only settlements, Chinese-only settlements, and general settlements for various foreigners. Westerners were allowed to live in the general settlements, and they were merchants and customs officials, many of whom were Europeans. Missionaries, on the other hand, were given the right to buy land and houses to establish mission compounds in Seoul and other places. They lived in a missionary society separate from non-missionary Westerners, and they also had more freedom to travel.

Fortunately, things naturally improved as the number of Westerners increased and a distribution network was created for them in Korea. Missionaries could thus soon obtain everything they needed in life, including food, more easily than before. Although some still complained that their salaries were low, most of them did not have much difficulty making an American kind of life in Korea. Rosetta Sherwood (1865–1951), an NM missionary who entered Korea in October 1890, wrote that although she could not get everything she ate in America, she enjoyed more and better food than she expected (Kim 2009, 84–85).

But not all missionaries maintained an American lifestyle in Korea. William J. Hall (1860–1894), a Canadian NM missionary who married Rosetta Sherwood in 1892, eschewed the Western lifestyle, believing that eating and sleeping like Koreans would be a good way to do missionary work. William J. McKenzie (1861–1895), another Canadian who was an independent missionary, also adhered to the Korean way of life, wearing Korean clothes and eating local food. He even gave the Western food—such as bread, canned goods, tea, milk, sugar, and so on—that he received from American missionaries to Korean people. Eli B. Landis (1865–1898), an American who was a medical missionary for the Church of England, lived with Koreans in a Korean village from 1897 on.¹⁰

Still, most missionaries continued to eat Western food. As a doctor, Lillias H. Underwood, advised the missionaries to eat foods their bodies were familiar with in order to preserve their health, and so avoid eating Korean food and getting sick. Another NP missionary, Charles E. Sharp (1870–1952), believed that eating Korean food was the best way for missionaries to get closer to Koreans, but also learned from experience that this was very difficult to put it into practice. In an article published in 1919, when he had been in Korea for about 19 years, he wrote that considering the usual constitutions and lifestyles of Westerners, missionaries should be cautious about altering their habits, as dramatic changes in their diet could harm their mental and physical health. Meanwhile, food was not simply a means of maintaining health, but a means of giving joy and satisfaction to people living far from home. Martha W. Noble (1872–1956), an NM missionary who came to Korea in 1892, was quite serious about food. She grew vegetables, raised chickens and turkeys, and built a cellar to store celery for a long time, and even raised a cow to obtain milk (Cho 2020, 211–19). For many missionaries, eating the food they used to eat at home was

10 However, the results of going native were not good, as adopting the Korean lifestyle could lead to malnutrition and waterborne diseases: Hall died of dysentery three years after coming to Korea, and Landis died of typhoid fever the year after he began living in the Korean village. McKenzie committed suicide by shooting himself after suffering from physical and mental illness, less than two years after arriving in Korea (Committee 2022, 158, 320 and 1368).

a great help in enduring the various hardships of their long-term missionary work in Korea.

When it came to housing, according to Horace Allen: “I found the securing of a house exceedingly difficult. The Koreans know nothing of the system of renting and the only alternative was to buy if possible.”¹¹ Some foreigners were able to buy houses that had been vacant after the owners were killed during the Gapsin Coup in December 1882¹² for a low price, because they were supposed to be haunted. Many foreigners were content with repairing old Korean houses instead of building perfect new Western-style ones, which required a lot of money time, and work. Lucius H. Foote (1826–1913), the first American minister to Korea, who was there from 1883 to 1885, bought a large piece of land with a number of houses for \$3,200 and repaired them at a cost of about \$2,000. Horace Allen, with Foote’s help, purchased a plot of land similar in size for \$1,300 and renovated the house at a cost of \$200 (Kim 2007a, 495–98). Early missionaries, including William Scranton and Henry Appenzeller, also bought the houses of Korean nobles and renovated them into more a Western style. For missionaries who came later, they took over the homes of missionaries who went on leave or moved to other places, or they lived in the homes of fellow missionaries until their own homes were renovated. The boards of foreign missions covered the costs of purchasing real estate and repairing houses, and also provided some support for furniture costs.

Missionaries did not always live in old Korean houses. If a suitable Korean house could not be found, the only alternative was to build a new one. From the early 20th century on, many two-storey houses with Western-style amenities were built. Whether a Korean house or a Western one, the interior was decorated in Western style, including a bed, chair, dressing table with mirror, carpet, curtains, and organs. Outside the house, there were vegetable and flower gardens that the missionaries had grown with seeds they were sent from home. In this way they adopted the American way of life, not only in clothing and food, but also in housing.

American Protestant missionaries lived in mission compounds, small American communities in Korea, wearing Western clothes, eating Western food, tending gardens, enjoying tennis, playing the piano, and celebrating Independence Day. And all of them, even those who tried to live frugally, employed several Korean

11 This is a part of the letter from Allen to Frank F. Ellinwood, October 8th, 1884 (Kim 2007a, 495).

12 This was an overthrow of the government by pro-Japanese progressives who wanted rapid and comprehensive modernization, with the help of the Japanese Legation in Korea. It ended after three days with the intervention of the Chinese military at the request of the queen and pro-Chinese factions, and those who led the coup were executed or exiled to Japan.

or Chinese servants, including nannies, cooks, and errand boys. Angus Hamilton (1874–1913), a British journalist who witnessed the lives of American missionaries in Korea in the early 20th century, criticized them for having too many children and living lazy and luxurious lives (Hamilton 1904, 264–66),¹³ and it was undeniable that they lived very well compared to missionaries from other countries. And while they were offended by Hamilton’s criticism, they knew that their lives were similar to, or perhaps better than, those of most Americans back home. In 1895, Annie L. Baird (1864–1916), an NP missionary from 1891 to 1916, wrote the following in *The Korean Repository*, a monthly journal published by the Korea Mission of NM: “Compared with the bulk of our constituents at home we live in, to say the least, the greatest ease and comfort. Compared with the people whom we have come to serve and to save, we live like princes and millionaires” (Baird 1895, 147). James E. Adams (1867–1929), an NP missionary from 1895 to 1920, even pointed out that the missionaries’ homes were larger than necessary for health and comfort, which would alienate them from the Koreans and place their missionary work on a wrong foundation (A letter from Adams to Frank Ellinwood, April 15, 1899, in Ryu 2001, 79).

Contrary to the concerns of some, however, the American lifestyle of missionaries did not harm their work, and they were able to carry it out for many years while in a comfortable environment in Korea. Here it should be noted that the frequent return of missionaries from their work was one of the main reasons why the Church of England was so unsuccessful in Korea. British missionaries received little support from their home country: they were not paid, except for the clergy, and were not allowed to bring their families, as they had to live with their colleagues in one house. As a result, they carried out missionary work in Korea by coming as single people, doing their work for a few years, and then returning home. No matter how many people were sent, there was no way such a project could succeed with such a short-term perspective among those involved.¹⁴

13 Hamilton argued that the Anglican missionaries “set before themselves that standard of idealism in missionary enterprise,” whereas American ones, “as a class, had large families, who lived in a comparative idleness and luxury.”

14 The Anglican Church did not participate as enthusiastically as American churches in Korean missions. The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) gave just £1,500 a year for such work, which was not enough to run the missionary project let alone pay the missionaries. Therefore, the first Bishop Charles J. Corfe’s (1843–1921) colleagues created an organization called the Naval Hospital Fund at the end of 1889 to support building the first hospitals in Korea, and the Community of St Peter established the Association for Intercessory Prayer for Korea in Kilburn in March the following year for prayer, service, and fundraising. The number of Anglican missionaries of who came to Korea before liberation is estimated at just 76, and almost all of them were short-term missionaries (Committee 1990, 30–33).

Family Life and Children's Education

In general, American Protestant missionaries were the ones who had the most normal family lives among all Westerners in Korea. Although some people remained single, most missionaries got married before or after arriving in Korea. Remarriage was common because male missionaries often lost their wives, and their new spouses were usually one of their female colleagues who had never been married before, although there was no rule that missionaries could only marry each other. Some men lost their wives twice and got married three times,¹⁵ but the remarriage of female missionaries who lost their husbands was a rare event.¹⁶ They usually returned to the US or sometimes remained single in Korea, like SP missionary Julia D. Bell (1872–1952), who devoted herself to women's education for 15 years after her husband Eugene Bell (1868–1925) died in 1925, returning home in 1940 (Committee 2022, 524).

Divorce was very rare. A faithful marital relationship was one of the most important things that missionaries taught potential Korean believers and converts. Breaking up marriages and families were unacceptable to one's fellow missionaries and the board of foreign missions. J. Ernest Fisher (1886–1989) was sent to Korea as an SM missionary after he married the daughter of Robert A. Hardie (1865–1949), a Canadian SM missionary. He and his wife, Elizabeth Hardie (1890–1974), knew well the impact their divorce would have on the missionary community, so they resigned in 1934 and returned to the US, where their marriage ended the following year (*ibid.*, 1248). In 1911, Charles H. Irvin (1869–1933), who was an outstanding NP medical missionary in Busan, was divorced by his wife because he had had an affair with a Korean woman named Yang Yu-Shik. The NP board of foreign missions sent his wife, Bertha K. Irvin (1868–1940), to Japan, and dismissed him from his missionary position. Irvin opened a non-missionary hospital and married Yang, but for various reasons their marriage did not last long (Ju 2019).

15 Frederick S. Miller (1866–1937), who was an NP missionary from 1892 to 1936, lost Anna R. Miller (1865–1903) and Susan A. Doty (1861–1931), and married Lillian M. Dean (1886–1984) in 1932 (Committee 2022, 421–22). Alexander A. Pieters (1871–1958), who was a non-American NP missionary from 1895 to 1941, also married three times. He lost Elizabeth C. Pieters (1872–1906) and Eva C. Field (1869–1932), and during his sabbatical year in the US he married Anne Cooper (1887–1974) (Committee 1990, 1261).

16 The reason is that there were few single men in the missionary community. Harriet G. Heron (1860–1908) was an exception, remarrying James S. Gale (1863–1937), a Canadian missionary who came to Korea in 1888, about two years after losing her husband in 1890 (Kim and Park 1994, 295). It was possible because there were not many single female missionaries at the time, and because she was still young.

As in the case outlined above, missionaries sometimes fell in love with Koreans. Victor W. Peters (1902–2012), an NM missionary who arrived in Korea in 1928, was one of the few missionaries who wore Korean clothes and ate the local food. In 1937 he fell in love with a Korean woman named Han Heung-Bok (1912–1999), and married her on February 12th the following year. This was reported in major Korean newspapers as the first known Korean-American marriage, and caused an uproar among missionaries who did not believe in marriage between an American male missionary and a Korean woman, even if she was a Christian who graduated from a missionary school. Regardless of this disapproval, Peters lived with his wife in Korea for three years without losing his missionary status, and they left for the US in early 1941 due to pressure from the Japanese government and an order from the American government to return home (Bhang 2022, 46–50).¹⁷ They did not return to Korea after its liberation at the end of the war. Some Koreans who liked the couple believed that this was because other missionaries did not want them to return (Ogle and Ogle 2012, 101).

Missionaries who started families in Korea had to carry out the difficult task of raising and educating their children in addition to their main job, something that was largely the responsibility of the women. They were typical working mothers in a missionary context, as they also needed to learn Korean and lead missionary work for women and children. At the same time, as immigrant mothers, they not only had to keep their children healthy, but also ensure that their education kept up with the level expected in America. In the early days most of them taught their children at home because there were no schools for foreigners in Korea, while some women lived away from their husbands and accompanied their children during their education away from home.¹⁸

Missionaries in Pyeongyang, whether from NP or NM, did not want to give up their missionary work in order to teach their children. They thus formed a school council, created bylaws and financial resources, and started Pyeng Yang Foreign School in June 1900 with one teacher and six children aged two to seven. It developed into a model American school following the New York State school system, creating a high school curriculum in 1903, and in 1914 it built a dormitory for students from other regions. In September 1924, when a three-storey building was to be built on the new school site, it had four full-time teachers and sixty-seven

17 As Bhang points out, Peters' marriage to Han was more than just a union with the woman he loved—it was another means of going native, like wearing Korean clothes and eating Korean food.

18 For instance, Ella D. Appenzeller (1854–1916) lived in the US with one son and three daughters, Loulie A. Scranton (1860–unknown) lived in Switzerland with her four daughters. Harriet Heron, now Gale's wife, also lived in Switzerland with her two daughters for six years (Committee 2022, 692, 752, 1328).

students.¹⁹ Twelve years after the Pyeng Yang Foreign School was established, missionaries in Seoul also planned a school for their children. Under the leadership of Charles S. Deming (1876–1938), an NM missionary and father of three, a school council was organized in April 1912. W. Carl Rufus (1876–1946), who was an NM missionary from 1907 to 1917, recommended his sister as a teacher. Seoul Foreign School started in September 1912 with one teacher and eighteen students (Committee 2022, 799), and is still in operation today.

The missionaries' enthusiasm for educating their children did not end with the establishment of foreign schools in Korea. They themselves had graduated from universities, whether prestigious or not, and were well aware of the importance and benefits of higher education. Indeed, their educational background was one of the main reasons they were able to obtain the honourable occupation of missionaries. They thus wanted their children, whether sons or daughters, to receive a college education in the US.

Sending children born and raised in Korea to American universities was a difficult job, however. In particular, early missionary children depended entirely on the education they received from their mothers instead of attending school, so the process of preparing for college was not easy. Horace Allen, who transformed from Korea's first missionary to a diplomat in 1890, spent a lot of money and effort to get his two sons into a good university. They were only admitted to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology after several years of study at a preparatory school in Manlius, New York, and a year of private tutoring in France (Lee 2020, 265). While Allen could afford this because he was the United States Minister to Korea from 1897 to 1905, with an annual salary of \$7,500, Arthur Becker, an NM educational missionary from a working-class family, could not. In order to send his eldest daughter to college, he resigned from his Mission in Seoul in 1926 and obtained a position as professor of physics in the US. He returned to Korea as dean of the science department at Chosen Christian College, today's Yonsei University, in the spring of 1928. His decision was greatly influenced by the offer of Horace H. Underwood (1890–1951) to pay for his two children's college tuition (Thompson and Blackwood 2006, 31–35).

As for the missionary children, because they were born and raised in Korea they spoke Korean and had a special attachment to Korea.²⁰ Therefore, many

19 It was a school exclusively for foreigners. At first, it only accepted children of missionaries to Korea, but later it also accepted children of foreigners living in China and Japan. For more information about Pyeng Yang Foreign School, see Cho (2020).

20 They learned Korean not at school, but in life: from church members at their parents' church, students at their parents' schools, and Korean employees who worked in their homes.

of them returned to Korea as missionaries after completing their studies in the US.²¹ Some missionary children even became professional Koreanologists with degrees from American universities based on their love for Korea. Harold J. Noble (1903–1953), who wanted to study Korean–American relations, began working on a doctorate in history at the University of California, receiving his PhD in 1931.²² George M. McCune (1908–1948), who created McCune–Reischauer romanization in the late 1930s, earned his doctoral degree in Korean history from the University of California in 1941.²³ He was a professor first at Occidental College and later at the University of California. His younger brother, Shannon B. McCune (1913–1993), received his doctorate in Korean geography from Clark University in 1939,²⁴ and was a professor at several universities, including the University of Florida. Evelyn B. McCune (1907–2012), who took on the role of wife and mother after marrying George McCune. After her husband’s death, she received a master’s degree from the University of California in ancient Korean history,²⁵ and served as a Korea expert at several major institutions. Clarence N. Weems, Jr. (1907–1996), received bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Vanderbilt University and a doctorate from Columbia University in 1954.²⁶ Although he earned his PhD at a late age and was not active in academia for a long time, he

- 21 The first was the Underwood’s only son, Horace Underwood, who graduated from New York University and returned to Korea in 1912. The Appenzellers’ children, Alice R. Appenzeller and Henry D. Appenzeller, came to Korea in 1915 and 1917, respectively. The Nobles’ only daughter, Ruth E. Noble (1894–1986), married Henry Appenzeller and worked in Korea until 1953, and their eldest son, Alden E. Noble (1899–1960), taught biology at Yonhee College as a missionary from 1925 to 1927. The Adams’ three sons were all missionaries to Korea: Edward A. Adams (1895–1965) worked from 1921 to 1961 and founded the Keimyung Christian College (today’s Keimyung University) in 1954. Benjamin N. Adams (1898–1994) only worked from 1924 to 1928 because of the health of his wife and children. George J. Adams (1907–2002) worked from 1932 to 1953, and led the establishment of the Union Christian Service Center in Daejeon after liberation. Their only daughter, Dorothy D. Adams (1899–1996), took care of the missionary children as the dormitory director at the Pyeng Yang Foreign School from 1924 to 1937 (Committee 2022, 733–39).
- 22 Harold Joyce Noble. 1931. “Korea and Her Relations with the United States before 1895.” PhD diss., University of California. He was a history professor at the University of Oregon, and after liberation he worked in Korea as an advisor to the U.S. Military Government and as a first secretary at the US Embassy in Korea. Regarding his life and works, see Lee (2022).
- 23 George McAfee McCune. 1941. “Korean Relations with China and Japan, 1800–1864.” PhD diss., University of California.
- 24 Shannon Boyd-Bailey McCune. 1939. “Climatic Regions of Tyosen (Korea).” PhD diss., Clark University.
- 25 Evelyn Becker McCune. 1950. “History of Lo-lang, with Special Attention to the Ways in Which Chinese Institutions Were Adopted by Surrounding Korean Tribes.” MA thes., University of California.
- 26 Clarence Norwood Weems, Jr., 1954. “The Korean Reform and Independence Movement (1881–1898).” PhD diss., Columbia University.

made his name known by publishing a revised and enlarged edition of Homer Hulbert's book, *The History of Korea*, in 1962. His younger brother, Benjamin B. Weems (1914–1986), a Duke University graduate, lived in Korea longer than his brothers and published the first Western scholarship on the *Donghak* 東學, *Reform, Rebellion and the Heavenly Way*, in 1964.

Family life provided missionaries with the impetus to carry out long-term missionary work in foreign countries. They enjoyed a fulfilling family life with children, and in the case of men, when they lost their spouses they rebuilt their families by remarrying with colleagues. As parents, they established schools for their children in Korea and later sent them to study in the US, giving them the privileges of a higher education which they themselves had enjoyed. Missionary children, born and raised in Korea, had a different sense of Korea from that of ordinary Westerners and even their parents. They went on to work for Korea, their native country, in various ways, including as missionaries to Korea.

Working in Korea for a Long Time or for Generations

After Japan occupied Korea in late August 1910, American missionaries' lives and work in Korea were not the same as before. First, the freedom of missionary-run schools was weakened because the Japanese Government General of Korea imposed its educational plan not only on public schools, but also on private ones. According to the Rules for Private Schools, promulgated in October 1911 and revised several times after 1915, all mission schools came under the control of the Government General.²⁷ Religious education was prohibited, Japanese language and morals were taught, and even in the case of general studies restrictions were placed on certain subjects, which was one of the reasons why some missionaries who taught in them decided to return to the US. Carl Rufus, who taught mathematics and astronomy at Yonhee College, stated that one of the reasons for his resignation in June 1917 was that it was difficult to fully perform his role under the Government General's education policy. Alden Noble made a lot of effort to establish a biology department at Yonhee College, but he left Korea in 1927 after realizing that the Government General would not approve it (Kang and Lee 2010, 351).

27 The Government General controlled not only public schools but also private schools established by missionaries and Koreans in order to raise Koreans who would be obedient to Japanese rule. It prohibited religious education and forced moral and Japanese language education in accordance with the Rules for Private Schools revised in 1915, and in 1918, it also ordered traditional Korean schools called *seodang* 書堂, to provide moral and Japanese language education (Kim, Lee and Lee 2016, 42–45).

Furthermore, some missionaries changed their views on Japan over time. They had previously acknowledged that Japan's rule over Korea was inevitable, but when the Japanese started treating Koreans harshly and oppressed Protestantism they began to oppose Japanese militarism, and defended or at least sympathized with Koreans participating in the independence movement. Samuel Moffett and George McCune worked for the release and fair trial of teachers and students arrested in the so-called 105 People Incident began in 1911. Some missionaries, including these two, were also involved in the March 1st Movement to protect Korean believers and students, and some got into trouble for this work. For example, Eli M. Mowry (1878–1971), an NP missionary from 1909 to 1940, was accused of hiding students who were being chased by police. He was sentenced to six months in prison at his first trial, and ultimately fined 100 won (Committee 2022, 390). Among the non-American missionaries, John H. Thomas (1867–1940), a British member of the Oriental Mission Society, was beaten by the police,²⁸ and the Australian Presbyterian missionaries Margaret S. Davies (1887–1963) and Daisy Hocking (1888–1971) were arrested. Through such incidents, the missionaries learned that Japan could harm not only Koreans but also themselves, and thus generally followed the instructions of the Government General until the mid-1930s. It was the only way for them to continue their hard-won missionary work in Korea. They wanted to stay in the country until retirement, and some retired missionaries, like Annie Bunker and Samuel Moffett, even spent their final years in Korea.²⁹

Missionaries' lives in Korea were interrupted in the mid-1930s when the Japanese Government General ordered all students to worship at Shinto shrines. Some considered it as a national ritual in order to save the schools, while others rejected it as idolatry and chose to close the schools instead. George McCune, one of the latter, left Korea in March 1936 when Soongsil School and Soongsil College, where he was the principal, were closed. Velma L. Snook (1866–1960), an NM missionary who arrived in Korea in 1900, was dismissed from her position as principal of Union Academy for Women and returned to the US in the autumn of 1936 (Committee 2022, 653).

28 This incident escalated into a dispute between Britain and Japan, and ended with Japan paying compensation on the condition of Thomas' returning home. He left Korea in early 1920, still suffering from the after-effects of the beating (Committee 2022, 1160).

29 Annie Bunker and her husband, Dalziel A. Bunker (1853–1932) returned to the United States in 1926 after living in Korea for 40 years. She came to Korea in 1933 to bury the ashes of her husband, who had died the previous year, in Seoul, and came to Korea again in 1937 to spend her final years. She died the following year and was buried in Seoul (Committee 2022, 497). Samuel Moffett lived in Pyeongyang after retiring from his 44-year missionary career in 1934, and returned to the US in 1936 due to health problems (ibid., 297).

As Japan's relations with the US and Britain deteriorated due to the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in July 1937, Americans and British people, whether they followed the instructions of the Government General or not, were all citizens of Japan's enemies. When Germany invaded Poland in September 1939 and the war was expected to spread to Asia, the US State Department made plans to recall its citizens from the expected war zones, and the boards of foreign missions did not appoint new missionaries to Korea, nor did they send those missionaries who had been in the US on leave back to Asia. The Weems returned to the US in July 1940 for a fourth furlough, hoping to return to Korea, but the Methodist board of foreign missions refused to send them back,³⁰ citing the state of their health and the threat of war with Japan, and finally the board decided to officially retire them (Kim 2017, 65).

When the Tripartite Pact was signed between Germany, Italy, and Japan in September 1940, making war in Asia inevitable, the US Government instructed O. Gaylord Marsh (1879–1952), the US Consul General in Seoul, to evacuate missionaries and their families from Korea. Gerald H. Phipps, the British Consul General in Seoul, also was instructed to urge any British people residing in Japan, Korea, and Manchuria to evacuate. As a result, 219 people, including a few Britons, left Korea on the *Mariposa* in November 1940, 116 of whom were missionaries and 73 of whom were their children (Kim 2023, 639). In early 1941, the US Government and the Methodist board of foreign missions urged the remaining missionaries to return home, while Japan began to oppress the missionaries, arresting E. Otto Decamp (1911–2001) and DeWitt S. Lowe (1899–1981), who were NP missionaries in Cheongju, for blasphemy, and another 22 American, Canadian, and Australian missionaries for the content of a prayer meeting on the Women's World Day of Prayer. Decamp and Lowe were initially sentenced to 10 months in prison, and were eventually released on the condition of immediate return. They and their families left for the US in early August 1941 (Committee 2022, 133 and 225). The eleven missionaries arrested in connection with the prayer meeting left Korea from late August to September, along with ten missionaries who had applied for leave. The remaining 40 missionaries were detained as enemy nationals after the outbreak of the Pacific War on December 8th, 1941, and some, including Edwin W. Koons (1880–1947), were tortured on suspicion of being spies. They all left Busan on June 1st of the following year for exchange with

30 In 1938, NM and SM were united. The Methodist board of foreign missions ordered the immediate withdrawal of all missionaries on February 20th, 1941, while the NP board of foreign missions respected the wishes of those missionaries who wished to stay, but recommended the withdrawal of children, women, and the sick. Therefore, the last remaining missionaries were from the United Church of Canada, the Presbyterian Church in Australia, and the Northern and Southern Presbyterian Churches in the United States (Kim 2023, 641–49).

Japanese civilian detainees. They were transferred to Yokohama and then Maputo (then Lourenço Marques), the capital of Mozambique, and arrived at the port of New York on August 25 (Kim 2023, 636–50).

Missionaries and their children were the Americans who knew Korea best. Therefore, many of them returned to the US and participated in the war between the US and Japan as soldiers or civilians. Missionary children who had been living in America also worked as interpreters, analysts, and so on at the request of the US government.³¹ After the liberation on August 15, 1945, they returned to Korea, their home and workplace, although not all of them. Horace Underwood was the first of the missionaries to return to Korea in October 1945 as an advisor to John R. Hodge (1893–1963), the commanding general of US Army Forces in Korea, and a staff member for the Archibald V. Arnold (1889–1973), military governor of Korea (Kim 2017, 207). In early 1946, a dozen missionaries and missionary children arrived in Korea as employees of the US military government,³² and in July ten missionaries representing six denominations or organizations arrived in Korea.³³ Other missionaries later entered South Korea and reestablished several Korean missions in early 1948 (An 2009, 10–12). They had to leave Korea again when the Korean War broke out on June 25, 1950, but after the war some of them returned to the peninsula to continue their work. On the foundation of the missionary work they had established they lived in Korea for as long as possible, some families for generations. For example, three generations of the Underwood family lived in Korea, based mainly on the Underwood School founded by Horace G. Underwood in 1886.

31 Harold Noble, a professor at the University of Oregon, opened a Japanese language school for soldiers and later served as an interpreter officer, etc., and George McCune, a professor at Occidental College, worked as an analyst for the government (Lee 2022, 658). Clarence Weems, Jr., a personnel officer at a company, worked with the Korean Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea after joining the Office of the Strategic Services (Kim 2007a, 222–23).

32 According to An (2009) and Kim (2017), missionaries included John D. Bigger (1881–1959), Dexter N. Lutz (1890–1985), Robert A. Kinney (1911–1994), William C. Kerr (1883–1976) (NP), Robert M. Wilson (1880–1963) (SP), Frank E. C. Williams (1883–1962), Henry D. Appenzeller (1889–1953) (NM), J. Ernest Fisher (1886–1989) (SM), and Arthur C. Bunce (1901–1953) (YMCA), and missionary children included Harold Noble, Clarence Weems, Jr., Benjamin Weems, and George Z. Williams (1907–1994).

33 They were Roscoe C. Coen (1888–1986), Archibald G. Fletcher (1882–1970) (NP), Daniel J. Cumming (1892–1971), William A. Linton (1891–1960) (SP), Arthur Becker, Bliss W. Billings (1881–1969), Anders K. Jensen (1897–1956) (Methodist), Edward J. O. Fraser (1887–1977) (United Church of Canada), Ralph S. Watts (1905–1994) (Seventh-day Adventist Church), and Paul E. Haines (1923–2013) (Oriental Missionary Society).

Table 1: Members of Underwood Family in Korea

Generation	Name	Work
1	Horace G. Underwood (1859–1916)	Arrived in Korea as the second NP missionary, 1885; established Underwood School, 1886; founded Saemoonan Church, 1887.
	Lillias S. Underwood (1851–1921)	Wife of Horace G. Underwood; arrived in Korea as an NP medical missionary, 1888.
2	Horace H. Underwood (1890–1951)	Only son of the Underwoods; appointed as a missionary to Korea, 1912; Principal of Yonhee College, 1934–1941; died in Korea.
	Ethel W. Underwood (1888–1949)	Wife of Horace H. Underwood; arrived in Korea as a teacher at Seoul Foreign School, 1912; died in Korea.
3	Horace G. Underwood, Jr. (1917–2004)	First son of Horace H. Underwood; Merged Yonhee College and Severance Medical School into Yonsei University; died in Korea.
	John T. Underwood (1919–1994)	Second son of Horace H. Underwood; served in Cheongju, 1946–1966; professor at Honam Seminary, 1966–1993.
	Richard F. Underwood (1927–2023)	Fourth son of Horace H. Underwood; director of the Korean-American Foundation in Korea, 1957–1961.
4	Horace H. Underwood, Jr. (born 1943)	First son of Horace G. Underwood, Jr.; left Korea in 2004 after about 30 years as a professor at Yonsei University.
	Peter A. Underwood (born 1955)	Third son of Horace G. Underwood, Jr.; currently living in Korea as a trustee at Yonsei University.

Another example is the Linton family. William A. Linton (1891–1960), an SP missionary who came to Korea in 1912, married Charlotte W. Bell (1899–1974), the daughter of SP missionaries, and they served in Korea until 1940. They returned to Korea in July 1946, and founded today's Hannam University in 1956. Two of their four sons became missionaries: their third, Hugh M. Linton (1926–1984), lived in Korea for 30 years until his death in 1984, and their youngest, T. Dwight Linton (1927–2010), served for 25 years from 1953 and then spent the rest of his life in America. Hugh Linton's third child, Stephen W. Linton (born 1950), graduated from Yonsei University and earned his PhD from Columbia University. In 1995, he founded the Eugene Bell Foundation, a non-governmental organization in Washington, D.C. that provides medical humanitarian assistance to rural North Korea, named after his grandmother's father, Eugene Bell, who worked in

Korea from 1895 to 1925. Finally, Hugh Linton's youngest son, John A. Linton (born 1959), graduated from Yonsei University and Korea University Medical School, and has been the director of the International Health Care Center at Yonsei University's Severance Hospital since 1992. He was the chairman of the Innovation Committee for the People Power Party, the ruling party of South Korea, from October to December 2023, and is currently its proportional representative in the National Assembly.

The missionaries' lives became harder when Japanese rule over Korea began. They witnessed Japan's violence, especially through the March 1st Movement, and realized that they were—along with Koreans—were in danger. Nevertheless, because Korea was their home and workplace, they tended to stay there for as long as possible. They returned to the US in the early 1940s due to threats from Japan and instructions from the US government, but many of them returned to Korea and continued their lives there after the war.

Conclusion

The lives and work of American Protestant missionaries in Korea have mainly been examined by seminary-trained scholars, and the resulting works have generally not gone far beyond investigating the missionaries' achievements and praising them, and have even served to commemorate some of them as saints. As a historian, the author wanted to view missionaries as people living on Earth, not in Heaven, that is, as ordinary members of human history, and she believed that it was most appropriate to analyse them as immigrants, since they, above all else, moved to a distant country to live and work.

Most of the American Protestant missionaries were young, religious, and educated people from a wide range of socioeconomic classes. They decided to live as missionaries in a foreign country instead of living as pastors, doctors, and teachers in the US. Being a missionary was not easy, and it was always accompanied by overwork and an element of danger. Nevertheless, these individuals became missionaries because they knew that it was a well-paid job, offering enough to support their families, and that the work would give them a sense of heavenly joy and fulfilment. In other words, they came to Korea for a better life, both religiously and socioeconomically.

Missionaries lived in their own societies based around mission compounds, separated from Koreans and non-missionary Westerners. They celebrated American holidays, enjoyed sports like tennis, and with the financial support of the boards

of foreign missions lived a middle-class American lifestyle in Korea, enjoying Western clothes and food, and living in comfortable houses with servants. They also created model American families, which were difficult for ordinary overseas Westerners to have, and made efforts to educate their children. Their luxurious lives were criticized by some non-missionary Westerners, and sometimes by themselves, but this comfort made it possible them to engage in missionary work for a long time.

That said, missionaries did not always live comfortably and freely throughout their time in Korea. When Japanese rule of Korea began, they also came under Japanese control and interference. Some were arrested, imprisoned, and even tortured. However, instead of returning to the US, they lived in Korea for as long as possible, sometimes for generations, enjoying the fruits of their missionary work. In short, from the perspective of immigration, American Protestant missionaries were immigrants who came to Korea in search of a better life, who developed their own community and lifestyle in Korea, and who were in a superior position than most Koreans.

The author proposed adopting the perspective of immigration to obtain a historical understanding of the American Protestant missionaries who came to Korea. Although their immigrant characteristics have been presented in this paper, in order to strengthen the argument, it is still necessary to investigate more missionaries who were dispatched to other countries. Accordingly, the author's next task will be to examine the lives of various missionaries who worked in other countries, and thus to review another side of American overseas missions in the imperial era.

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ASIAN STUDIES IN SLOVENIA

Sublacija literature in filozofije v *Zhuangziju*: novi modus transkulturne hermenevtike

Jana S. ROŠKER*

Izvleček

V literaturi se pogosto raziskujejo filozofske teme, ki uvajajo nove metode poglobljenega prikaza problemov obstoja, moralnih dilem in kompleksnosti človeške narave. Avtorji in avtorice uporabljajo strukture, like in simboliko, s katerimi posredujejo ter raziskujejo filozofske ideje, pri čemer neredko ustvarijo bogato interakcijo med obema vedama. Sama filozofija se lahko v literarni obliki izrazi v dialogih, esejih in filozofski fikciji. Takšna literarna izrazna oblika filozofije lahko izboljša razumevanje, s čimer lahko postanejo abstraktni koncepti bolj razumljivi.

Prepletanje filozofije ter književnosti, poetike in analize je dobro opazno pri starokitajskem mislecu Zhuangziju. Ta članek poskuša z dialektično interakcijo in konstruktivno medsebojno sublacijo literarno-filozofskih elementov v njegovem istoimenskem delu predstaviti novo obliko transkulturne hermenevtike, ki izhaja iz Gadamerjeve ideje zlitja horizontov, ki jo avtorica nadgradi oziroma transformira v nekonceptualno metodo razumevanja in interpretacije, kakršna se izraža v procesu združevanja estetskih sfer (ali *jingjie ronghe* 境界融合).

Ključne besede: sublacija, književnost, filozofija, Zhuangzi, *jingjie* 境界, transkulturna hermenevtika

The Sublation of Literature and Philosophy in the *Zhuangzi*: A New Mode of Transcultural Hermeneutics

Abstract

In literature, philosophical themes are often explored, introducing new methods for an in-depth representation of problems related to existence, moral dilemmas, and the complexity of human nature. Authors use structures, characters, and symbolism to convey and explore philosophical ideas, often creating a rich interaction between the two fields. Philosophy itself can be expressed in literary forms through dialogues, essays, and philosophical fiction. Such literary expression of philosophy can enhance understanding, making abstract concepts more comprehensible.

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The intertwining of philosophy and literature, poetics, and analysis is notably evident in the works of the ancient Chinese thinker Zhuangzi. This article attempts to present a new form of transcultural hermeneutics through dialectical interaction and constructive mutual sublation of literary-philosophical elements in his eponymous work, drawing from Gadamer's idea of the fusion of horizons, which the author further develops or transforms into a non-conceptual method of understanding and interpretation, as expressed in the process of merging aesthetic spheres (or *jingjie ronghe* 境界融合).

Keywords: sublation, literature, philosophy, Zhuangzi, *jingjie* 境界, transcultural hermeneutics

Uvod: kitajska hermenevtika in neproduktivno navduševanje nad Gadamerjem

Pričujoča študija, ki se ukvarja z združevanjem literarnih in filozofskih vidikov v Zhuangzijevem istoimenskem delu, temelji na uporabi hermenevtičnih metod. Po mojem mnenju je poseben izziv pri interpretaciji besedil, ki pripadajo obema žanroma, prav tvorjenje mostu, ki ju povezuje. Namen tega prispevka je razviti inovativni hermenevtični postopek, ki je osnovan na modifikaciji koncepta, vzete ga iz tradicionalne kitajske estetike. Uporabiti ga je mogoče tako v literarni vedi kot tudi v filozofiji, specifičen pa je zlasti po tem, da spodbuja in pogloblja intersubjektivne ter medkulturne povezave.

Za dosego takih ciljev se zdi na prvi pogled še posebej primeren Gadamerjev koncept zlitja horizontov; zato morda ni naključje, da postaja v zadnjih letih ta teoretik vse bolj popularen med proučevalci hermenevtike v Ljudski republiki Kitajski (Sernelj 2017, 271; Pfister 2006, 4).

Kot je znano, Gadamerjev koncept zlitja horizontov temelji na elaborirani različici Schleiermacherjevega koncepta hermenevtičnega kroga, to je na ideji, da se razumevanje teksta kot celote vzpostavlja s sklicevanjem na posamezne dele in obratno: razumevanje vsakega posameznega dela se vzpostavi s sklicevanjem na celoto. Tako celotnega besedila kakor tudi katerega koli posameznega dela ni mogoče razumeti brez medsebojnega sklicevanja, kar je mogoče ponazoriti s krožnim modelom razumevanja. Potemtakem pride do »zlitja horizontov« v dialektičnem procesu prenosa pomenov med pisateljico in bralkami, govorko in poslušalkami, slikarko in ogledovalkami. V tem smislu pojem horizont označuje posebno situacijo, v katero je vpeta vsaka posameznica, pri čemer situacija ni omejena na vizijo ali dožemanje tistega, kar je v bližini (Sigurðsson 2023, 321). Kot takšen horizont implicira odprtost eksistence in možnost preseganja lastnih predsodkov. Zlitje horizontov vedno znova ustvarja nove pomene, saj v tem dialektičnem

procesu posredovanja in dojemanja integrira oba horizonta ter obenem presega njune omejitve.

Značilnost krožnega razumevanja je, da je treba pomen besedila najti znotraj njegovega konteksta; vendar je problem ravno v tem, da koncept konteksta ni bil nikoli dovolj pojasnjen in definiran, še zlasti glede na različne plasti realnosti ter različne načine njenega dojemanja in kategoriziranja. Po mojem mnenju lahko pojem kontekstualizacije in njene vsakokratne vsebine razdelimo, na primer, vsaj na zunanjo in notranjo kontekstualizacijo. Prva se nanaša na kulturni, zgodovinski in literarni kontekst besedila, druga pa na inherentne konceptualne razsežnosti in njene semantične ter filozofske implikacije in tendence. Tako Gadamerjeva metoda še vedno nima neke povezujoče, inherentne konsistence.

Vendar to še zdaleč ni edini problem, povezan s to metodo. Po mojem mnenju je celo še bolj vprašljiva njena premisa, ki predpostavlja normativno razumljiv pomen. Gadamer izhaja iz pozitivne ponovne ocene funkcije predsodka v smislu heideggerjanske predstrukture razumevanja in poudarja, da razumevanje zmeraj vključuje to, kar imenuje »slutnja popolnosti«. Z drugimi besedami, ta metoda vsebuje zmeraj preverljivo predpostavko, po kateri »je tisto, kar je treba razumeti, nekaj razumljivega, to pomeni nekaj, kar je konstruirano kot koherentna in zato smiselna celota« (Malpas 2018, 3). Povedano z Gadamerjevimi besedami, koncept horizonta in zlitje horizontov lahko pomenita sredstvo za dojemanje »lastnega pomena« nekega besedila:

Tisto, kar nam je najbližje, nas vedno navdaja z upanjem in strahom, tako da k pričevanju preteklosti pristopamo pod tem vplivom. Zato je zmeraj potrebna previdnost, da prehitro ne prilagajamo preteklosti lastnim pričakovanjem glede smisla. Šele tako lahko prisluhnemo tradiciji na način, ki ji omogoča posredovanje svojega pomena. (Gadamer 1989, 305)

Očitno je to še zmeraj konceptualni pogled na hermenevitično razumevanje. Kot smo videli, še vedno predpostavlja »lastni pomen« določene tradicije (ali diskurza).

Na tej ravni postane prav tako problematična ideja hermenevitičnega kroga, zato ne preseneča, da je tudi Lacan poudaril, da je takšen krog brez semantične podpore, saj je pomen rezultat neskončnega drsenja referenčne površine. Na tej podlagi Žižek (1976, 75) zavrača hermenevitični krog, ki v specifičnih izjavah implicira prednost celotnega semantičnega horizonta. Po njegovem mnenju »gre hermenevitična do roba interpretacije, a tik preden ga doseže, zapre oči pred spoznanjem dejstva, da ni prvotnega pomena, ki bi lahko bil podlaga za drugo referenčno mrežo za prenos referenc, ker je pomen vedno relacijski« (ibid.).

Tudi sama menim, da je pomen temeljno določen relacijsko, zato je Gadamerjev model hermenevtičnega kroga, ki temelji na konceptualnem pogledu na horizonte, dejansko problematičen. Toda namesto da se večno pritožujemo nad tem modelom, se lahko podamo v iskanje nekonceptualnega temelja, ki bi lahko v procesu interpretacije ustvaril semantično enotnost.

Gadamerjevo paradigmo zlitja horizontov bi lahko zamenjali z nekonceptualnim pristopom, ki je posebej pomemben v transkulturnih študijah, saj so koncepti kulturno globoko ukoreninjeni (Jin 2023, 354). V nadaljevanju bom prikazala tak pristop v klasičnih kitajskih besedilih, pri čemer bom z uporabo metode sublacije proučila dve znani besedili iz knjige *Zhuangzi*.

Pri metodi sublacije,¹ ki jo uporabljam pri Zhuangzijevem delu, gre za dialektično primerjano analizo, ki ne išče ene same »prave« interpretacije, temveč aktualno relevantno obravnavanih tekstov. Čeprav poimenovanje metode spominja na Heglove dialektične modele,² ne temelji na identitetni logiki ali na formalnologično utemeljeni sintezi protislovij. Namesto tega temelji na tradicionalnih kitajskih načelih korelativne komplementarnosti.

Metoda poteka v osmih fazah: od razvijanja relacijskega raziskovalnega vprašanja prek proučitve podobnosti in razlik,³ povezovanja teh ugotovitev z referenčnim okvirom proučevanih *comparat*⁴ do izločitev pomanjkljivosti in medsebojnega dopolnjevanja konstruktivnih elementov, ki odpirajo nove perspektive. Ta pristop presega evrocentrične omejitve konvencionalnih primerjalnih metod z uporabo transkulturne perspektive, katere cilj je vzpostavitev dialoga med *comparatama*, kar prinaša inovativna spoznanja. Uporaba te metode v analizi Zhuangzijevih besedil odpira večplastno raziskovano pot, ki združuje literarne in filozofske dimenzije ter ustvarja nov hermenevtični postopek.

1 Za podrobno razlago in opis sublacijske metode glej Rošker (2022) in Rošker (2025), *Chinese Philosophy in Transcultural Contexts: Comparative Approaches and the Method of Sublation* (London, New York: Bloomsbury Academic).

2 Sublacija temelji na hegeljanskem terminu *Aufhebung*, ki se opira na tri etimološke pomenske ravni te besede: izločitev, ohranitev in dvig na višjo raven. Ta izraz, ki je del hegeljanske dialektike, se v angleščino prevaja z neologizmom *sublation*, katerega etimološki izvor vsebuje vse tri prej omenjene konotacije. Zato ta neologizem tudi sama slovenim, saj so za izvedbo omenjene metode pomembne vse tri pomenske ravni.

3 Pri tem ne gre za razlike med obema *comparatama*, temveč za razlike, ki jih lahko najdemo znotraj predhodno ugotovljenih podobnosti.

4 Beseda »comparata« je množinska oblika od »comparatum«. Gre za pojem, ki ga uporabljamo v primerjalnem raziskovanju in označuje predmete, koncepte, dela ali fenomene, ki jih medsebojno primerjamo. V našem primeru pojem obsega filozofske in literarnoteoretske interpretacije besedil iz *Zhuangzija*, ki ga uporabljamo za primerjalno raziskavo.

Dva eseja iz *Zhuangzija*: ptič, riba in krožna narava intersubjektivnosti

Takšno celostno kontekstualno interpretacijo bom poskušala ponazoriti na primeru dveh Zhuangzijevih esejev. Najprej si podrobneje ogledjmo Zhuangzijevo znameniti esej o »Rajski ptici«:

Še niste slišali za to? Nekoč se je na robu dežele Lu pojavila rajska ptica. Kralj dežele Lu jo je sprejel z najvišjimi častmi in ji izrekel prisrčno dobrodošlico. Da bi jo razveselil, jo je dal odpeljati v najpomembnejši tempelj, jo pogostil z najboljšimi vini in ji ponudil najčarobnejšo glasbo. Zaklati je dal veliko govedi in ovc ter priredil veličastno gostijo. Toda ptica je ostala žalostna in potrta, pojedla ni niti grižljaja in spila niti enega požirka. Po treh dneh je preprosto umrla. To se zgodi, ko hranimo ptice s hrano za ljudi namesto s hrano za ptice. Tisti, ki vedo, kako je treba hraniti ptice, bi ptico pustili odleteti globoko v gozdove, kjer bi lahko počivala na drevesih. Pustili bi jo, da veselo leta nad peščenimi tlemi ter nad rekami in jezeri. Pustili bi jo loviti, da bi jedla svoje najljubše majhne ribe. Sledila bi lahko svoji jati in počivala, kjer koli bi želela. Popolnoma svobodno bi se lahko gibala. Ptice najbolj motijo človeški glasovi. Če bi v divjini igrali simfonije največjih človeških glasbenikov, bi ptice takoj odletele, vse divje živali bi zbežale in ribe bi se umaknile v najgloblje vode. Toda ko ljudje slišijo takšno glasbo, se zberejo ob njej in uživajo. Ribe lahko živijo samo v vodi, ljudje pa v njej umrejo. Ker imata človek in riba različne lastnosti, se razlikujeta tudi po tem, kaj sovražita in kaj ljubita. Stari modreci niso presojali posameznih sposobnosti in vedenja po enakih merilih. Ime je ustvarjeno pred realnostjo. Pomen nastane z ustreznostjo. Upoštevanje teh načel prinese srečo in zadovoljstvo. (*Zhuangzi* n.d., Zhi le, 5)

Torej to, kar ni ptica, preprosto ne more soditi in sklepati, da je tisto, kar je najboljše zanj, najboljše tudi za ptice. To je daoistična kritika zlatega pravila, ki so ga zagovarjali konfucijanci, in je izražena v najbolj znanem priporočilu: »Drugemu ne vsiljuj tistega, česar si sam ne želiš« (Luny n.d., Yan Yuan, 2). Zavedati se moramo, da smo deli različnih svetov, ki živijo v različnih realnostih.

Toda vrnimo se k osnovnemu sporočilu zgodbe. Ker nisem ptica, po naravi ne morem vedeti, kaj imajo ptice rade ali česa ne. To je seveda samo predpostavka Zhuangzijeve metode dojemanja in komunikacije. Nikakor ne gre za sistem logične sistematizacije. V Zhuangzijevem temeljnem delu njegov prijatelj Huizi vedno predstavlja osnovni tip argumentacije, ki poskuša iz predpostavk izpeljati logične,

splošno veljavne zaključke. In seveda se pogostokrat naredi neumnega. Če ljudje ne morejo poznati ptic, ker niso ptice, ali ne bi moralo potem veljati tudi, da ne moremo poznati rib, ker nismo ribe? Ali prevedeno v formalnologične sklepe:

P1: Ljudje ne morejo poznati ptic.

P2: Zhuangzi je človek.

C: Zhuangzi ne more poznati ptic.

P1: Ljudje ne morejo poznati rib.

P2: Zhuangzi je človek.

C: Zhuangzi ne more poznati rib.

Vendar je Zhuangzi skeptičen do te poenostavitve. Razmislimo zdaj o drugi anekdoti, poznani kot »Ribje veselje«, ki jo najdemo v razdelku *Jesenske vode* v Zunanjih poglavjih knjige *Zhuangzi*.

Zhuangzi in Huizi se sprehajata po mostu čez reko Hao. Zhuangzi reče: 'Kako lahkotno plavajo bele ribe sem in tja – to je veselje rib!'

Huizi reče: 'Ampak ti nisi riba, kako lahko veš, kaj je ribam v veselje?'

Zhuangzi odgovori: 'Toda ti nisi jaz, torej kako lahko veš, da ne vem, kaj je ribam v veselje?'

Huizi reče: 'Jaz nisem ti, zato te ne morem razumeti; ampak tudi ti nisi riba in zato ne moreš razumeti rib. To je vse.'

Zhuangzi reče: 'Dobro, potem se vrniva na začetek. Vprašal si me: Kako lahko veš, kaj je ribam v veselje? Torej, ko si me to vprašal, si moral vedeti, da vem, kaj je ribam v veselje. No, to sem vedel na tistem mostu čez reko Hao.' (*Zhuangzi* s. d., Qiu shui, 13)

Ali se je Zhuangzi tukaj poigral s sofizmi? Nedvomno se je igral z besedami: izkoristil je večplastnost jezika, saj lahko s kitajsko vprašalnico *an* 安 v različnih kontekstih sprašujemo po različnih vsebinah: sprašujemo lahko »kaj«, »kako«, »kdaj« ali »kje«. Če jo razumemo v zadnjem pomenu, je Zhuangzi podal povsem primeren odgovor. Če pa upoštevamo družbeno-kulturni kontekst tradicionalne Kitajske v času nastanka tega dela, hitro spoznamo, da je hotel Zhuangzi s to zgodbo posredovati globlja spoznanja. Da bi to razumeli ter prišli do sveže

interpretacije obeh esejev in njunega medsebojnega prepleta, je pomembno, da se najprej ozremo na literarnoteoretske in filozofske elemente obeh.

Literarna in filozofska elementa ter njuna sublacija

Obe zgodbi vsebujeta tako literarne kot tudi filozofske vidike, ki posredujejo globok vpogled v naravo človeškega obstoja, medčloveških odnosov, relativnosti znanja in človekovega odnosa z naravnim svetom. Literarno navdušujeta s svojo pripovedno umetnostjo in simboliko, filozofsko pa odpirata globoka vprašanja o znanju, izkušnjah ter odnosu med človekom in naravo.

Literarni vidiki obeh esejev se kažejo v pripovedni strukturi in slogu zgodb. Z uporabo anekdot posredujeja kompleksne ideje na dostopen način. Pripovedni slog je bogat s prisposodobami in simboliko, kar je značilno za klasično kitajsko literaturo. Z uporabo parabol in metafor postanejo abstraktni koncepti oprijemljivi. Literarnoteoretsko je bogata tudi karakterizacija glavnih likov: tako rajska ptica in kralj države Lu kakor tudi razpravljavca Zhuangzi in Huizi predstavljajo domiselna sredstva za proučevanje filozofskih idej. Njihova interakcija in usoda ptice ponazarjata globlje nauke ter se dotikata elementarnih moralnih vprašanj. Literarno zanimivo je tudi razvijanje tem: obe zgodbi se ukvarjata z intersubjektivnostjo, človekovo svobodo, omejitvami človekovega dojemanja, sposobnostjo vživljanja, pa tudi z neprimernostjo človekovih konvencij pri ravnanju z naravo. Literarna upodobitev teh tem spodbuja bralce in bralke k razmisleku, ki presega meje njihovih lastnih čutnih vtisov.

S filozofskega vidika oba esej obravnavata več ključnih daoističnih načel, kot so *wuwei* 无为 (»nedelovanje« ali odsotnost delovanja, ki bi bilo usmerjeno proti naravnemu ravnovesju), relativnost konceptov in iskanje preprostosti v kompleksnosti. Oba esej postavljata vprašanja, povezana z dobrim življenjem, in temeljita na predpostavki, da je mogoče srečo in zadovoljstvo doseči z življenjem v harmoniji z naravnim potekom stvari. Oba obravnavata problem relativnosti znanja in perspektive. Prva zgodba ponuja ostro daoistično kritiko konfucijanskega zlatega pravila, ki pravi, ne stori drugim tistega, česar si ne želiš, da bi ti storili drugi. Ta kritika vsebuje še dodatno razsežnost, ki je tesno povezana z daoističnim pogledom na odnos med naravo in človekom ter relativnostjo znanja in perspektive. V tem kontekstu je pomemben pogovor med Zhuangzijem in Huizijem, saj osvetljuje meje človekovega razumevanja ter subjektivnost izkušnje in znanja. Zhuangzijevo odgovor na Huizijevo skepsa pojasnjuje daoistično razumevanje, po katerem pravo razumevanje seže onkraj objektivnih dokazov in ga je pogostokrat mogoče najti v intuitivni harmoniji z *Daotom*. Z etičnega vidika bi lahko opozorili tudi na osrednji

pomen perspektive in konteksta: obe zgodbi poudarjata pomembnost razumevanja in spoštovanja edinstvene narave ter potreb vsakega bitja. V nasprotju s konfucijansko etiko, ki podarja univerzalna moralna načela in medčloveško vedenje, je glavni poudarek daoizma na prilagajanju specifičnim okoliščinam in posebnostim vsakega posameznika ali vsake vrste. To je implicitna kritika predpostavke o univerzalni uporabnosti moralnih pravil, kot jih predlaga zlato pravilo.

Ta kritika konfucianizma v *Zhuangziju* skozi daoistična načela razkriva kompleksne literarno-filozofske diskurze v klasičnih kitajskih delih o etiki, naravi razumevanja ter odnosu med človekom in naravo. Poziva k preseganju mej rigidnih moralnih dogem in prepoznavanju raznolikosti bivanja, pomena kontekstualnosti ter potrebe po globoki povezanosti in harmoniji z naravnim svetom.

Literarna in filozofska perspektiva, ki tvorita jedro obeh raziskovanj, sta *comparati*. Na tej osnovi bomo uporabili našo primerjalno, dialektično metodo sublacije, s pomočjo katere bomo raziskali doslej nepoznane vidike kitajske hermenevtike, ki nedvomno lahko veliko prispevajo tudi v transkulturnih primerjavah. Naša raziskava se bo zato osredotočila na osrednje vprašanje, ki lahko osvetli interakcijo med obema *comparatama* glede na njune literarnoteoretske in filozofske vidike.

Naše izhodišče se manifestira v relacijsko strukturiranem raziskovalnem vprašanju,⁵ ki raziskuje možnosti konstruktivnega povezovanja literarnih in filozofskih elementov pri interpretaciji besedila.

S to metodo najprej proučujemo podobnosti v obeh zgodbah, in sicer uporabo pripovednih tehnik, kot so anekdote, parabole in metafore, s čimer postanejo kompleksne ideje dostopnejše. V obeh besedilnih odlomkih se z uporabo teh tehnik osvetljujejo določena vprašanja, ki so povezana z dožemanjem in etiko medčloveških odnosov. Obe zgodbi prinašata domišljijско polno karakteriziranje in simboliko ter obravnavata teme, kot sta svoboda in kritika konvencij.

Kljub na prvi pogled opaznim podobnostim uporabe pripovednih sredstev pa podrobnejša analiza obeh *comparat* – literarnih in filozofskih vidikov obeh odlomkov – razkriva pomembne razlike glede intence in reševanja večpomenskosti med umetniško zasnovo ter filozofsko vsebino.

V naslednjem koraku metoda postavi te razlike nazaj v referenčni okvir obeh *comparat*, pri čemer je literarni diskurz usmerjen na estetsko in emocionalno

5 Metoda sublacije temelji na relacijsko zastavljenih raziskovalnih vprašanjih, saj se ne opira na primerjavo izoliranih konceptov. Ker so močno odvisni od konteksta, so pogostokrat neprimerni za celovito razumevanje njihovih pomenskih plasti. Namesto tega metoda uporablja konceptualne primerjave, ki se osredotočajo na odnose med koncepti. V tem pristopu je relacija temeljna kategorija, ker zagotavlja trdnejšo osnovo za analizo.

resonanco, medtem ko filozofski okvir razjasnjuje teoretske koncepte. Kontrastivna analiza zatem ugotavlja pomanjkljivosti obeh pristopov: pokaže se, da literarni diskurz zanemarljivo splošno veljavna spoznanja, medtem ko filozofski pristop pogostokrat spregleda čustveno razsežnost človeške izkušnje.

Metoda sublacije kompenzira te omejitve z medsebojnim dopolnjevanjem obeh *comparat*, pri čemer literarne interpretacije poudarjajo čustvene in estetske izkušnje, filozofske pa poglobljajo konceptualna spoznanja. Ta holistični pristop omogoča, da v celoti zajamemo večplastnost in kompleksnost tematik v *Zhuangziju*.

V fazi sublacije se napetosti med ohranjenimi in izločenimi elementi uporabijo za razmislek na višji ravni ter razvijanje novih spoznanj. V naslednji, zadnji fazi tega procesa postane jasno, da bi z vrnitvijo k tradicionalnim kitajskim holističnim metodam lažje integrirali literarne in filozofske dimenzije – v primerjavi s tradicionalnimi zahodnimi interpretacijskimi pristopi, ki temeljijo na strogem ločevanju med različnimi vedami in diskurzi. Dodatna ovira klasične evropske hermenevtike, zaradi katere se zdijo njene metode neustrezne pri proučevanju takšne integracije, je že omenjena konceptualna narava njenih interpretativnih mehanizmov. V povezavi s tem se znova razkrije, da se zdi prej omenjena Gadamerjeva metoda zlitja horizontov kljub na prvi pogled integrativnemu pristopu neprimerna za naše cilje, ker temelji na ideji o konceptualno zamejenem in statičnem pomenu.

Na tem mestu velja opozoriti na tradicionalni estetski koncept *jingjie* (境界) (sfera, atmosfera, estetsko področje). V nadaljevanju bom na kratko raziskala, ali ga lahko in kako ga lahko uporabimo za dosego združitve literarnih in filozofskih aspektov. *Jingjie* je hermenevtično sredstvo, ki izhaja iz budizma; osvetlila ga bom z vidika njegovega razvoja in funkcij. Razpravljala bom o tem, v kolikšni meri lahko to orodje omogoči koherentno razumevanje literarnih in filozofskih elementov v njihovi živi raznolikosti, ter tako ponudila alternativno paradigmo zlitju horizontov.

Onkraj hermenevtičnega kroga: zlitje estetskih sfer?

Toda kaj pravzaprav je *jingjie*? Sprva so ta pojem uporabljali v geopolitičnih razpravah. Kot izraz za neko območje, določeno mejami, se je uporabljal za kartiranje geopolitičnega sveta stare Kitajske. Razvil se je v filozofsko-religiozni diskurz mentalne ali psihološke »teritorialnosti«, potem ko se je začel uporabljati za posredovanje budističnih idej duhovne realnosti in razsvetljenja v smislu transcendentnega »prehoda na drugo obalo« (Han 2014, 86). Povedano drugače, koncepcija estetskih sfer je prvotno zajemala »objektivne« lastnosti zunanje resničnosti. Ponotranjenje psihološko preoblikovanih formacij te osnovne ravni *jingjie* je torej

povezano z njeno budistično razlago. Zaradi tega se je omejeno področje zunanje resničnosti integriralo v človekovo notranjost, kar je povzročilo združitev zunanjih in notranjih elementov zaznavanja s transformacijo zunanjih oblik ter podob v specifično obliko zavesti. V tem kontekstu je ključnega pomena spoznanje, da so meje med notranjim in zunanjim področjem fluidne in se spreminjajo, saj se oblikujejo kot del kontinuiranega in dinamičnega izmenjavanja med človekovo zavestjo in zunanjo resničnostjo. Kot pravi Christina Han, je dobil pojem v neokonfucijanskih diskurzih iz časa dinastij Song in Ming številne nove pomene ter razvil kompleksnejše semantične dimenzije. V predmoderni kitajski filozofiji je bila predstava o *jingjie* osrednji pojem Wang Guoweijeve (1877–1927) estetike. Sam Wang je koncept definiral takole:

'Sfera' (*jingjie*) se ne nanaša samo na krajino ali prizor. Čustva veselja ali žalosti, jeze ali radosti tvorijo v človekovem srcu tudi neke vrste estetsko sfero. (Wang 2013, 18)

V tem citatu Wang obravnava objektivacijo psihološkega stanja, v katerem subjektivna čutnost popolnoma poveže zunanji svet z notranjim svetom. Tako lahko *jingjie* razumemo kot paradigmo znotraj estetskega *noumenona*, s pomočjo katere se razkriva raznoliki pomen človeškega obstoja in posredujejo specifična spoznanja (Li 2010, 210). To razkritje pomenov izhaja iz izkušnje *noumenalnega* ter poteka v združevanju imanentnih in transcendentnih vidikov človeške zaznave.

Čeprav Wangov teoretski pristop kaže jasne vplive zahodne filozofije, zlasti Schopenhauerja in Nietzscheja, lahko *jingjie* še vedno razumemo kot »razkritje življenja v medsebojni igri čustev in zunanje resničnosti, pa tudi kot objektivacijo umetniškega subjekta« (Li Zehou v Samei 2010, xvi). Vendar te estetske razsežnosti ni mogoče zreducirati na preprosto združitev čustev in podob zunanjega sveta, kajti prav tako vsebuje odpravo meja med jazom in drugim ter presega vsako utilitarno funkcionalnost, ne da bi bilo treba pri tem zanikati voljo, željo in življenje samo. *Jingjie* bi torej lahko razumeli tudi kot sredstvo, ki omogoča subtilne povezave med tradicionalnimi kitajskimi hermenevtičnimi koncepti, tehnikami in metodami na eni strani ter zahodnimi hermenevtičnimi teorijami na drugi.

Estetska sfera posreduje pomene, ki imajo difuzne, stalno razpršene okvire in jih ni mogoče primerjati s tistimi, ki so zamejeni na ozke semantične prostore s trdno postavljenimi mejami konceptualnih definicij.

Wang nadaljuje:

Posledično lahko rečemo, da besedilo, ki nadene besede resnični sceni ali avtentičnim čustvom, posreduje estetsko sfero (*jingjie*). (Wang 2013, 18)

Posebna sporočilna moč, ki nastane iz zlitja estetskih sfer in področij, presega meje literarnih zvrsti, kot so poezija, novela in roman. Prav tako je ni mogoče omejiti izključno na druge umetnostne forme, kot sta slikarstvo ali glasba. Ob upoštevanju *noumenalne* razsežnosti *jingjie* jo je mogoče najti tudi v številnih, čeprav ne vseh, filozofskih besedilih. *Jingjie*, ki jo razumemo kot estetsko razsežnost, zajema filozofske ideje, ki niso posredovane zgolj s pojmovnimi strukturami. Bolj se kaže predvsem v tistem, kar je zasidrano med vrsticami in ustvarja specifično vzdušje, ki posreduje določene vpoglede in spoznanja. To vzdušje sestavljajo podobe, asociacije, občutenja in čustva, ki jih doživlja in izraža avtor, bralec pa jih intuitivno dojame ter podoživlja čustveno in kognitivno.

Tako ni presenetljivo, da je filozofija zlasti na Kitajskem, in še posebej v daoizmu, zaradi značilne miselne ter jezikovno posredovane integracije notranjega in zunanjega izkustva pogostokrat tesno povezana z literaturo. Na primer, ugledni sodobni kitajski filozof Li Zehou je definiral filozofijo kot »znanost, prežeto s poezijo« (Li 2016, 4):

Kot znanost nam ponuja sistematično pot raziskovanja in razumevanja resničnosti; kot poezija nas spremlja skozi nepregledno džunglo naših življenj na dolgem in intimnem potovanju, ki nam ne ponuja le lepote in užitka, temveč nas tudi sili v soočenje s strahom in melanholijo. Filozofija lahko postane način življenja, ki je hkrati racionalen in umetniški; ne spodbuja nas le k iskanju odgovorov na večna vprašanja bivanja, temveč tudi k nenehnemu postavljanju novih vprašanj. Ne omejuje se samo na odkrivanje sveta, ampak omogoča tudi njegovo neprestano ustvarjalno spreminjanje. (Ibid.)

Jingjie ali estetska sfera bi lahko veljala za eno najbolj prepoznavnih hermenevtičnih orodij v filozofiji, ki so ga v tradicionalni Kitajski razvili krogi tako imenovanih literatov. V tem specifičnem kulturnem kontekstu sta se pojavili izjemna afiniteta in tankočutna povezava med racionalnostjo in senzibilnostjo, ki ustvarjata avtentični referenčni prostor – in to celo pri soočenju z najglobljimi eksistencialnimi vprašanji:

Jingjie, ki se razkrije pri literarnem priznavanju, pomeni neposredni vpogled v ultimativno resničnost, ki združuje načela resnice, dobrote in lepote, ter njeno razumevanje. Izkušnja, ki jo prinaša *jingjie*, ni samo estetske, temveč tudi eksistencialne in religiozne narave. Poglobljeno ukvarjanje z Wang Guoweijevimi študijami *jingjie* lahko razkrije globok duhovni pomen tega pojma. (Wu 2002, 450)

V določenih pogledih lahko *jingjie* primerjamo s Heideggerjevim konceptom razpoloženj (*Befindlichkeiten*) ali vzdušja, ki po njegovem razkrije bitnost tubiti (*das Sein des Daseins*). Heideggerjevo stališče je, da je tubit zmeraj ujeta v razpoloženje in skozi to razpoloženje se odpira svet (Heidegger 1967, 134ff). Ta razpoloženja tvorijo temelj, na katerem je osnovan naš biti-v-svetu. Povedano drugače, naša razpoloženja oblikujejo naše dojemanje in pozicioniranje v svetu. Na podoben način tudi estetske sfere ali *jingjie* ponujajo predsubjektivno in predobjektivno perspektivo biti-v-svetu.

Estetska sfera oziroma *jingjie* torej ni paradigma, povezana s trdnimi koncepti. Omo- goča situacijske in s kontekstom povezane interpretacije, ki razkrivajo globoko razu- mevanje povezanosti med formo in vsebino. Taka razumevanja so, podobno kot ki- tajski jezik in filozofija, zmeraj relacijska in tesno povezana s konkretnimi izkušnjami.

V zaključnem delu tega članka bom paradigmo estetske sfere uporabila za inter- pretacijo prej obravnavanih besedil iz *Zhuangzija*.

Seveda gre v nadaljevanju samo za mojo osebno interpretacijo obeh zgodb, ki je ena od mnogih možnih.⁶ Glede na mojo zavrnitev absolutnega besedila ali abso- lutnega pomena se zdi ustrezno preizprašati tudi idejo o absolutni interpretaciji. V nadaljevanju želim ponazoriti, kako je mogoče z združitvijo estetskih sfer (*jingjie*) iz obravnavanih zgodb izluščiti nove perspektive in globlje vpogleda, ne da bi se morala pri interpretaciji opirati samo na točno določene konceptualne pomene.

Analiza pripovedi razkriva, da sta obe tesno prepleteni z medčloveškimi odnosi (ali nasploh z odnosi med živimi bitji), zato je verjetno povezovalni element raz- iskovanje narave intersubjektivnosti. Glavna tema obeh pogovorov je nedvomno povezana s to tematiko. Kot poudarja Ram Adhar Mall (2000, 6), je naše priza- devanje za medsebojno razumevanje neprekinjen cikel srečevanja z namenom, da bi prepoznali naše medsebojne razlike, in ločevanja zaradi teh razlik, da bi se na različne načine ponovno srečali.

Prva zgodba poudarja različnost živih bitij. Kot je zapisano v *Zhuangziju*, se je tre- ba za spodbujanje dobrega vseh obstoječih stvari najprej navaditi na to, da smo vsi različni. Šele s priznavanjem dejstva, da vsak živi v svojem svetu, je mogoče sthati globoke medčloveške vezi.

6 Zaradi subtilnosti in bogastva jezika ter njegove uporabe, pa tudi zaradi same narave klasične kitajščine, ki je zapisana v pismenkah in ne potrebuje fiksnih besednih vrst, je v *Zhuangzije* besedilih možna neskončna vrsta različnih interpretacij, ki so lahko vse pravilne in smiselne. V sinologiji ga zato upo- rabljamo predvsem kot inspiracijo za nove uvide v naravo sveta in človeka; vsakršno diskutiranje o tem, katera interpretacija je pravilna in katera napačna, je namreč iz zgoraj navedenih razlogov brezplodno. Vsako leto smo tako priča mnogoterim novim publikacijam, katerih predmet so nove interpretacije različnih poglavij tega dela. Kot nedaven primer si lahko ogledate zbirko esejev, ki se ukvarjajo samo z interpretacijo zgoraj omenjene kratke zgodbe »Ribje veselje«. (gl. Ames in Nakajima 2015)

Vendar kot pokaže druga zgodba, ustvarjanje takšnih stikov in komunikacij znova potrjuje, da vsi živimo v enem samem, združenem svetu. Zhuangzi je lahko razumel veselje rib, ker je z njimi delil isti eksistencialni okvir: živo celoto okoliščin, v katerih je opazoval ribe. Med tem veselim sprehodom v naravi v spremstvu svojega najboljšega prijatelja je Zhuangzi zaznal celoto te situacije, vključno z ribami. Njegova sreča je bila neločljivo povezana s srečo rib in obratno. Ta enotnost v veselju – združitev vesele *jingjie* – je Zhuangziju omogočila trenutno, popolno in globoko razumevanje rib.

Spretni preplet takšnih estetskih področij – vzajemna igra distance in bližine, divergence in konvergence svetov, ki se odpira v zgodbah – z izjemno jasnostjo razkriva, da na koncu individualni človeški svet izkušenj določa to, kar lahko razumemo kot resnično povezanost, ki presega meje lastne individualne subjektivnosti. To spoznanje lahko odpre večplastno in niansirano razumevanje intersubjektivnosti. Pri tem gre za obliko prepletanja, ki je ne smemo zamenjati s preprosto združitvijo dveh enodimenzionalnih entitet. Zgodba o morski ptici nas uči, da prav prepoznanje razlike in ločenosti ustvarja osnovo za vsako združevanje estetskih področij. Neskaljeno veselje rib iz druge zgodbe skozi njihov goli obstoj poudarja, da so razlike in ločnice bistvene za vsako obliko pristne, vitalne in ustvarjalne skupnosti – prav zato, ker lahko zlitje estetskih področij vedno izvira zgolj iz absolutne raznolikosti.

V tem kontekstu paradigma zlitja *jingjiejuev* združuje literaturo in filozofijo obravnavanih odlomkov na različne načine. Zhuangzijevo spretno pripovedno tehniko povezuje z njegovim globokim filozofskim razmišljanjem in pri tem združuje estetiko zunanjih svetov z globinami človekovega notranjega doživljanja. S tem omogoča najbolj intimno srečanje kljub največji distanci in spodbuja razumevanje, ki presega golo zaznavo, pri čemer premošča vrzel med neizrečenim in izrečenim, med subtilnim in očitnim.

Zaključek

Intersubjektivno razumevanje ne nastane iz togega okvira vnaprej definiranih pojmov, temveč vzkljuje iz samega bistva stvari – to je rezultat poglobljenega spoznavanja in doživljanja estetskih dimenzij, v katerih subjekti ne samo obstajajo, temveč je v njih ontološko ukoreninjen njihov način bivanja. Domnevna objektivnost in avtonomija človeškega razuma se redno izkažeta za nič drugega kot himero – za zapeljivo meglo, ki ponuja lažno tolažbo, da je mogoče z racionalnimi razlagami in objektivnimi spoznanji v celoti razumeti večplastnost človekovega bivanja. Toda ta domneva na koncu vodi samo v slepe ulice samoprevare. V tej luči postane jasno, da pravo razumevanje zahteva obliko srečanja, ki presega golo kognitivnost in se poda v globoke, pogostokrat nedoumljive vode estetske in eksistencialne izkušnje.

To vzajemno učinkovanje omejitve na osebno sfero posameznika in nenehnega združevanja vseh individualnih sfer v skupni univerzum oblikuje naš obstoj in nas umešča v sistem, ki ga razumemo kot »čas-prostor«. Iz takšnega sotočja različnih estetskih področij se vije nit, tanka, toda močna, ki Zhuangzija povezuje z njegovimi bralci, kitajske miselne tradicije z zahodnimi, tebe in mene v enotni proces vzajemnega spoznanja in razmišljanja.

Združitev estetskih sfer, kot se izraža v Zhuangzijevem delu, med drugim temelji na uravnoteženem združevanju literarnih in filozofskih elementov, tako vsebinskih kot oblikovnih. Starodavna kitajska interpretativna paradigma *jingjie* je na eni strani most v preteklost in na drugi inovativno orodje nove transkulturne hermenevtike. Ta dvojna funkcija učinkovito poudarja, kako je mogoče posredovati globoke vpogled v resničnost človeških izkušenj čez kulturne in časovne meje ter jih na novo interpretirati.

Prevod: Nina Kozinc⁷

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OTHER TOPICS

***Kkondae* (꼰대) Culture and South Korean Youth: Untangling a Micro and Macrosocial Suicide**

*Bryce Matthew ANDERSON**

Abstract

This study investigates the interplay between anomie and fatalism in understanding the high suicide rates among young adults in South Korea. Utilizing Émile Durkheim's suicide typology, the research explores how societal expectations, enforced by the older generation through the concept of *kkondae*, contribute to the experience of normlessness (anomie) and oppressive regulation (fatalism) among young people. Through qualitative interviews with South Koreans aged 20-30, the study uncovers the significant stress these individuals face due to conflicting cultural values. These pressures, deeply rooted in South Korea's rapid postwar development and history, create a tension between adhering to traditional collectivist values and pursuing individual autonomy, leading to feelings of alienation and disconnection. The study posits that anomie and fatalism, typically seen as opposing forces in Durkheim's theory, can coexist within individuals, shaping their responses to societal pressures and contributing to suicidal behaviour. By foregrounding the voices of young South Koreans, this research challenges rigid theoretical frameworks and offers a nuanced understanding of the complex social dynamics influencing suicide. The findings emphasize the need for suicide prevention strategies that account for the related effects of anomie and fatalism and address the generational and cultural tensions exacerbating these conditions. This study contributes to the broader discourse on suicide by advocating for culturally sensitive approaches that prioritize local experiences and perspectives.

Keywords: *kkondae*, suicide, fatalism, anomie, cultural ambivalence, Durkheim

Kultura *kkondae* (꼰대) in južnokorejska mladina: razpletanje mikro- in makrosocialnega samomora

Izvleček

Študija raziskuje preplet anomalije (izkušnje pomanjkanja normativnosti) in fatalizma pri razumevanju visokih stopenj samomorilnosti med mladimi odraslimi v Južni Koreji. Z uporabo tipologije samomora Émila Durkheima proučuje, kako družbena pričakovanja, ki jih starejše generacije uveljavljajo prek koncepta »*kkondae*«, prispevajo k izkušnji pretirano

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stroge regulacije in pomanjkanja normativnosti (anomije) ki med mladimi vodi v fatalizem. S pomočjo kvalitativnih intervjujev z Južnokorejci in Južnokorejkami, starimi od 20 do 30 let, študija razkriva velik pritisk, ki ga mlajši posamezniki in posameznice doživljajo zaradi nasprotujočih si kulturnih vrednot. Ti pritiski, globoko zakoreninjeni v eksplozivnem povojnem razvoju in zgodovini Južne Koreje, ustvarjajo napetost med spoštovanjem tradicionalnih, na pomenu skupnosti temelječih vrednot in iskanjem individualne avtonomije, kar vodi v občutke odtujenosti in nepovezanosti. Avtor trdi, da lahko anomija in fatalizem, ki sta v Durkheimovi teoriji običajno obravnavana kot vzajemno nasprotujoča si koncepta, sobivata v posameznikih oziroma posameznicah in oblikujeta njihove odzive na družbene pritiske ter na ta način prispevata k samomorilnemu vedenju. S poudarjanjem glasov mladih Južnokorejcev in Južnokorejk ta raziskava podaja kritiko rigidnih teoretskih okvirov in ponuja bolj poglobljeno razumevanje zapletenih družbenih dinamik, ki vplivajo na samomor. Ugotovitve poudarjajo potrebo po strategijah preprečevanja samomora, ki upoštevajo povezane učinke anomije in fatalizma ter obravnavajo generacijske in kulturne napetosti, ki te razmere še zaostrojujejo. Ta študija prispeva k širšemu diskurzu o samomoru z zagovarjanjem kulturno občutljivejših pristopov, ki v ospredje postavljajo lokalne izkušnje in perspektive.

Gljučne besede: *kkondae*, anomija, fatalizem, samomor, nasprotujoče si kulturne vrednote, Durkheim

South Korea has one of the highest suicide rates in the world, and this phenomenon is especially notable among young adults, where the unrelenting pressure that they feel from societal expectations often replaces their own dreams with obligations they have not chosen. This study recognizes these narratives, uncovering how societal pressures and feelings of powerlessness intersect in ways that Émile Durkheim's typology on suicide, with its focus on anomie and fatalism, can help us understand but not entirely capture. Nam-Il, a 30-year-old South Korean man, captures this tension in the following quote:

To be honest, I also think about suicide, cause I think life is too tough. I normally set a goal but it is hard to get it nowadays. I don't even make my own goals. But I can't make them, other people force them on me. And when I can't make them, my life feels over. Because I failed, and they're not even my own goals. As I tell you this, I feel a bit of shame.

South Korea has consistently had one of the highest suicide rates globally, with recent figures showing 25.2 per 100,000 people, in first place among OECD countries (Statistics Korea 2023, 15; OECD 2023, 17). Among those aged 25-34 and 15-24, the rates are notably high, at 22.4 and 14.3, respectively (WHO 2019a).

More specifically, suicide is the leading cause of death for South Koreans aged 10-39, but ranks sixth for the overall population (Statistics Korea 2023). While

suicide among the elderly is often a focus in suicide studies in the nation, suicide accounts for increasingly less of a share of total deaths after the aforementioned 10–39 age group (*ibid.*, 8). Globally, suicide ranks as the eighth leading cause of death among similar age groups (15–29), but sixth in the Western Pacific Region, which includes South Korea (WHO 2019b).

While the overall suicide rate in South Korea decreased from 28.1 to 25.2 per 100,000 between 2012 and 2022, rates among those aged 10–19 and 20–29 have increased (Statistics Korea 2023, 18). Suicide ideation among university students is also claimed to be increasing in recent years (Kim and Cha 2018). Given the high rate of high school students enrolling in higher education (~80%) and the fact that most South Korean university students are in their 20s, the suicide rates among the 20–30 age group likely reflect broader trends among students (Ahn, Kim and Choi 2015).

Against the backdrop of South Korea's alarming suicide rates, which have persisted as some of the highest in the world over the past two decades, there is a pressing need to unravel the forces at play. Durkheim's typology on suicide offers a foundational framework, categorizing suicides into types like egoistic, altruistic, anomic, and fatalistic (Durkheim 2002 [1897]). However, in the South Korean context, real-world suicides often defy such neat categorizations.

Durkheim acknowledged that suicides could exhibit the characteristics of multiple types, highlighting the complex combination of social, cultural, and psychological factors at play. This recognition underscores the multifaceted nature of suicide and the limitations of applying rigid theoretical constructs to understand its complexities. However, most of his work in this area, and that of his followers, has been based on the premise that one type is often best suited to describe a particular suicide in a given context.

Despite this, in practice, individuals contemplating suicide may not neatly fit into one specific Durkheimian type. People's actions are shaped by myriad influences, including personal experiences, societal norms, and emotional states. Moreover, individuals are unlikely to adhere to Durkheimian terms or categories when making decisions about their lives. Thus, to comprehend South Korea's high suicide rates, it is essential to recognize the nuanced realities of individual experiences and motivations.

This study reveals that young adults experience significant stress from conflicting social expectations, exemplifying Durkheim's concept of anomie. However, these social expectations are described as oppressive and inescapable, thus also revealing a fatalistic element.

Evidence of anomie and fatalism coexisting challenges traditional views of Durkheim's typology, and highlights the complexity of suicidal behaviour. This suggests that individuals may experience a sense of normlessness and oppressive constraint simultaneously, leading to heightened vulnerability to suicide. Understanding the interplay between anomie and fatalism provides valuable insights into societal pressures and individual experiences, which can then inform targeted prevention and intervention strategies. Moreover, it highlights the need for a nuanced approach to suicide research that considers the intersectionality of various social, cultural, and psychological factors in shaping suicidal behaviour.

This article not only contributes to understanding how suicide is conceptualized among youth in South Korea, but connects suicide to particular societal and cultural elements unique to life in this context. It has been argued that the study of suicide is generally too heavily reliant on positivist and quantitative approaches (Ansloos 2018; Kral 2012; White et al. 2016), without qualitatively asking the important question, "why suicide?" (Kral 2012). Prioritizing voices in such a study is key to providing more nuanced and contextual understandings of suicide than statistical analyses alone can give (Hjelmeland 2016). Moreover, scholars often call for suicide research to be sensitive towards local cultural, experiential, and environmental conditions (Ansloos 2018; Baer, Singer and Susser 2013; Wexler and Gone 2016), and it is contended that an approach that explicitly asks people themselves about suicide is best-suited for providing a contextual and nuanced understanding of the phenomenon. Furthermore, it has also been claimed that more effective approaches to suicide prevention can be developed by directly prioritizing input from community members themselves (Fullagar and O'Brien 2016; Kral 2019; Morris 2016). This approach falls in line with an anthropology of suicide that places focus on how people "make sense" of suicide (Münster and Broz 2016). In line with this, the current article is focused on prioritizing the voices and narratives of people themselves about suicide in order to link these explanations to life and society in South Korea.

This article begins by introducing a nuanced theoretical perspective and approach to exploring suicide in this context. The article then demonstrates what interviewees overwhelmingly reported about suicide that could be related to the themes of anomie and fatalism. This work ends by discussing the relevance of finding evidence for overlap between Durkheim's two suicide types that were originally posited to be opposite extremes of social regulation.

Importantly, this study does not propose any *causes* of suicide, but instead highlights how young adults interpret societal pressures in South Korea. The effort here is simply meant to give attention to how previously unheard voices interpret

suicide in their own society. Thus, it should be acknowledged that this paper does not seek to prove causality, or certain factors that lead to suicide. Rather, the intention is to contribute alternative perspectives to suicide in South Korea, and to juxtapose said views with Durkheim's influential theory on suicide. In doing so, it is argued that Durkheim's original formulation can be reimagined in light of people's own qualitative opinions on the matter.

Anomie and Cultural Ambivalence

This paper's interpretation of anomie aligns with Park's (2013) concept of cultural ambivalence, a variation of Durkheim's anomie prevalent in South Korean society, especially among university students. Park defines cultural ambivalence as a condition where old values blur and new values are not yet accepted, leading to normlessness. This normlessness occurs when societal values are neither regulated nor accepted, leaving individuals unable to adjust.

Park argues that cultural ambivalence in South Korea arises from the external, foreign values that have clashed with traditional norms since the 1960s and 1970s, creating tension between Confucian collectivism and emerging individualism. Simply put, a clash between traditional values and newer, globalized values, leads to normlessness, a key component of Durkheim's anomic suicide.

Rising individualism among younger adults, according to Park, creates cultural ambivalence due to the tension between individualism and traditional collectivism. Park also notes that older people may experience cultural ambivalence due to social disconnection, stemming from changes in family dynamics or the digital revolution.

This is not to argue that this situation is entirely unique. Certainly, it is a common feature in a society for the older generation to criticize the young people and their ways of living, values, and beliefs. Therefore, the dichotomy between individualistic and collectivistic here is not meant to overly reduce the complexity of culture in this context. However, what is important to note here is that, according to Park, this intergenerational tension may be specifically related to *suicide* in South Korea.

While Park's argument has not been extensively followed up, Kang (2017) offers a different perspective, suggesting that increasing individualism among younger people would lead not only to an increase in anomic suicides, but also to a rise in egoistic suicides. Durkheim characterized egoistic suicides as resulting from weakened social ties, where increased individualism and eroded social networks promote suicide. South Korea, like any other society, grapples with varying levels

of individualism and collectivism, but what is unique here is that the ensuing conflict, where people are trapped between two sets of values, is again explicitly linked to suicide.

The contrast between Park and Kang is notable, as they examine the same issue—suicide among young South Koreans—but identify different Durkheimian suicide types. Kang focuses on how individualism in South Korean society leads to egoism and egoistic suicide, while Park interprets it as anomie (cultural ambivalence) due to the tension created by individualism. The key takeaway is that more than one of Durkheim's suicide types may apply to the same situation, suggesting that suicides can be best understood by considering multiple themes and types from Durkheim's framework.

Both Park's (2013) view of cultural ambivalence and Kang's (2017) argument for egoism are theoretically plausible in the South Korean context. Thus, understanding how individuals conceptualize suicide *themselves* is crucial to better grasp its connection to Durkheim's typology. Prioritizing people's own ideas may provide a more nuanced understanding, focusing on how individuals make sense of suicide, something often missing from the literature (Hjelmeland 2016; Münster and Broz 2016).

Fatalistic Suicide and Cultural Expectations

Durkheim's work on suicide includes four types—egoistic, altruistic, anomic, and fatalistic—though the latter received limited attention in his original framework.¹ Fatalistic suicide, characterized by oppression and excessive regulation, has led scholars to revisit Durkheim's work, highlighting its relevance today.

Scholars have emphasized the relationship between fatalistic suicide and cultural expectations, showing how societal norms shape individual experiences and responses to adversity. This exploration underscores the nuanced complexities of understanding suicidal behaviour within specific cultural contexts and emphasizes the need for culturally sensitive approaches to suicide research and prevention. In other words, culture creates the conditions from which fatalism emerges.

Van Bergen et al. (2009) illustrate fatalistic suicide among young women from Turkish, Moroccan and South Asian cultures, where overregulation by stringent norms and familial pressures leads to suicide. Davies and Neal (2000) and Aliverdinia and Pridemore (2009) further support this view, highlighting how

1 The entire discussion on fatalistic suicide in Durkheim's original work is confined to a footnote in his chapter on anomic suicide (Durkheim 2002, 239).

oppressive cultural norms and familial expectations in China and Iran correlate with fatalistic suicide.

Scholars mostly highlight fatalistic suicide as a framework for understanding how harsh cultural norms and moral expectations can lead to powerlessness and dehumanization. Moreover, cultural norms, particularly those related to marriage, significantly influence the norms governing women's lives in particular. Hence, a comprehensive understanding of fatalistic suicide necessitates considering the cultural logics and scripts dictating behavioural *expectations*. While these examples focus on women's oppression, fatalism generally pertains to suicides among the marginalized and subordinate, or those that must adhere to cultural and social expectations.

Abrutyn and Mueller (2014) broaden the discussion, exploring how high moral regulation and low integration contribute to fatalistic suicides across contexts. Their work emphasizes how societal norms and cultural scripts shape individual responses to adversity, particularly through gender roles and familial obligations. As such, understanding cultural expectations is key to grasping the complexities of suicidal behaviour in different contexts. Cultural norms not only prescribe "acceptable" behaviour, but also define the boundaries of individual agency and autonomy.

Mixed Types of Suicide and Combining Anomie with Fatalism

Durkheim acknowledged the possibility of mixed suicide types, such as ego-anomic and anomic-altruistic, where extremes of social integration, like egoism and altruism, coexist (Durkheim 2002, 219). Though Durkheim only briefly mentioned fatalism, he did not explore its combination with other suicide types. In this paper, it is proposed that combining anomie with other aspects of Durkheim's theory may better describe suicide among young South Koreans. While anomie can capture much of what individuals may feel in relation to suicide, combining it with other parts of Durkheim's theory might prove more insightful.

Research such as Ji (2020) shows that suicides in South Korea can traverse Durkheim's categories, intertwining altruistic and anomic elements. Ji argues that altruism manifests in protests through suicide on behalf of exploited labourers, while anomie arises from oppressive social conditions beyond workers' control. Similarly, Im, Park and Ratcliff (2018) argue that in South Korea the categorization of a suicide as egoistic or altruistic hinges on the rationalization provided by the deceased's social circle, such as their family. This communal conceptualization sheds light on the perceived social forces contributing to suicidal behaviour

(McGrath 2022). That is, when people share their conceptualizations of suicide, the related data may not fit neatly into one of Durkheim's suicide types.

Varnik et al. (2003) highlight how Soviet-era suicides combined anomic, egoistic, and altruistic elements, driven by conflicting societal expectations. The imposition of social regulations engendered disillusionment, paving the way for anomic suicides. The stringent social regulation within the Soviet system contributed to anomie among workers, potentially leading to fatalism. In such contexts, individuals could attribute suicide to any number of Durkheim's classifications simultaneously, and notably anomie and fatalism, as these social forces often coexist.

Marson and Powell (2011) suggest that individuals may overlap multiple suicide types, moving from fatalism to anomie. The higher the degree of regulation that people have, the more likely suicide becomes (Abrutyn and Mueller 2014, 342), as normlessness disrupts the individual's life more profoundly. Elsewhere, I have posited that in the case of young South Koreans, strongly regulated cultural and social goals followed by a sudden inability to achieve these goals could plausibly be conceptualized as anomie resulting from fatalism (Anderson 2023). Therefore, pinpointing one specific suicide type at one time in an individual's life may not tell the whole story.

Similarly, Hamlin and Brym (2006) argue that overlapping anomie and fatalism highlight individuals' emotional responses to social pressures. Durkheim neglected motivations for suicide in his original work, so finding a link between social pressures and how people react to them opens an unchecked area of potential suicidal behaviour. Hamlin and Brym found that anomie in Brazil's Kaiowá led to increased social regulation, combining anomie with fatalism. The introduction of new values and opportunities (anomie) reinforced the Kaiowá women's culturally prescribed disposition toward individualism. As such, a highly regulated individualism stemming from strong anomie combines anomie and fatalism in a way that neither force can adequately describe alone.

Abrutyn and Mueller (2014, 333) propose that high and low regulation or integration can coexist, with different suicide types existing simultaneously at macro and micro levels. Specifically, they interpret fatalism and altruism as ways in which macrosocial structures are characterized in their content and values. Anomie and egoism are microsocial reactions to macrosocial forces. In other words, one can experience anomie at an individual level within a fatalistic social environment, or one's reaction to fatalistic circumstances can be anomie.

Chandler and Tsai (1993) also argue that fatalism and anomie may be mixed in particular Asian contexts where fatalism is more common. They suggest that

Japanese businessmen who fall short of high social expectations die by suicide due to both fatalistic and anomic elements related to their continued existence in flux and disgrace. This aligns with Abrutyn and Mueller's (2014, 346) proposition that fatalism and anomie can both be connected to the shame of not meeting expectations. When considering people's own accounts of their experiences with fatalistic expectations, anomie may exist at the same time as a way to describe how they feel about these expectations.

Synthesizing Durkheim's suicide types, such as fatalism and anomie, offers a comprehensive framework to understand the human experience under social expectations. Scholars propose that individuals may traverse a spectrum encompassing multiple suicide types, including where fatalism may precede an onset of normlessness, leading to anomic suicide. This perspective challenges traditional notions of mutually exclusive extremes and highlights the nuanced interrelationship between societal regulation and individuals' responses to this.

The way forward in seeing fatalism and anomie combined is to focus on people's micro reactions to macrosocial forces. Closely following Abrutyn and Mueller (2014), this paper will argue that Durkheim's suicide types transcend individual-level concepts, offering insights into structural and cultural forces that shape group emotional dynamics. Fatalism can be understood as a macro description of social relationships regarding their content, quality, and quantity, alongside the examination of values, moral directives, and norms in terms of their content, quality, and obligatory nature. Anomie, on the other hand, reflects individuals' reactions to these structural and sociocultural milieus.

This perspective gives space for anomie and fatalism to coexist and adapts Durkheim's theory to include how people perceive the motivations behind suicidal behaviour. While it seems contradictory to suggest that someone can be both strongly and lowly regulated at the same time, it is argued here that young South Koreans' reactions to fatalistic environments and social expectations reveal feelings of anomie and a derivative form of cultural ambivalence.

Methods and Methodology

This study adopts a deductive approach, rethinking Durkheim's theory on suicide while incorporating inductive elements to explore why suicide is prevalent in a specific high-risk group. This approach aligns with the concept of abduction, which begins with an inductive examination of the data without predetermined theoretical constraints, then links novel findings to existing theory (Halpin and

Richard 2021; Tavory and Timmermans 2014). Here, abduction balances inductive and deductive approaches, allowing novel findings to connect with theory without being confined by it.

In this article, interviewees' perspectives on suicide are juxtaposed with Durkheim's suicide typology. This comparison provides a basis for explaining the social environment and conditions that interviewees believe are most related to suicide in South Korea, set against the general theory that Durkheim (2002) originally proposed. While grounded in existing theory, this approach extends beyond Durkheim's propositions by building upon the suicide typology through the insights gleaned from interviews. Encountering "surprising observations" (Tavory and Timmermans 2014, 38) allows abduction to extend theory into new substantive areas about suicide.

Twenty-nine² interviews were conducted with South Koreans aged 20-30 in Seoul from January to August 2022, collecting open-ended perspectives on suicide. To avoid directing interviewees' answers, predetermined questions were not used. Each interview began with the open-ended question: "Why do you think suicide rates are high in South Korea?" Follow-up questions were then added, such as "Why do you think that way?" or "Can you tell me more about this?"

Participants were exclusively in the 20-30 age group due to the rising suicide rates and the prevalence of suicide as the leading cause of death in this cohort (Statistics Korea 2023, 8). Moreover, while significant research on South Korean university students and suicide has been done, it has mostly relied on quantitative methods like questionnaires and population data (Han and Lee 2021; Kim et al. 2023), and qualitative studies on this demographic have been mostly published in the Korean language (Jeong and Shim 2022; Jo, An and Sohn 2011; Lee 2015). This study contributes to the resulting gaps in the literature, while also following recent South Korean anthropological studies with similarly sized participant pools (Jeong and Shim 2022; Kim 2018; Lee 2019).

Previous experiences with suicide or suicide ideation were not required for participation in this study. Understanding the perspectives of all individuals, regardless of personal experience with suicide, is crucial for comprehensively addressing the complexities of suicide in South Korea. These insights provide valuable context regarding societal attitudes, cultural beliefs, and environmental factors that influence suicidal behaviour. Additionally, non-suicidal individuals may offer indirect experiences or observations of suicidal behaviour within their communities, further enriching our understanding of the underlying issues contributing to suicide risk in South Korea.

2 I felt that I had reached data saturation (Bernard 2018) at around 20 interviews, and continued to see it in subsequent interviews (Francis et al. 2010).

It is important to acknowledge that focusing on a single age group may limit insights, as other cohorts face different challenges contributing to suicide. Excluding older or younger individuals could result in a narrow understanding of the multifaceted factors influencing suicide in South Korea. Additionally, intergenerational differences in attitudes, cultural norms, and coping mechanisms may not be fully captured, potentially leading to incomplete findings. Therefore, exclusively interviewing the 20–30 age group may restrict the comprehensiveness and depth of the data collected.

Appendix A lists the participants with their age, gender, and university major, and all the names are randomly generated pseudonyms. This research received ethics approval under Dalhousie University REB# 2021-5795.

This study uses a qualitative approach based on Durkheim's suicide typology to explore the factors behind high suicide rates in South Korea through open-ended interviews. The interview questions were intentionally open-ended, allowing the participants to articulate their thoughts and experiences without predetermined constraints. Although the questions were not explicitly designed to elicit data about Durkheim's suicide types, the responses were subsequently compared with his theory. This comparative analysis facilitated a nuanced understanding of how participants' perceptions intersect with established theoretical constructs, shedding light on the complex dynamics driving suicidal behaviour in South Korea. Through this methodological approach, the study aimed to uncover the multifaceted nature of suicide phenomena within the South Korean context, enriching our understanding of the social, cultural, and individual factors involved.

This article also draws on my field experiences in Seoul, where informal conversations provided valuable insights that complement the formal interview data. While the primary data comes from semi-structured interviews, including informal conversations enhances understanding of the interviewees and their social contexts. Incorporating these field experiences enriches the qualitative analysis by offering a more holistic perspective on the complex dynamics surrounding suicide in South Korea. All conversations included were recorded with participant consent and conducted in English.

The Kkondae

Kkondae (꼰대) is a term frequently used by younger South Koreans in their 20s and 30s to describe older individuals who impose outdated thinking on others, especially younger or subordinate individuals. While some seniors may fit this

description, not all are labelled as such. The term mainly critiques communication or behaviour styles, rather than individual identities. Similar to the North American phrase “OK, boomer”, *kkondae* critiques outdated or authoritarian attitudes.

Although the term originated in the 1960s, *kkondae* has recently gained recognition as a commentary on generational dynamics and authority in South Korea (Kim 2016, 233). Originally, *kkondae* was derogatory slang for old men or used by students to criticize teachers (Kim 2016). By the late 1960s and 1970s, during South Korea’s industrialization and Westernization, it extended to include classroom teachers (Lee 2016, 233–34; Lee, Ko and Choi 2021, 165). Discontented students, rebelling against outdated schooling, labelled older teachers as *kkondae*. Over time, this term broadened to critique any authority figure perceived as rigid or out of touch, not just related to age (Kim, Lee and Chae 2021), reflecting societal changes in South Korea (Bu and Lee 2021).

Furthermore, the meanings associated with *kkondae* have shifted with each generation, influenced by distinct historical and cultural contexts. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to map the term across generations, the parents of the young adult interviewees in this paper would have likely been born around 1970 and before. Those individuals would have grown up and become adults themselves in the years of economic prosperity (e.g., the so-called Miracle on the Han River, 한강의 기적, from the 1960s to 1990s) and economic turmoil (e.g., the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis), and so their own values may be more strictly related to economic well-being, job success, and other such factors.

Lee, Ko and Choi (2021) state that considering the concept of *kkondae* leads to the better understanding and management of intergenerational conflict in South Korea. That is, strategies must be developed to foster more social integration and to improve organizational environments, such as the workplace, where the idea of *kkondae* is often invoked (Choi 2023). It is thus an important cultural concept to be explored and has great potential for examining interpersonal relationships in contemporary South Korean society.

Ho-Jin, a 28-year-old philosophy student, first explained the term to me. When asked about suicide at the start of the interview, Ho-Jin began locating the reason of why suicide was so common in South Korea among his age group in parts of Korean culture that put pressure on the younger generation:

Have you ever heard of the term 꼰대 [*kkondae*]? When older Korean people force the younger or subordinate Koreans to think in their older thinking, their old ways, many younger Korean people think they are really like *kkondae*, like a curse or swear [word]. [It’s] not only about their

age, but about [their] way of thinking. If someone's thinking is really based on collectivism too much, we really hate it.

The term expresses the pressure younger adults feel from older people to conform, carrying a strong negative connotation beyond just labelling someone as old-fashioned. As much as the word critiques outdated attitudes, it is the imposition of “older” values that captures its full meaning. This is evident in Ho-Jin's reference to how someone might use *kkondae* to label someone who forces collective values on them. Ho-Jin felt that this dynamic is unique to South Korea:

Collectivist culture leads to one way of living, and anything else is labelled wrong by *kkondaes*. Young Koreans are fed up with the collective thinking of the older generation and have a strong individualistic tendency. And, compared to the Western world, there is still a collective personality [in Korea].

Ho-Jin's discussion of collectivism versus individualism aligns with Park's (2013) concept of cultural ambivalence, where the young resist the collectivist values imposed by their parents' and grandparents' generations. Suicide, for Ho-Jin, does not necessarily come from the individualistic tendencies of the young, but rather from the role that the *kkondaes* play in forcing values upon them. This creates tension, leading younger individuals to be unsure of what to believe in and how to live. On the one hand, they want to pursue individualistic qualities, as Ho-Jin mentioned, but on the other, society vehemently tells them not to live that way.

Ho-Jin's explanation highlights the anomie younger South Koreans feel when *kkondaes* enforce rigid, traditional expectations, stifling their autonomy. The pressure to adhere to social ideals intensifies feelings of alienation from the older generation among younger Koreans, who may yearn for greater personal freedom and expression. The disconnect between the collective thinking enforced by *kkondae* figures and the growing individualistic tendencies, especially in comparison to more globalized cultural norms, exacerbates the confusion between personal autonomy and societal expectations.

Confucian values emphasize social order and relational harmony, contrasting with the younger generation's shift toward individualism. In previous generations, individuals built an ideal self by maintaining harmony in all areas of life and defining themselves within relationships and their roles, rather than as individualistic entities (Kim and Park 2013, 294). As younger generations become less collective, less family-centred, and more individualistic, they become dislodged from these traditional values in favour of individualism (Sleziak 2013, 43). This mirrors the

process outlined by Durkheim (2002) when explaining anomie, as these traditional values that are being abandoned supposedly served as a protective influence against suicide.

It is important to note that while traditionally collectivistic cultures like South Korea often prioritize shared norms, which can lead to strong conformity pressures, the tension between generational norms and new cultural values is not unique here. The concepts of individualism and collectivism, while useful, can sometimes oversimplify complex cultural realities. Therefore, the important takeaway is not that there is intergenerational conflict, as this is not specific to South Korea. Instead, the central finding is that young adults in South Korea, specifically link *suicide* to this cultural tension.

This discussion also mirrors the meaning captured by the term *Hell Joseon* (헬조선—literally “Hell Korea”). While not mentioned in the interviews done in this project, *Hell Joseon* is a term widely used by younger South Koreans to describe the oppressive realities of living in a society marked by intense competition and economic inequality (Lee 2019). This concept encapsulates feelings of disillusionment and frustration, as young people struggle with the burdens of society’s demands alongside traditional values enforced by *kkondae*s. The convergence of *Hell Joseon* and *kkondae* ideologies offers a comprehensive lens through which to understand the generational tension and despair that young Koreans express regarding their futures, which often leads to young adults wanting to leave South Korea (ibid.).

The term *kkondae* thus represents the tensions between generations in South Korea. Following Abrutyn and Mueller’s (2014, 329) idea that macrosocial forces, such as fatalism, capture the content of values and their obligatory nature, it became necessary to explore the term further. This included focusing on the actual content of *kkondae* culture and specifically what a *kkondae*’s vision for life looks like. Diving deeper into what is being forced upon individuals by *kkondae*s could reveal more about life and suicide in South Korea today.

A Kkondae’s Expectations: Career, Productivity, and Postwar Progress

Sixteen interviewees (55%) mentioned “parents” when discussing suicide, underscoring how deeply these expectations are tied to South Korea’s recent history, particularly its experiences of Japanese colonialism (1910–1945) and the Korean War (1950–1953). These expectations, rooted in South Korea’s historical context, influence career, free time, and lifestyle choices. For example, Ju-Won, a 25-year-old computer science student, explained the following:

People in Korea so so obsessed with progress. Always moving forward. Don't stop, or your country will suffer. That's the thinking. The *kkondaes* also tell us we have to do well for our country. Forget about your individual wants, and think about your family and your country. Be a good worker and citizen for Korea, because that's what your parents and grandparents do.

Similarly, Ah-Hyun, a 27-year-old business graduate, told me that:

Parents and all society, they always tell people like me that we need to do something for our future, and for our *country*. For example, they always tell us 'Don't waste your time'. When I was in university, during my vacation, I just wanted to take a break. But the parents always say, you need to do something, you need to study English, or get a license. You need to do something that is helpful for your future. Always moving forward. (Emphasis added)

Both Ju-Won and Ah-Hyun highlight that they are expected to be productive not only for themselves but also for their country, reflecting the values passed down from the older generations. For *kkondaes*, national progress is as important as personal success. While Ah-Hyun values taking a break for her own benefit, this desire conflicts with the societal expectation to advance herself and contribute to her country's progress. It is also important to remind the reader that these statements were made by the interviewees specifically in relation to suicide.

Ah-Hyun links the constant pressure to be productive with widespread unhappiness and frequent suicide among younger South Koreans. She further noted that "Koreans commonly feel depression" because of the pressures to always be productive, identifying depression as "one of the causes for suicide". This perspective aligns with common critiques of the South Korean education system, which is often blamed for sacrificing the socio-emotional development of young people in favour of educational success (Ahn and Baek 2013). In both contexts, individuals are expected to follow strict guidelines on how to live, often at the expense of their own well-being. Similarly, 29-year-old Jin-Ju remarked: "Older people think we should work more, and they challenge our different opinions if we speak."

Again, these quotes resonate with the idea of *Hell Joseon*, a phrase that reflects disenchantment with a hypercompetitive society that exacerbates personal struggles. The intense pressure to succeed financially and socially under capitalist demands compounds the stress they feel from *kkondae* expectations. For example, young adults face not only the expectation to conform to traditional values, but also

the harsh realities of an economic system that values productivity above all else. These dual pressures contribute to a sense of hopelessness and alienation that is frequently cited as a factor in suicidal ideation.

These quotes also align with Durkheim's concept of anomie, highlighting the pervasive sense of value conflict experienced by younger South Koreans within a societal framework shaped by *kkondae* figures. The pressure to constantly progress and prioritize the collective well-being of the country and family over individual desires creates a state of anomie, where societal norms clash with personal aspirations. The relentless emphasis on productivity instils a sense of obligation to conform to these collective expectations, leaving individuals feeling disconnected from their own desires and identities. Here, individuals struggle to reconcile their own needs with the rigid expectations imposed upon them by *kkondaes* and society at large. Furthermore, Ah-Hyun contextualized the reason *why* the older generation may push their children and grandchildren so hard:

The older generation grew up in [a] very hard environment, like think about the Korean history. So, they want us to live in more good environment. So that's why they tell us like that [to live a certain way]. They were growing up when Korea was changing a lot. ... When they were growing up though, they didn't have the opportunities. So, they want us to live better. I heard that they wanted to study, they didn't have enough money to go to university, so they didn't get to graduate. So, they want their kids to have opportunities [that they did not have].

Ah-Hyun's parents and grandparents, shaped by the Korean War and post-war poverty, passed down expectations rooted in South Korea's rapid social development. These were deeply rooted in South Korea's relatively short history—a history marked by the hardships that were endured to produce the developed nation that exists today.

This drive to persevere and do everything possible to survive and improve was something many interviewees attributed to *kkondaes*. Similar to how Ah-Hyun contextualized expectations with South Korea's history, Ha-Eun, a 27-year-old business graduate, shared that *kkondaes'* expectations are most certainly:

related to Korean history... At the time living was so hard [for the older generation growing up] and the IMF crisis. They thought hanging in there was important. No matter what happened, they had to hang in there. Just to survive. Nowadays it is not so hard to live, and the quality of life became more important [to the younger generation]. They [*kkondaes*] don't think

like that [about resting and free time] because they had to survive. And there are many conflicts because of this between the older generations and younger generations in the workplace. ... For me, they always force me to think in their ways. I have two older bosses. One of my bosses forced me to learn his way. But I think I had to be respected in my own way.

Just as her grandparents' generation had to survive the Korean War and its aftermath, Ha-Eun mentions the 1997 IMF crisis as a key factor shaping her parents' expectations of how to live. This financial crisis, which severely impacted South Korea's economy, further shaped the expectations of the *kkondae* generation. The key point here is that multiple interviewees located the source of *kkondae* expectations in the socio-economic hardships of South Korea's recent history. The expectations being forced upon younger people can be contextualized within Korean history, as there has been little time in the past century when South Korea was free from economic turmoil, considering the lasting effects of war and the more recent financial crisis. These contextual factors may partly explain why such social expectations are so prevalent in South Korea today compared to other East Asian contexts that have experienced similarly rapid development.

Furthermore, Ha-Eun mentions that the "quality of life" has become more important to both her and other young people. This aligns with Ah-Hyun's desire to take a break during school vacation. The interviewees largely felt that satisfying their individual needs was synonymous with enjoying their lives. The absence of the nationalistic feeling that they should be productive on behalf of others and their country may stem from the fact that they are far removed and no longer recovering from a war or financial crisis. This may also explain why older people, who grew up during times of chaos, share different values. In any case, there are significant differences in how to live between generations.

While younger South Koreans often encounter *kkondae* attitudes that emphasize conformity, it is essential to recognize that different generations of *kkondaes* impose unique expectations. For example, those who lived through the Korean War or postwar period may prioritize communal loyalty and resilience, values forged in hardship. In contrast, *kkondaes* born in the 1970s and 1980s emphasize career success and stability, reflecting the aspirations shaped by South Korea's rapid economic growth during their formative years. This gives some context of what would determine *kkondae* expectations at a given time, since the concept is traced back to the 1960s.

The quotes presented above thus highlight the intergenerational tensions in South Korea, where the older generations, shaped by hardship, prioritize survival, while

the younger generation, experiencing a comparatively better quality of life, places greater emphasis on personal well-being and work-life balance. The clash between these perspectives leads to conflicts in the workplace and family environment, where older generations, including *kkondae* figures, may insist on the traditional values and work ethic. This insistence on conformity to their ways stifles the autonomy and individuality of younger South Koreans, contributing to feelings of frustration and alienation. The desire for respect and recognition of individual perspectives highlights the struggle for autonomy and identity within the societal framework shaped by *kkondae* values. These conflicts underscore the enduring impact of historical experiences on societal norms and the challenges of navigating intergenerational differences in contemporary South Korean society.

Cultural ambivalence (Park 2013) emerges as young South Koreans struggle between their desires and the productivity expectations of older generations. The interviewees expressed frustration and an inability or unwillingness to adapt to their social norms. While they contextualized this within a highly regulated life, society assigns them goals that are not their own. Simply put, individuals cannot pursue their own goals, and thus society does not regulate them. Despite the presence of high regulation, because their own goals cannot be regulated this results in anomie (Powell 1958).

It is worth noting that the intergenerational conflicts observed in this paper echo patterns seen in other societies, including Western contexts. For example, in the United States and Europe, it would not be surprising to claim that older generations also view the young as overly individualistic or lacking traditional values. As such, while cultural contexts differ, the generational divides that are seen here are, in many ways, universal.

Nonetheless, in this particular context, anomie and fatalism coexist as young South Koreans respond to oppressive social conditions with frustration and a lack of control. Therefore, anomie cannot characterize the expectations themselves. It cannot be said that there is only form of normlessness, and in fact the *kkondaes* have specific sets of values and norms that they enforce upon the young, and the interviewees felt highly regulated by these expectations. However, the resulting conflict is precisely where the normlessness occurs, as young people do not know what to do when caught between two cultures.³

3 It should be noted that Kral (2019, 96) argues in other contexts that individuals being “caught between two cultures” is a risk factor to suicide.

Younger Generation's Resistance

The interviewees reported strong resistance to the older generations' expectations, particularly emphasizing the importance of work-life balance for their happiness. Notably, these topics arose primarily when the participants were asked why younger people in South Korea might die by suicide. Ha-Joon, for instance, shared that "resting time" (쉬는 시간) was necessary to balance her life and stay refreshed, implying that those without such balance might be more susceptible to suicide. Another participant, Hye-Kyung, a 28-year-old graphic designer, elaborated on this idea:

In our generation, we try to focus on more balance, working and life... I think there's a struggle that the older generation wants us to work more harder. I understand why they think like that, because they've been living like that. But we have the internet, we can connect with everyone. We know about the other countries, we travel a lot. We accept, embrace the other cultures, values. So, we think differently than the older generations. So, there's a conflict I think.... I think it could be related because people who don't have the balance and how too much conflict might be suicidal. I think that's why people are unhappy.

A healthy work-life balance is viewed as a protective factor against suicide, but prioritizing and seeking this balance is often discouraged by older generations. According to Hye-Kyung, older people are enforcing ways of living that undermine these protective factors.

The older generation's work-centric mindset clashes with the younger generation's emphasis on work-life balance, shaped in part by global cultural exposure. This difference in perspective leads to conflicts in values and expectations, as the older generation may struggle to understand the changing priorities of young people. Hye-Kyung also suggested there is a link between the lack of balance and increased conflict, with feelings of unhappiness potentially leading to suicidal ideation. This underscores the importance of addressing societal pressures and fostering understanding between generations to promote mental well-being and harmony within South Korean society.

Happiness, tied to life satisfaction and work-life balance, is conceptualized differently by the young compared to the old. Yong-Gi, a 22-year-old computer science graduate, told me that:

Employers and older persons said to us, we have the only way to live. In high school [we are told] we need to go to university, in uni [we are told]

we have to employ [get a good, well-respected job]. They say the same cycle to us. I think the young generation thinks it is the only way to live because that's what the older generation says. I don't agree, I think there are more ways to enjoy life. Now the younger generation, because they heard from the older generation, they value only material realities, like money, ownerships, cars, houses. Because in life they [the older generation] had those material things. Happiness, love, they know about the meaning but their mind is sick towards it because they don't know about the value of happiness. They only see and follow the material. This is the only way to achieve success. Older persons, they had these things, because Korea was poor in the 1950s, 60s, 70s, 80s [and thus material things were cheap to purchase]. But we made vertical growth. There were side effects. Korea is a developed country, but our thinking not much change. They [the older generation] still want development, change, as if we are still a developing country. Older people had to earn their money and success, so they said to us, the young generation, we value only material things.

This quote is reminiscent of another from Ah-Hyun, who noted that older generations want younger people to “live the way they wanted to live”, reflecting a cycle where past hardships shape current expectations. Young people today believe South Korea no longer needs to focus on rapid development, unlike the older generation shaped by colonial and postwar hardships. They are more concerned with adapting to the current circumstances and the society that exists today.

Similarly, the interviewees are not so concerned with striving for the development and progression of South Korean society. They do not mention their inability to buy material things or earn money as primary desires. In fact, one interviewee, 30-year-old Dae-Hyun, told me: “The people who aren't happy, [and die by] suicide, [are] only considering material things. Rather, trying to live comfortably in their given circumstances [should be] their main concern.” Thus, material things are not a concern, and the obsession with them is even blamed by some as contributing to suicide. Moreover, while efforts to improve the quality of life for some of the younger generation are seen as a primary concern, they are viewed as impeding development by the older generations.

Dae-Hyun also emphasizes contentment over materialism, critiquing the *kkondae* values that continue to regulate societal expectations. His critique highlights a complexity where the pursuit of material wealth is seen as contributing to societal pressures and even suicide, while simultaneously upholding the importance of conforming to *kkondae* expectations. Thus, while Dae-Hyun's perspective offers insight into the pitfalls of materialism, it does not diminish the overarching

regulatory influence of *kkondae* values, which continue to shape individual behaviour and societal expectations in South Korea.

Both anomie and fatalism are present in these circumstances, as younger people resist the older generations' enforced way of life, which they view as a cause of suicide. Not living that life and instead living outside expectations and striving for a work-life balance are seen as the path to happiness. Accordingly, those who cannot escape from the oppressive social expectations are most prone to suicide.

These findings highlight the older generations' rigid expectations, which emphasize a linear path to success focused on educational achievement and material wealth. This perspective, rooted in South Korea's historical economic development, perpetuates a materialistic mindset among the younger generation. Despite South Korea's advancement, the older generations' values remain unchanged, leading to a disconnect between societal expectations and evolving values. This disparity contributes to feelings of disillusionment and dissatisfaction among younger South Koreans, who seek alternative paths to fulfilment beyond material success.

Difference = Wrong

Feelings of oppression are closely tied to the difficulty of resisting it, a point echoed by Abrutyn and Mueller (2016), who link regulation with suicide based on the availability of alternatives to social expectations. In the context of this study, when young South Koreans resist *kkondae* expectations, they are not merely met with aversion but are deemed “wrong”, with no room for negotiation, as older generations enforce a singular, “correct” way of living.

The generational differences in lifestyles (가치관, 삶의 방식) in South Korea are significant and deeply rooted in the country's history. One interviewee even related this to the Korean language, illustrating how these differences are ingrained in South Korean culture and society:

There is a very interesting language habit of the older generation in Korea. Older generations cannot distinguish between “different” and “wrong”. And older generations use “wrong” in the situation when they are supposed to use “different”. As I said last time, I think people living in a collectivist culture tend to live as if there is only one correct answer in life. These characteristics have advantages and disadvantages, and the disadvantage is violence against life in a different way from the exemplary answers shared by the community. Isn't it because there is little tolerance for difference by the collectivist culture, so it is “wrong” even in situations

where many Koreans should say it is “different”? This is a violent way of thinking. The *kkondae* way of thinking, naturally they are likely to force younger generation, subordinates think of their answer, their one answer. To force younger generations to think in their own answer is very natural. (Ho-Jin, 28 m)

According to Ho-Jin, older generations cannot accept deviations from their own thinking, and this intolerance is deeply embedded in Korean culture and language. Prioritizing individual needs over the collective is seen as wrong, and enforcing these ways of thinking on young people is considered natural. These interviewees are not just referencing a select group of older people, but a societal-wide phenomenon. The fact that they believe this to be true and choose to relate these points to suicide illustrates the extent to which these social expectations affect individuals.

Ho-Jin highlights a broader cultural inclination toward a collective mindset, where a single correct answer is enforced, leading to intolerance for differences and labelling them as “wrong”. This mindset can lead to symbolic violence against those who deviate from the communal norm. In the context of a *kkondae* mentality, this inclination toward enforcing a singular perspective onto the young is particularly pronounced, reflecting a natural resistance to divergent viewpoints.

Throughout this article, I have provided a modest sample of views from young people I have interviewed. However, the idea that older generations may not be able to accept difference is perhaps not just an opinion held by the young. During my time living in Seoul, I worked as an English teacher at a private school in addition to conducting my field research. One night after work, I was invited to dinner by two of my South Korean coworkers. These coworkers were friends outside of work and both women were around the same age (~50). Going out with coworkers and team leaders after work during weekdays is a common event in South Korea, usually involving sharing a meal and drinking alcohol, commonly soju (a Korean spirit) and beer. This practice, called *hoesik* (회식), is seen as a subculture for many South Korean companies, serving as a form of team-building.

My coworkers knew about my research, and they were particularly interested in what I had found as this was about two months into my interviews. As I explained what I had discovered about the concept of *kkondae* the two women both smiled and laughed, surprised that I knew about a concept like that (a term that would not be widely known to foreigners), and embarrassed by the recollection of discussions they had had with their own children:

Eun-Hee: ‘I think I’m a *kkondae*. What about you?’ [Turning to the other coworker]

In-Suk: ‘Yeah, I think so too. My daughter called me that more than once.’

Eun-Hee: ‘Me too. I try to avoid it when I can, as I’m always trying to think about it. I think when my children are lazy or something and I tell them [to do something] about it they call me that. But I think it happens most often when I see differences. Differences in between me and them, what they want to act like. To me I cannot accept the differences. I can try and I know they can’t be the same as me, but I can’t accept the differences. I have a really hard time.’

In-Suk: ‘I think I’m the same. When we grew up, we had hard lives. We were in hardship. Our parents talked about hardship too. Surviving during hard times. During war, during poverty. They had to work hard to survive, to develop Korea. But now gen [the younger generation] grew up when Korea is already developed. The younger generation can just enjoy the benefits [of fast development] from us. So, they really must have weaker minds, because they don’t have to face the hardship.’

This conversation revealed that older people recognize the tension between generational values, acknowledging differences without necessarily seeing them as problems to fix. Instead, they see that differences in opinions exist. Taking a break—something that a participant from the younger generation wanted to do but was frowned upon by older people—was something that Eun-Hee and In-Suk might consider “lazy” (귀찮은, 게으른). Actions taken by the young to take care of their own needs are interpreted this way by those older. My coworkers felt that younger people have not faced the same hardships as they did, and that individual desires seem like a luxury to the older generation. Here, anomie and fatalism are relational, and achieving personal happiness by resting goes against social norms, leading to normlessness (anomie). Young people swing back and forth between fatalism and anomie as they navigate meeting social expectations while taking care of their personal well-being.

In-Suk mentioned her parents passing on expectations shaped by hardship, acknowledging that she might now contribute to these social expectations imposed on the young. In this way, fatalism is passed on through generations. Blocked futures and discipline are passed through relatives, signalling that it is not new for fatalism to be perpetuated within families. However, In-Suk’s observation that today’s younger generation has faced little to no hardship, given South Korea’s

social development, suggests that there may be even more of an expectation that youth should endure hardship to “deserve” their lives.

What is also notable, towards the end of the conversation, is when In-Suk mentions that the younger generation has a *weaker mind* (멘탈이 약하다). One of the interviewees that I talked to in the younger generation said that her mother once told her something similar:

I talked about this [*kkondae*, generational differences] with my mom a lot. And, like, let me tell you about my mom. She thinks that our ages, we don't really have strong mentals [mentalities]. So, my mom will have conversations with someone who is around my age, and she only talks with us because I'm her daughter. And that was kind of the first time she talked with someone who is in our age. And she thought, she was kinda of shocked, because she didn't know [people in their] 20s had that kind of weak mental. [She thinks] they're easily exhausted from the problems that she doesn't think is a thing. So, she was kind of shocked, because they have so weak, fragile mentals. My mom thinks that our parents had strict parents, more strict parents than her, so they don't really want to do the same things to their child, so [the young generation] easily get spoiled. Or you know, if they tell their problems to their parents, the parents are going to solve it for them. They don't have independence, or they don't really have their skills to solve their own problems. I don't want to be so harsh, but that's true. That is the reality of this society, our age, according to my mom. (Young-Ae, 26 f)

Again, we see this idea of the younger generation having weaker minds due to the fact that they did not have to endure the hardships that older people did. In this latter example, a participant's mother believes that the current problems of the younger generation are simply handled by their parents. Similarly, 28-year-old Seong-Ho told me:

Any time something new happens with society my parents always love to blame the younger generation. 'They have weak minds, they can't handle like we could' is what I hear them say. My parents think the younger gens are so weak minded because all they want to do is rest.

We can see here how today's version of *kkondae* is particularly contextualized, based on what each generation values most. Parents of today's young adults, many of whom were born in the 1970s, emphasize economic stability as a marker of success, a stark contrast to the values of those who experienced postwar scarcity and

emphasize survival and national duty. Such differences suggest that while *kkondae* attitudes endure, the specific ways they manifest evolve over time.

Moreover, these circumstances described by *kkondae*, and even the term *Hell Joseon*, often extend into the workplace, where older generations enforce standards that prioritize loyalty and conformity. This, however, collides with the brutal realities of a capitalist economy that rewards individual achievement and financial success. Young people caught between these competing values feel the weight of unrealistic expectations from *kkondaes*, compounded by a societal framework that they perceive as merciless and unsupportive. This intersection of cultural and economic pressures amplifies the sense of alienation that contributes to generational conflicts and, ultimately, to the despair expressed in interviews about suicide.

The point here is that there certainly exists tension regarding expectations on how to live. The characterization of having a weak mind is attributed to those in the younger generation who prioritize satisfying their own needs before the collective's, indicative of cultural ambivalence. Moreover, older generations believe that young people should passively accept the hardships and fatalistic conditions they themselves had to endure growing up. Many in the older generation may feel they endured more hardship and fatalism than today's youth ever will, leading to a stricter enforcement of ideals and an oppressive lifestyle. Explanations of suicide reveal generational tension between fatalistic expectations and the younger generation's desire for work-life balance, creating cultural ambivalence and anomie. This clash leads to feelings of alienation, as the younger generation's priorities are not understood or respected by the older generation, perpetuating a cycle of misunderstanding and frustration between generations.

Discussion

In the first of the quotes from an interview in this paper, Durkheim's concept of anomie is evident in Nam-Il's struggle with societal expectations, where he expresses hopelessness and a lack of personal agency. Nam-Il articulates a sense of alienation and disconnection from his own desires and aspirations, indicating that the goals he pursues are imposed by others rather than self-determined. This lack of autonomy and the pressure to conform to external expectations contribute to feelings of shame and failure, highlighting the disruption of social norms and the breakdown of social cohesion characteristic of anomie.

This article argues that Durkheim's suicide types overlap in South Korea, where generational tension, as acknowledged by the interviewees, reflects both anomie

and cultural ambivalence. This overlap strongly conveys Durkheim's (2002) anomie and Park's (2013) cultural ambivalence, as young South Koreans navigate conflicting lifestyles, values, and philosophies. Society fails to facilitate their personal goals and expectations, a theme echoed throughout the interviews as a perceived cause of suicide. These social expectations are maintained and enforced by older people with regard to their children and grandchildren. The concept of *kkondae* represents the ambivalence and resistance felt by the younger generation against these oppressive social expectations. However, resistance alone does not provide a solution, as the younger generation finds itself caught between two cultures: one that expects them to live a certain way—productive for their country and enduring the same hardships as their parents—and another that promotes self-care, rest, and the pursuit of individual desires.

Bu and Lee (2021) emphasize that, given the lack of cultural diversity and Korean culture's emphasis on cultural homogeneity, South Koreans will often locate the roots of social issues, such as the abuse of power, discrimination and others, to the collision of different cultures (be it between ages, countries, subcultures, etc.). Here, the conflict between globalized values of the self and Confucian values of group harmony lead to intergenerational tension. While suicide is not mentioned in their study, I find the findings in this article to be strikingly fitting to their claims. Here, *kkondae* is representative of the social conflicts within South Korean society that are perceived to be related to suicide.

Specifically, the generational tension in South Korea transcends the binary framework of collectivism versus individualism. Instead of this dichotomy, there is a nuanced interplay between societal expectations and individual desires. While traditional values emphasize conformity to societal norms and the collective good, elements of individualism are evident in the younger generation's quest for personal autonomy and fulfilment. This dynamic reflects Durkheim's concept of anomie, where societal norms weaken, and Park's notion of cultural ambivalence, highlighting the clash between differing cultural values. The cultural gap between generations exacerbates this tension, with the older generation imposing traditional expectations on the younger, while the latter seeks self-expression and autonomy. Anomie arises as a reaction to this generational tension, with *kkondae* symbolizing the younger generation's resistance and assertion of individual agency. However, this resistance is not a wholesale rejection of societal norms but rather a targeted defiance against perceived oppressions. Ultimately, young South Koreans navigate between tradition and modernity, collective duty and individual fulfilment, as they strive to reconcile societal expectations with personal aspirations.

Theoretically, these circumstances in which young South Koreans find themselves are fatalistic at their core. Individuals face strictly laid-out expectations of what to do and not do, how to live and how not to live. Their futures are constrained by these expectations, and they live their lives under extreme social discipline. Happiness, according to interviewees, can only be achieved by escaping these strongly regulated circumstances, a form of escape that the interviewees in this article see as necessary for living happily, or even living at all.

A theoretical impasse arises: if cultural ambivalence represents anomie (normlessness), how can fatalism also exist, given that they are opposites in Durkheim's theory? Marson (2019, 11) suggests that individuals can slide back and forth on the spectrum of social regulation, arguing it plausible that people can move between fatalism and anomie in their lives. However, Marson acknowledges that people cannot experience anomie and fatalism at the same time, as these are opposite ends of social regulation, and it is illogical to suggest someone can be both socially regulated and not regulated simultaneously.

Abrutyn and Mueller (2014, 329) offer a different perspective, arguing that anomie and fatalism can overlap, with fatalism representing *macrosocial* forces and anomie as a *microsocial* reaction. In other words, an individual can experience both anomie and fatalism while living within fatalistic circumstances, with a micro level of anomie emerging within this environment. Following Abrutyn and Mueller's logic, anomie or cultural ambivalence are microsocial concepts that reflect one's reactions to larger societal structures that perpetuate fatalism, such as the content of directives and norms. This interpretation aligns with the findings in this article, suggesting that anomie and fatalism can coexist. Fatalism exists as the content of macrosocial forces, describing the structure and values underpinning the social expectations placed on young South Koreans. Their lives are predetermined, and they are expected to follow a narrow path to success. Abrutyn and Mueller (2016, 68) further note that the impact of high regulation on suicide is exacerbated in social contexts where the options to subvert expectations and obligations are limited.

Meanwhile, anomie or cultural ambivalence represents societal-wide ideological tension between generations due to these fatalistic expectations. *Kkondaes* enforce a fatalistic life, creating anomie as a micro reaction to these expectations. Individuals only feel this tension between generations because of their resistance to these expectations and what they represent. In other words, the concept of the *kkondae* is essential to understanding suicide in this context. Fatalistic social expectations are embedded in individuals from childhood, and the term *kkondae* is born out of resistance to this pressure. The pressure itself thus creates a value-conflict aptly described by cultural ambivalence and anomie. The negative connotation of the

term *kkondae* reflects how the younger generation problematizes these expectations, specifically in relation to suicide, and the normlessness they result in. In this sense, the South Korean case, as described by the interviewees, supports the idea of anomie as a reaction to fatalistic circumstances. Moreover, this case builds upon Durkheim's theory by demonstrating that two opposite ends of social regulation can exist simultaneously.

Alternatively, Powell (1958) extends the concept of anomie to include high regulation, where individuals subsumed by cultural expectations experience meaninglessness and anomie. In other words, those who cannot act on their own passions and goals due to societal regulation are, in a sense, do not have their individual selves and goals regulated. The resulting meaninglessness is anomie, similar to the anomie that arises when people cannot have their goals regulated at all due to a breakdown in society or within themselves. Powell argues that such individuals feel as though they are not really living, given an anomie that stems from a combination of low and high regulation. The drive for success that leads many to self-destruction can strongly determine and regulate one's behaviour, but provides no regulation for what the individual truly wants.

Powell's interpretation aligns with the central argument here. While fatalism provides very strong regulation in South Korean society, manifested in strict and oppressive social expectations enforced on the young, their personal goals, aspirations, and autonomy cannot be pursued. Thus, as Powell suggests, individual desires and passions are not regulated at all, engendering anomie.

Spectrum vs Spectrum(s)

Individuals navigate contexts with both high and low regulation simultaneously, driven by societal, cultural, and interpersonal dynamics. This explanation depicts social regulation as existing on a *spectrum*. It illustrates how individuals can experience varying degrees of regulation along a continuum, ranging from high to low regulation, within different social contexts and dynamics. However, the *one* spectrum model does not inherently explain how someone can exist in both high and low regulation simultaneously. It suggests that individuals may navigate different levels of regulation at different points along the spectrum, but not necessarily simultaneously. To explain how someone can experience both high and low regulation simultaneously, I would propose a different perspective. That is, individuals exist within *multiple social contexts*, each characterized by varying degrees of regulation. In this view, individuals might encounter high regulation in one aspect of their lives (e.g., their professional environment) and

low regulation in another (e.g., their personal relationships), leading to a simultaneous experience of both.

This also considers the idea of situational or contextual regulation, where individuals encounter fluctuating levels of regulation depending on specific circumstances or interactions. In this case, someone could experience high regulation in certain situations and low regulation in others, allowing for a simultaneous experience of both states within different contexts.

Fatalism represents the macro-level force shaping young adults' experiences in South Korea, imposing rigid societal and cultural constraints. These fatalistic influences stem from cultural norms, institutional practices, and broader social structures prevalent in South Korean society, which dictate expectations and roles for young adults. At the macro-level, fatalism creates a pervasive sense of inevitability and resignation among young South Koreans, constraining their agency and autonomy by prescribing rigid pathways and societal norms.

Conversely, anomie or cultural ambivalence operate as the micro-level force, reflecting the breakdown or absence of clear societal norms and values within specific social contexts or interpersonal relationships of young adults in South Korea. At this personal level, young adults navigate ambiguity and uncertainty, experiencing a lack of guidance or moral frameworks to inform their actions. Anomie fosters a sense of disorientation and disconnection, as young South Koreans grapple with conflicting expectations and competing cultural narratives, particularly in the rapidly changing social landscape of contemporary South Korea.

When examining the reactions and behaviours of young adults in South Korea, fatalism and anomie interact to shape varying degrees of regulation across different contexts. In some aspects of their lives, young South Koreans may confront high levels of regulation imposed by fatalistic societal expectations, such as rigid cultural norms or familial obligations. Simultaneously, they may encounter low regulation associated with anomie, where societal norms are ambiguous or conflicting, allowing for greater flexibility but also fostering feelings of confusion and alienation.

This perspective demonstrates the interactions between macro-level fatalism and micro-level anomie in shaping the experiences of young adults in South Korea. It also finds great support for Abrutyn and Mueller's (2014, 329) conceptualization of Durkheim's suicide types as macro and micro forces. By recognizing the distinct yet interconnected influences of these forces, we gain insight into how young South Koreans navigate the complex social landscape of their society and negotiate competing cultural pressures. Ultimately, this nuanced understanding

highlights the dynamic nature of social regulation and its impact on the behaviours and well-being of young adults in contemporary South Korea.

Conclusion

This paper contributes to a deeper understanding of youth suicide in South Korea by examining how *kkondae* culture interacts with the concepts of anomie and fatalism, as articulated in Durkheim's theories. Through the interpretations of young adult South Koreans, this study uncovers how older people enforce a set of rigid expectations that leave little room for individual aspirations, creating an environment that is both normless and highly regulated. In doing so, it reveals that anomie and fatalism are not merely opposing forces but can coexist within the same cultural landscape.

The findings suggest that the pressures young South Koreans face are dual: the lack of support for personal autonomy leads to a sense of normlessness, or anomie, while the relentless imposition of collective values produces a fatalistic environment. This convergence highlights a unique cultural ambivalence where individuals experience a breakdown of traditional norms, yet remain bound by the very structures that contribute to their distress. This challenges the conventional interpretation of Durkheim's framework, underscoring that cultural contexts can render these types not mutually exclusive but instead interwoven in complex ways.

By amplifying these qualitative perspectives, this paper not only provides insights into the local dimensions of suicide but also argues for a more nuanced application of Durkheimian theory. The experiences shared here call for a re-evaluation of how we understand societal influences on suicidal behaviour, particularly in contexts where rapid cultural and economic shifts impact generational expectations. This study advocates for culturally sensitive approaches to suicide prevention that recognize the layered social forces at play, acknowledging the ways in which young people interpret and respond to their social realities.

In conclusion, these insights into the related nature of anomie and fatalism in South Korea extend Durkheim's typology, suggesting that prevention strategies must account for both the regulatory demands and the cultural ambivalence that shape young lives. As such, this research argues for the necessity of approaches that prioritize individual experiences within broader societal frameworks, illuminating a path forward for addressing the unique challenges faced by South Korea's youth. Importantly, this paper does not claim to identify direct causes of

suicide but rather includes perspectives from individuals who might not usually be heard in such studies. If these perspectives challenge existing categorizations and theories of suicide, such as Durkheim's, they may contribute, even slightly, to advancing suicide prevention.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interviewee Characteristics

Name (n=29)	Age (\bar{x} =26.2)	Gender (13 F, 16 M)	Major	Education
Ah-Hyun	27	F	Business	Graduated
Dae-Hyun	30	M	Religious Studies	Graduated
Do-Yun	20	M	General Arts	In-progress
Eun-Woo	29	M	Linguistics/Chinese/English	Graduated
Ha-Eun	27	F	Business	Graduated
Ha-Joon	27	M	Economics	Graduated
Hee-Ra	30	F	Biology	Graduated
Ho-Jin	28	M	Philosophy	Graduated
Hye-Jin	22	F	Business	Graduated
Hye-Kyung	28	F	Graphic Design	Graduated
Jeon-Su	27	M	Music	Graduated
Ji-Ho	23	M	Business	Graduated
Ji-Min	28	F	Linguistics	Graduated
Jin-Ju	29	F	Business	Graduated
Ju-Won	25	M	Computer Science	Graduated
Kyu-Ri	25	F	Undecided	In-progress
Min-Jun	29	F	Pharmacy	Graduated
Nam-Il	30	M	International Trading	Graduated
Seo-Jun	29	M	Visual Arts	Graduated
Seong-Ho	28	M	Social Sciences	Graduated
Si-Woo	22	M	Business	In-progress
Song-Min	21	M	Medicine	In-progress
Soo-Jung	30	F	Graphic Design	Graduated
Sun-Yung	25	F	Undecided	In-progress
Ye-Jun	22	M	Math	Graduated
Yeon-Woo	25	M	Social Work	Graduated
Yi-Jae	26	F	Software/Logistics	Graduated
Yong-Gi	22	M	Computer Science	Graduated
Young-Ae	26	F	Chinese/English	Graduated

Appendix B: Most Common Themes Mentioned in Relation to Suicide

Theme	Brief Description	Frequency (n=29)	Example Quote
Career Pressure	Intense pressure to secure stable, prestigious jobs, causing stress and anxiety.	24	“I thought about suicide when I kept failing job interviews and feels like I’m useless and there’s no hope in the future.” - Yi-Jae
Productivity Demands	Constant expectation to be productive and achieve, with little rest or leisure time.	11	“In Korea, I feel like there’s a lot of pressure to the people. Like, you need to work hard, study hard, and get along with people well.” - Ah-Hyun
Lack of Life Satisfaction	Feelings of dissatisfaction with life choices influenced by external pressures.	21	“But now when I think about it, many Korean people my age must go through the same thing. They end up in a situation where they don’t want to live the life they created.” - Song-Min
Parental Expectations	Influence from parents on career, education, and life decisions to avoid disappointment.	16	“When I was 8, I scored so high in math hagwons [private schools]. My teachers would call my parents and say how good I did, and I think this made my parents so happy. But the downside is that it made my parents made solid. They couldn’t ever forget about the math, and so they pushed me so hard to do math throughout my whole life.” - Ye-Jun

Theme	Brief Description	Frequency (n=29)	Example Quote
Pressure to Conform to Societal Norms	Societal pressure to follow expected life milestones, like marriage and career success.	26	“Actually, it’s funny to say like this, but it’s like your life is determined from when you’re baby. Your parents will tell you what they want you to do. Korean society tells you, do like this and you’ll be a successful citizen. Your parents will never ask you, what do you think you want to do for a major in uni? They just say what they want you to major in. Or do the major which you score the best in at hagwons, or on the test.” - Ji-Ho

Changing Attitudes Toward Diversity in Japanese Public Schools: A Study of Multicultural Education Strategies in Higashi-Hiroshima

*Tinka DELAKORDA KAWASHIMA**

Abstract

Researchers have identified certain shortcomings in multicultural education in Japanese public schools, particularly in relation to children with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. While there is an emphasis on supporting Japanese language instruction and equal treatment with mainstream students, there is a lack of attention to the cultural and religious differences and needs that may hinder children's integration into the school environment. Despite this observation, there is limited research on practical strategies to address these issues. This paper evaluates multicultural education on two fronts: first, through the observation of teaching practices for children with foreign roots at a Higashi-Hiroshima elementary school, and second, by examining teacher training at a national university in the same city. The study highlights deficiencies in teachers' diversity approaches, particularly their lack of experience in dealing with differences. It proposes that integrating practical group activities aimed at promoting awareness of diversity, e.g., religious differences into multicultural teacher education strategies can significantly reshape teachers' perceptions and attitudes toward different cultures.

Keywords: multicultural education, Japanese public schools, cultural diversity, integration challenges, teacher training, religious differences, practical strategies

Spreminjanje odnosa do raznolikosti v japonskih javnih šolah: študija strategij večkulturne vzgoje v Higaši Hirošimi

Izvleček

Raziskovalke in raziskovalci so prepoznali ključne pomanjkljivosti v večkulturni vzgoji v japonskih javnih šolah, zlasti pri vključevanju otrok z raznolikimi kulturnimi in jezikovnimi ozadji. Medtem ko se izobraževalni sistemi osredotočajo na poučevanje japonskega jezika in enakovredno obravnavo v primerjavi z domačimi učenci in učenkami, so kulturne in verske razlike pogosto spregledane, kar otežuje vključevanje teh otrok v šolsko okolje.

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Kljub tem opaženjem primanjkuje raziskav o praktičnih strategijah za reševanje teh izzivov. Članek ocenjuje večkulturno izobraževanje na dveh ravneh: z opazovanjem učnih praks za otroke tujega porekla v osnovni šoli v Higaši Hirošimi in analizo usposabljanja učiteljic in učiteljev na nacionalni univerzi v istem mestu. Študija razkriva pomanjkljivosti v učiteljskih pristopih k raznolikosti, zlasti pomanjkanje izkušenj pri obravnavanju kulturnih razlik. Trdi, da bi lahko vključitev praktičnih skupinskih dejavnosti, ki spodbujajo zavedanje o različnosti, na primer o verskih razlikah, v izobraževanje učiteljev in učiteljic pomembno izboljšala njihovo razumevanje ter odnos do različnih kultur.

Ključne besede: večkulturna vzgoja, japonske javne šole, kulturna raznolikost, izzivi vključevanja, usposabljanje učiteljic in učiteljev, verske razlike, praktične strategije

Introduction

Deficiencies in Multicultural Education

In the last two decades, the liberal approach to multicultural education has been criticized for not effectively addressing issues of inequality, such as racism and discrimination, in schools and society as a whole (Norton and Toohey 2004). Multicultural education in schools, although it focuses on teaching about diverse cultures, customs, and lifestyles, also emphasizes that all children should be treated equally and have equal opportunities in society regardless of said differences in their backgrounds. The emphasis on equal treatment though, which means that every student is given the same opportunity to succeed, has been criticized as it stresses that each individual's academic and economic success depends on their own efforts (Kubota 2004). Okano argues that conventional approaches often focus on individual merit and equal treatment, overlooking systemic inequalities that affect marginalized groups. She critiques one-size-fits-all policies, and argues for an understanding of justice that incorporates diverse cultural and social backgrounds, allowing for a more nuanced approach to educational equity (Okano 2016).

Researchers have provided examples of how schools and educators worldwide readily adopt liberal multicultural education as an apparent solution to ethnic and cultural diversity issues in education (McLaren 1994; Banks and McGee Banks 2009). This approach is often criticized as a superficial solution to ethnic and cultural diversity issues, as discussed by Peter McLaren, a scholar in critical pedagogy. McLaren critiques how liberal multicultural education is usually embraced in ways that focus on tolerance and diversity without addressing the deeper structural inequalities and power relations that underlie educational systems. In this work, McLaren discusses the limitations of liberal multiculturalism, arguing that it can

often serve as a way to pacify real demands for systemic change by focusing on surface-level celebrations of diversity rather than addressing the fundamental issues of racism, classism, and inequality in education. James A. Banks critiques the “celebratory” or “additive” approach to multicultural education that many schools adopt, which can be more about tokenism than real systemic reform (Banks and McGee Banks 2009). In this text, Banks critiques how multicultural education is often implemented in ways that avoid challenging the dominant culture or the inequalities present in the system.

It is argued that this ease of implementation is recognized as a significant weakness because it fails to acknowledge cultural differences and unequal social positions that perpetuate inequality. This is because it hinders the opportunity for meaningful interactions that would help students experience and cope with cultural differences. Simply acquiring knowledge about the cultural differences between “us” and “them” does not lead to the recognition of the differences “among us” that are the source of power dynamics and social inequalities. However, educational practices that do not substantially challenge power relations are more likely to be adopted in schools, as the authors suggest (Norton and Toohey 2004; Kubota 2004). The root of conflict is often considered to result from misunderstanding differences rather than inequitable power relations. For example, culture, sometimes equated with ethnicity (e.g., Japanese culture = an ethnic Japanese individual),¹ is seen as a characteristic of individuals and a set of stable practices that can be described and taught, so that even teachers without training in cultural studies can easily teach noticeable cultural differences to promote awareness of various ethnic cultural histories. However, in doing so, teachers often inadvertently create idealized cultures that romanticize differences. When we only focus on the customs and traditions of different people, we often end up exoticizing and simplifying their cultures to objects we appreciate. This superficial treatment or essentialization of another culture is referred to as “cultural tourism”, where cultures are reduced to festivals, foods, and holidays without addressing issues like systemic racism and inequality (Sleeter 1995; Ladson-Billings 1995) or “methodological nationalism” (Rots 2023). Rots argues that essentialization is closely linked to nationalism, particularly in the context of Japanese studies. Framing cultural studies within rigid national boundaries limits understanding of transnational influences and the fluidity of cultural identities (*ibid.*).

To effectively address discrimination in education and society, it is crucial to revamp current multicultural education in teacher training (Norton and

1 Such an equation is viewed as problematic because it relies on an essentialist understanding of culture as an inherent and unchangeable attribute of an individual.

Toohy 2004). It is vital to move beyond merely recognizing diversity on the surface level and instead engage with the complexities of difference (Kubota 2010). To create more inclusive and equitable educational environments that genuinely embrace diversity and promote social justice, education must involve acknowledging and challenging systemic inequalities, understanding the unique experiences of marginalized groups, and actively working to dismantle discriminatory structures and practices (*ibid.*). However, the teaching practices needed to understand the experiences of marginalized groups have not been explored in previous studies. Understanding the experiences of others is not achieved by merely studying them as fossilized knowledge, and instead we must provide opportunities to experience the differences that are important to others—we must experience how these differences matter to others (Montgomery 2021). Religion (and attitudes to religion) is one of the ways to introduce the concept of difference and diversity. Unlike other important differences like language, customs, and geographical features, religion has been largely neglected in education. In Japan, the law prohibits education on or the advocating of specific religions, but not general knowledge about religion and the role of religion in society.² Although religion and the process of “learning from religion” play a significant role in civic education (Jackson 2005; Walker, Chan, and McEver 2021), university-level teacher education in Japan currently places little emphasis on this. I thus aim to introduce a unique approach to religion, highlighting its effectiveness in multicultural education at the university level.

As I showed above (see Norton and Toohy 2004; Kubota 2004), multicultural education tends to be based on misguided philosophies such as cultural tourism, nationalism and liberalism. However, despite the need to revamp multicultural education, very few studies address exactly how this can be achieved. The current work thus aims to address this gap by examining two aspects of multicultural education in the case of the Higashi-Hiroshima public school and higher education systems: 1) how teachers educate children with foreign roots in elementary schools, and 2) how religious awareness practices can help us improve multicultural teacher training at the university. Throughout this paper, I will refer to the first as “elementary school practices” and to the second as “teacher training”, both falling under the field of multicultural education. The main goal of the study is to present a case of multicultural education in Japan to hopefully illustrate good

2 Basic Act on Education in the Fundamentals Concerning the Provision of Religious Education (Article 15 in Chapter II) states: (1) Religious tolerance, general knowledge about religion, and the position of religion in social life must be valued in education. (2) The schools established by the national and local governments shall refrain from religious education in favour of any specific religion, and from other religious activities (MEXT 2006).

practices, and guide future discussions of the execution of more appropriate and fairer education.

The paper commences with the author's observations of current practices in an elementary school in Higashi-Hiroshima. It then explores the issue of teacher training at the university, focusing on the author's experiment with a focus group that conducted practical discussions on religious awareness. Finally, the results are discussed, illustrating the current gaps in multicultural education and how to address them.

Observation of Elementary Teaching Practices

The Demand for Japanese Language Instruction

In 2022, approximately 3.1 million residents of foreign nationality were registered in Japan, making up about 3% of the population. Between 2013 and 2019, the total number of foreign residents increased by 660,000 before dropping due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In cases where foreign national wishes to enroll their child in a public compulsory school, the child is admitted free of charge following the International Covenant on Human Rights and is guaranteed the same educational opportunities as Japanese students. As of the 2023 school year, the number of children of foreign nationality enrolled in Japanese public elementary and junior high schools was approximately 129,449. Of these, 57,718 are in need of Japanese language instruction.³

The number of children (including Japanese nationals with multicultural backgrounds) requiring Japanese language instruction in public schools has increased by around 150% in 10 years and will rise even further due to the renewed governmental policy of increasing the number of foreign workers, researchers, and students in Japan. Among children in need of Japanese language instruction in elementary and junior high schools, 79.5% of foreign nationals and 74.4% of Japanese nationals are receiving special instruction, such as supplementary lessons in school subjects. Of these, the proportion receiving Japanese language instruction in elementary and junior high schools through the formulation and implementation of a "special curriculum", which involves the preparation and evaluation of individualized teaching plans, was 60.8% and 57.3%, representing increases of 18.2 and 18.5 percentage points, respectively. This special instruction, introduced in 2014, is provided in classrooms other than the student's enrollment class (MEXT 2021; National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2017).

3 Dual citizens with Japanese and other nationalities were not included in the study.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Education's survey on foreign children's enrollment status conducted in 2019 and 2022 revealed that more than 20% of these students are unable to receive special education, such as Japanese language instruction. About 20,000 foreign children were either not enrolled in school or their enrollment status had not been confirmed (MEXT 2022).⁴

When examining the current multicultural education strategies for elementary and high school students in Japan, it is important to start by looking at the teaching practices in Japanese as a second language education. The field of Japanese language instruction has garnered the most, if not exclusive, attention in governmental and Board of Education policies aimed at integrating foreign children with foreign roots into the Japanese educational system (MEXT 2021).

Various studies have been conducted on the problems that foreign children face in receiving education at elementary and high schools. In areas such as Aichi Prefecture, where there are many foreign workers, research on Japanese language education in schools has been ongoing for more than 20 years (Miyajima and Ota 2005). Higashi-Hiroshima City is becoming similar to other college cities/regions in Japan (e.g., Aichi, Tsukuba, etc.) and around the world with universities and research institutions, in that many foreign children are coming from numerous different countries and do not know the local language. It is therefore of interest to conduct research in Higashi-Hiroshima, and we can expect the results to have some applicability for other college towns.

The number of foreign researchers and other workers coming to Higashi-Hiroshima from almost 100 different countries has increased by around 7,000 compared to before the internationalization initiative in the city (Higashi-Hiroshima City Official Website n.d.). Local public schools with little experience of teaching foreign children have thus become overwhelmed by 30 to 70 new foreign students enrolling in public elementary schools each year (Delakorda Kawashima 2019). There is no doubt that the acquisition of the Japanese language is a major challenge for this group of "newcomers" (A category classifying foreigners who entered the country after the new immigration policies to distinguish this group from the minorities who have lived in Japan for several generations, referred to as "oldcomers"). However, language proficiency alone is not sufficient to ensure a smooth school life for such children. In the following paragraphs, a situation at one among several schools in the city where the author has conducted observations will be briefly discussed.

4 Sources like *Japan Today* (2019) and Yoshimi (2022) also mention these trends.

Elementary School Observation in Higashi-Hiroshima: Methodology

The author has been in charge of a university programme for globally minded teachers and is interested in improving teaching practices for pupils with foreign roots in elementary schools. In collaboration with the city Board of Education and the Japanese as Second Language Education Department in the School of Education, which together support the provision of Japanese language instruction for pupils with foreign roots in local elementary schools, the author was invited to explore approaches to improve teacher training by observing and supporting the education of children with foreign roots in several local schools throughout the Hiroshima prefecture. Here, the study focuses on one of the elementary schools in Higashi-Hiroshima, a city located in Hiroshima Prefecture, which belongs to an area with a relatively dense foreign population (partly due to the presence of the main campus of a national university with international teachers, researchers, and their families). In 2024, roughly 190,000 residents live in Higashi-Hiroshima, among which almost 5% (around 9,000) are foreigners.

The author observed the school on a daily or weekly basis throughout the academic years of 2018 and 2019. The school had around 1,000 students and 80 teachers, including a part-time former Japanese language teacher responsible for the academic and other needs of approximately 30 to 40 students with foreign backgrounds from the first to sixth grades. My observations extended from the Japanese room to homeroom and other venues (e.g., gym, playground) to observe student ability to participate in the mainstream class. The author's primary focus was on these students, who received instruction in a dedicated Japanese language room (*nihongo kyōshitsu* 日本語教室) during various class periods throughout the day. With the exception of music and physical education classes, these students attended the Japanese language room during subjects such as math, Japanese language (*kokugo* 国語), and ethics (*dōtoku* 道徳) due to their limited Japanese language skills. The observations involved supporting the teaching process, conducting interviews with the teacher and volunteer language supporters, and engaging in casual conversations with the pupils. Additionally, the author would accompany the students to their homeroom and observe their activities there, as well as during other school events such as preparations for the graduation ceremony. The author's observations of participants' behaviours and expressions were recorded in a paper notebook.

Observation Results

The principal of a public elementary school I frequently visited said that the school had little experience with foreign students in the past. Now, they have about 30

to 40 new students enrolling yearly, and the number is growing. These foreign students were named “students with foreign roots” by researchers in order to also include Japanese nationals born to parents of Japanese and non-Japanese nationalities (Tokunaga 2018). They came to Higashi-Hiroshima from different countries, such as Afghanistan, Brazil, China, Egypt, Iran, Indonesia, and Mongolia, mainly because their parents work as researchers at local universities or multinational corporations. Because of different work contracts, they would join the school at different stages of the school year, from October, January, to April, etc. Naturally, they are of different ages and join different school grades. They all come together to the so-called *nihongo kyōshitsu* that was set apart for Japanese instruction. For example, first and second-graders would spend the first three periods in the Japanese language room, while third to sixth-graders would join later. Organizationally, this class was somewhat chaotic due to the mix of students from different grades.

According to the Board of Education, every school gets one part-time Japanese language teacher for 18 pupils. At this school, only one teacher was appointed to take over 30 to 40 pupils who might need extra help compared to their native Japanese counterparts. The Japanese language instructor at the school is tasked with addressing a wide range of student needs, including language instruction, religious and dietary accommodations, and facilitating communication with parents. They also collaborate with homeroom teachers who are in charge of the homeroom of a group of students where they spend their entire time in a school. As Rhodes (1994) puts it, “homeroom teachers share parental responsibility for each student’s academic and social progress and for discipline and guidance”, and in the context of this study they also assess each student’s proficiency in Japanese and academic performance in subjects such as math, social studies, and science.

What stood out to me the most during these observations was the thoroughness of the instruction in addressing inappropriate student behaviour and maintaining discipline, aligning with the approach used for mainstream students. Such instruction is referred to as *kokumin* 国民 education—education for Japanese nationals (*kokumin*) perceived as ethnic Japanese (Miyajima and Ota 2005). Teachers showed difficulty instructing first and second graders when they would not sit with their backs straight, as this is considered as a sign of disrespect towards the teacher and indicative of a lack of concentration. There were also many miscommunications with parents with regard to “what to bring to school”. For example, if a student did not bring clean school shoes to school every Monday, they would be instructed to stay barefoot despite the cold winter, as the room was not heated. After a while, I learned more about the circumstances of the students’ families, including the absence of parents due to work or lack of language skills to understand what needs to be prepared for their children every week. The school is strict

for all students, no matter their background: if you are not prepared, then you are excluded from class activities and tasked with writing an observation and self-reflection on one side of the room.

The somewhat harsh treatment the elementary school adopts derives from the directive from the Administrative Vice Minister of Education (Bunhatsu Zaisei No. 464, dated 18 December 1965). The directive, which was initially applied only to Korean residents in Japan, but it was later revised to apply to foreigners in general, states that children should be treated the same as Japanese children, with no special treatment given to the organization of curricula and the education of those who have been permitted to reside permanently in Japan. The directive states that the basic aim of accepting foreign children into Japanese schools is to provide them with “the same education as Japanese children”. This means the same classrooms, using the same textbooks, and with the same teachers as the Japanese children. All children in Japan thus receive the same content and are evaluated according to the same standards. According to Miyajima and Ota (2005), there have been no substantive changes to this directive, and Japanese schools reflect this principle in the education of newcomer children, and thus it has an impact on their educational achievement (*ibid.*, 57).

Many newcomer children are not native speakers of Japanese, and this naturally creates a linguistic gap in schools where instruction and activities are carried out only in Japanese. The greatest efforts on the side of the school with regard to foreign students is thus devoted to Japanese language instruction, in the hope that improving their language proficiency will lead to a better learning experience, one similar to that of Japanese children. As a result, the use of the children’s native language is often discouraged or not actively supported. In this environment, students have limited opportunities to use their mother tongue and are expected to use Japanese as the primary language in their school life, while simultaneously learning the language (Miyajima and Ota, 2005, 60–61).

In her survey, Tokunaga pointed out that in Japan, multicultural education is mainly focused on educating newcomer students, which in this context means teaching them to speak and behave like a Japanese child. This approach does not prioritize promoting intercultural understanding between Japanese and international students, and instead it can further emphasize the division between “us” and “them” (Tokunaga 2018). The linguistic and cultural wall between students with different backgrounds and mainstream students could be seen in some common situations at the school, where newcomer students seemed isolated from others and also hesitant or lacking confidence to actively participate or communicate with their mainstream peers upon returning to the homeroom. Despite this,

the teacher usually continued to teach without addressing the students' difficulty in understanding the material. Miyajima and Ota (2005) have explained this treatment in the practice of the so-called "*kokumin* education" (education for the national/ethnic Japanese), which has been practiced, particularly since the post-WWII era, assuming that all students proficient in Japanese are regarded as equal citizens. As a result, they are treated "equally" without considering their diverse backgrounds. According to the authors, the integration of children with foreign roots in Japanese public education assumes that they have mastered the Japanese language (*ibid.*). This is also in line with my observation, where all students were treated as "equals" and held at the same standards as native Japanese students, despite the obvious gaps in language proficiency among the newcomers.

Also telling is the recent report of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) titled "Current Status of Japanese Language Instruction for Returnees and Foreign Pupils", which reflects the view of Japanese returnees from abroad and foreign children having the same needs, namely a lack of Japanese language proficiency. The report recommends utilizing multicultural education to explicitly educate Japanese language teachers (MEXT 2021), showing a limited understanding of multicultural education that involves all teachers and students aiming at mutual learning. On the ground, as the research on foreign children's education (also the so-called "immigrant education") in Japan shows, except for schools with a large minority population where they incorporate the idea of "multicultural co-existence" school policies (Tsuboya and Kobayashi 2013), most public mainstream schools face difficulties in implementing multicultural education and dealing with culturally and linguistically diverse children. This is, according to research, due to a shortage of teachers trained in diversity (Association for Japanese Language Education 2018), and this weakness could stem from systemic issues, such as institutional policies—as governmental reports and guidelines show (MEXT 2021)—or societal biases.

While some may argue that the current multicultural education system focusing on Japanese language instruction and equal treatment adequately addresses the needs of diverse students in Japanese public schools, it is essential to recognize the overlooked power dynamics that can inhibit the integration of these students into the school environment. That is, the extra burden caused by the pressure to learn "acceptable language" and "socially acceptable behaviours". In practice, for Japanese pupils these are acquired naturally, while newcomer children have to learn them, and that adds to the burden they face in school.

Additionally, we may contend that the lack of research on practical strategies to address these issues undermines the urgency of this matter. As such, it is crucial

to acknowledge the deficiencies in the current multicultural education system and the need for effective strategies to address and transform teachers' attitudes towards diversity and the inequalities arising from there. To change this situation in schools, we need to look not only at current elementary teaching practices but also at what is happening with teachers. What are their attitudes and perspectives? How are teachers being taught? To what extent do pre-service teachers learn to become sensitive to cultural differences? What is their religious and cultural awareness? I will first elucidate the inadequacies in the current approach to multicultural education among teachers, and then I will expound upon a specific practical endeavour/experiment aimed at addressing this issue through a teacher training programme at a national university.

Perspectives Lacking in Current Teachers

Monoculturalism and the Invisible Power of the Majority

The existing approach to multicultural education (or immigrant education) among teachers, as evidenced by research and practice in the realm of Japanese as a second language education, demonstrates the field's commitment to providing language instruction to a diverse group of students and facilitating their integration into the school system while aiding them in keeping pace with the curriculum. In practice, the implementation of *nihongo kyōshitsu* gives a sense of inclusion, yet it ignores the potential disadvantages immigrant students may face. This approach has thus faced criticism for its perceived elitism and monocultural focus (Kubota 2010). Critics show how perceptions of Japan as a single nation, ethnicity, and language can conceal power imbalances and hinder efforts to promote fairness and equality in multicultural schools (Hirasawa 2009; Noiri 2005). Takahashi (2020) discusses the impact of the concept of "Japaneseness" on educators in immigrant education, emphasizing that educational literature often fails to acknowledge the ethnic majority in Japan, equating it with people holding Japanese nationality (I refer to this group as "nationally/legally Japanese"). This invisibility perpetuates the hidden privileges of power in society and obscures the diversity within the nationally "Japanese" community (*ibid.*, 21). Viewing the Japanese as a culturally and ethnically homogenous group leads to the labelling of children from mixed cultural backgrounds as "non-Japanese" individuals.

This invisible "Japaneseness" prevents teachers from being impartial, as they belong to the dominant ethnic majority and tend to privilege ethnic Japanese students and Japanese culture, as the concept of Japaneseness is closely tied to Japanese culture (Noiri 2005).

Only a few studies on foreign children's education have focused on Japanese teachers and their cultural awareness, such as Tokunaga (2018) and Takahashi (2020), and sources like Yoshimi (2022) mentioned above. It seems crucial to find ways to acknowledge and appreciate the internal diversity of nationally/legally "Japanese" people, including children from "mixed" parents.⁵ As Noiri (2005) points out, a binary approach between Japanese and non-Japanese individuals overlooks the diversity, complexity, and hybrid nature—we should rather say—within and between ethnically/racially Japanese and legally/nationally Japanese individuals.

Pressure to Conform

In Japan's education system, "non-Japanese individuals" frequently face marginalization as outsiders, whereas the Japanese majority, viewed as ethnically pure, maintains exclusionary practices in education. The concept of homogeneity is used to separate the majority from those who are considered different based on their appearance, lifestyle, worldview, and behaviour (Takahashi 2020). As such, exclusion, bullying, and discrimination can occur at schools because individuals do not fit into predetermined mainstream categories. For these reasons, it seems important in teacher training to consider which types of diversity are sanctioned by the state, mass media, and academia, and what kinds of difference are perceived as problematic. However, the current teacher training curriculum and guidelines do not include any mention of the relationship between the "problematic" diversity and dominant ideological constructs or literature on culture and ethnic formation based on historical facts (e.g., Hudson 1999) or critical examinations of *nihonjinron* 日本人論 (theories of "Japanese-ness") (e.g., Oguma 1995; Yoshino 2005; Morris-Suzuki 1998).

When examining the impact of uniformity and conformity in school settings, we are confronted with a significant and tangible risk of peer exclusion for displaying any form of deviation. The excessive emphasis on rules and conformity has led to issues such as absenteeism, bullying, and the perpetuation of homogeneity. According to a 2019 survey by MEXT, there were over 540,000 reported cases of bullying in schools, marking a year-on-year increase of 31% (Tomano 2021). Moreover, absenteeism, violent incidents, and suicides have been on the rise, with the age-based grouping system being a fundamental factor contributing to many of the challenges faced by schools. The highly homogeneous nature of classrooms, where all students are of the same age, ethnicity, and cultural beliefs, intensifies

5 In Japan, children of nationally mixed parents with only one ethnic Japanese parent are widely considered as half Japanese or just "half", even in school textbooks.

the pressure to conform. Individuals who do not fit in often face stigma in environments that prioritize conformity, and consequently the pressure to conform is a significant issue that requires attention and resolution (*ibid.*).

Separation of Difference

The elementary practices discussed in this paper show how teachers interact with different students at the elementary school level. Newcomer students are placed in a separate classroom to learn the Japanese language and behaviour. While students in the separate room seemed more engaged in learning, expressing themselves and voicing their opinions more often compared to their participation in a regular classroom, this arrangement may provide a sense of belonging in an otherwise insecure environment. However, it also widens the gap between minority students and others, hindering their integration into school life.

Preoccupation with Japanese language instruction in multicultural education research lacks focus on students' social integration beyond the Japanese language classroom. Japanese scholars have somewhat discussed multicultural coexistence education in the contexts of Korean (*Zainichi* 在日) minorities (e.g., Chapman 2007; Lie 2008; Noiri 2005). However, as the comprehensive analysis of papers authored by Japanese multicultural researchers from 1985 to 2011 showed, while there have been studies on topics relating to living (race, minority religion, minority culture, minority lifestyle), learning (how to learn a language), school activities, and community life, there has been a lack of research on topics such as living and language learning (Seo and Qi 2013). The research employed a multi-factor paradigm support method to review 505 documents on diversity, difference, and equity within the context of multicultural education in Japan. The findings revealed that Japanese researchers demonstrated a greater interest in environmental factors (43%) than minority humanism factors (20%), indicating a greater focus on policy, society, the school curriculum, textbooks, classes, and educational instruments compared to issues such as race, minority cultures, and minority problems. Furthermore, those studies grouped in the “learning” category contained more papers on Japanese teaching and learning compared to bilingualism and other languages. The text also highlights Japanese researchers' fascination with Western research on multicultural education, particularly from the United States. However, it points out a discrepancy, noting that many American multicultural education journals emphasize human factors, particularly those related to race. The study found that out of a total of 505 papers, only 12 were related to minority groups such as Koreans, Chinese, Taiwanese, Brazilians, Spaniards, Vietnamese, and Indonesians (Seo and Qi 2013).

The previous research in Japan shows a gap between the Japanese researchers' fascination with Western studies on multicultural education and the reality of public schools' treatment and understanding of multicultural education. That is, most researchers focus on institutional policy, the school curriculum, textbooks, etc., rather than on the diversity of students, social integration, and minority issues.⁶ The issues and engagement with regard to diversity and difference seem divorced from those pertaining to multicultural education in Japan. This study identified deficiencies in education within Higashi-Hiroshima's public school system, where the current teaching and school environment, e.g. separate classrooms, intensify the division between the mainstream and minority students.

To address this, it is suggested that an inclusive learning environment be established to allow all students to learn together. However, creating such an environment requires fostering the right attitudes toward diversity, which cannot be achieved solely by gaining knowledge about different cultures and minorities. Hirasawa highlighted that the challenge stems from misunderstandings about the concept of multicultural education. As reflected in MEXT policies, the focus is on content integration about diverse cultures into the mainstream curriculum and the failure to implement other essential components of multicultural education, such as an equity pedagogy, prejudice reduction, and empowering school culture (Hirasawa 2009; MEXT 2021).

In order to effectively address power dynamics, inequality, and exclusion based on cultural differences in schools, it is crucial to acknowledge and confront the differences among students. As Adam Seligman rightly puts it, "to overcome difference, one must first acknowledge it" (Seligman 2023).⁷ Teacher training should thus prioritize equipping pre-service teachers with new attitudes and mindsets conscious of cultural differences and diversity. Pre-service teachers can acquire such attitudes during their teaching training through structured conversations on cultural differences, especially non-negotiable values, which cause prejudice and conflict between members of different groups, such as minority and majority groups, religious groups, groups belonging to different social classes, and so on. As pre-service teachers can become more aware of their own cultural orientations and sensitive to other cultural groups by learning about and experiencing various non-negotiable values, this paper focuses on topics related to religious awareness,

6 A welcome exception is the 2024 special issue on community and intercultural education of the Japanese journal *Intercultural Education* that discusses life and lifestyles of minorities in the context of education in Japan.

7 Adam Seligman emphasized the importance of difference in his lectures at Hiroshima University in 2023 (more on the topic is found in Seligman, Wasserfall and Montgomery 2016; Seligman 2021).

as this is one of the themes completely overlooked in teacher education due to the lack of research on the religiosity of Japanese people and the widespread view that all Japanese people are non-religious (Fujiwara 2010; 2011). In the following section, we will explore the potential challenges of teaching important differences that relate to culture, religion, and values, and I will also share an illustrative training practice on religious awareness at Hiroshima University.

Effective Strategies: Advancing from Passive Knowledge Acquisition to Practical Learning

The previous research argues for the need for participatory learning (Okano 2021). Moreover, several studies show that simply learning new general and abstract knowledge about perceptions of culture, nation, and identity was not enough to change deeply rooted essentialist views of culture, but instead simply intensified these problematic views (Fujiwara 2010; Seligman 2021). Such arguments are not new, and Seligman reminds us of John Dewey's lessons on the dangers of abstraction from a hundred years ago and argues on the need for experience and embodied knowledge in education (Seligman 2021; Dewey 1938).

This study fills this gap with specially designed activities to raise self-awareness of differences through discussions that effectively change students' assumptions about themselves and the Other. Such a teaching strategy could enable teachers to recognize the internal diversity of "Japanese culture" and students' (i.e., pre-service teachers') positions in power structures.

Researchers have warned that the acquisition of cultural knowledge alone can lead to stereotyping and bullying (Sleeter 1995; Ladson-Billings 1995; Rots 2023; Grigoryev, Berry and Zabrodskaja 2021). Grigoryev, Berry and Zabrodskaja (2021), in a study focused on intercultural relations, noted that reducing intercultural interactions to superficial knowledge about cultural groups may reinforce rigid stereotypes, as individuals may adopt a "fixed" view of cultural traits rather than developing a deeper understanding of the individuals within those groups. This approach can exacerbate existing biases rather than mitigate them, especially if educators or individuals do not actively engage in nuanced perspectives and critical thinking about cultural diversity. According to a scholar in religious education, teaching and testing generalized knowledge about values (e.g., "Muslims do not eat pork") within Japan's nationally unified examination system can lead to stereotyping (Fujiwara 2010, 229). Moreover, cultural knowledge acquisition can further promote the idea of the homogeneity of foreign culture, customs, and tradition. In the context of Japanese culture, such a study of culture might have

given rise to the prevailing idea of “homogenous non-religiosity” that nobody questioned, criticized, or tested (Fujiwara, 2010; 2011). It is worth noting that there are no studies on the influence of religiosity on political views in Japan, as it is assumed that all Japanese people have the same level of religiosity (ibid.). Ama further states that in Japan, rather than being uneducated about religion, there is a preference for religious ignorance (Ama 2005).

Instead of mere knowledge acquisition, recent international and regional efforts tend to emphasize interreligious dialogue as a means of resolving conflicts and creating peace (Keast 2007). In multicultural education, it is crucial to uncover and overcome stereotypes—racial, cultural, gender, and more (Eurydice Network 2004)—through dialogues on cultures and values. The intercultural approach thus calls for the ability of teachers and, indeed, other school staff, to react to ethnic or racist types of stereotyping that can be voiced by pupils during the discussion process. However, this presupposes that teachers themselves are capable of protecting their own behaviour from the influence of cultural stereotypes, and that they then possess the skills needed to facilitate pupils’ discussions (Fujiwara 2010, 229–30).

I have shown that multicultural education goes beyond simply acquiring cultural knowledge. I contend that integrating practical studies from the sociology of religion into multicultural education can provide a solution to this issue. In the following section, I will introduce an attempt to assess the effectiveness of practical learning on subjects related to culture, religion, and values. This assessment will be conducted with a focus group as part of a globally minded teacher-training programme at a university.

Religious Awareness Activity in Teacher Training: Methodology

The practical learning experiments were conducted with several focus groups of pre-service teachers at the School of Education. I will describe one of the experiments from July 2019 with a focus group of undergraduate students in their third year of teacher training. These students were selected to assess their existing sensitivity to cultural differences and to examine the effects of the activity on their awareness of these differences. The experiment aimed to clarify how can we educate (pre-service) teachers to address different values and beliefs among pupils through dialogues and interactions without stereotyping. Concretely, what mindset and skills do (pre-service) teachers need to acquire, and how? Will raising teachers’ religious and cultural self-awareness help teachers become more mindful of the risks of their own behaviour, values, and beliefs influencing their grading and cultural stereotypes in and outside the classroom?

The experiment began with an introduction to problems in a multicultural society, such as unfair treatment of students or discrimination in a local school. This was followed by a questionnaire and group discussion activity. The items in the questionnaire were based on a religious studies survey by Ishii (2010) that focused on everyday religious practices and beliefs.

Figures 1 and 2 illustrate a set of questionnaire questions. A total of 144 pre-service elementary school teachers, 98 female and 46 male, in their third year of undergraduate study, individually responded to these questions. Subsequently, they compared their answers with their peers and engaged in discussions to reflect on their findings. The questions were designed to explore beliefs in the existence of gods, *kami* 神, Buddha, ancestor spirits, and heaven, as well as related practices such as visiting graves and carrying talismans. Additionally, the questionnaire included items about perceptions of Shinto, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and new religious movements, among other topics (Delakorda Kawashima 2019).

Experiment Results

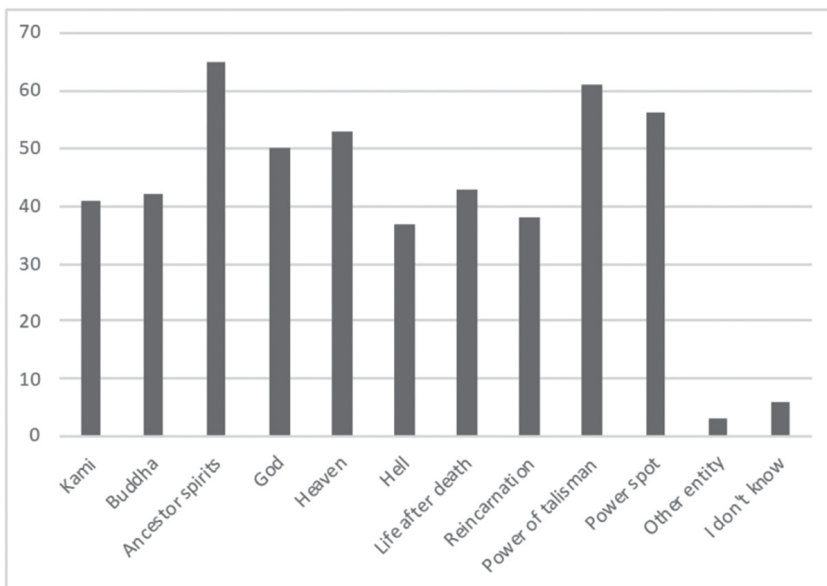


Figure 1: Do you believe in the existence of the following?

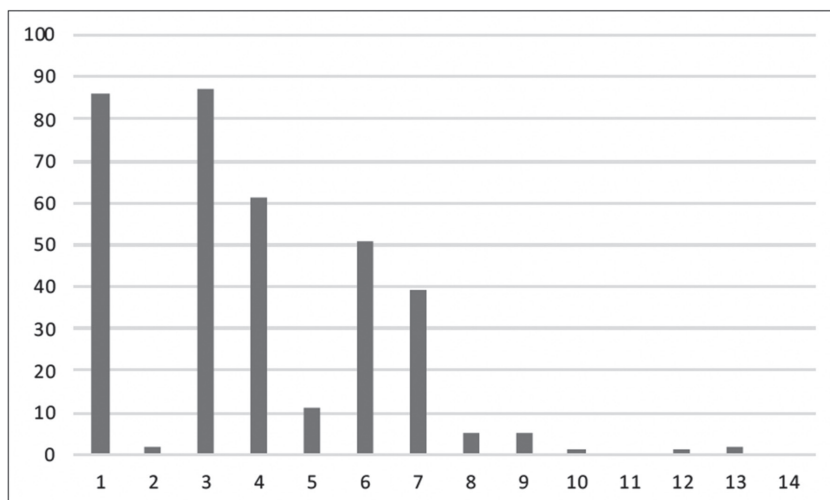


Figure 2: Do you practice or participate in the following:

- 1 Make a New Year's pilgrimage (visit) *hatsumōde* 初詣で
- 2 Visit a church on Christmas Eve
- 3 Make equinoctial visits to family graves
- 4 Carry a talisman, *omamori* お守り or *ofuda* お札
- 5 Visit a shrine or temple or church
- 6 Pray for family safety, health, success, a passing of an exam, etc.
- 7 Read about fortune-telling (*uranai* 占い) or visit a fortune teller
- 8 Read sacred scripts, the Bible or other literature on the topics of religion/spirituality
- 9 Read manga / watch anime or movies on the topics of religion and spirituality
- 10 Practice Zen meditation / yoga / attend mass / recite sutra / spread the faith
- 11 Practice yoga for fitness
- 12 Other activities
- 13 None of the above
- 14 I don't know

As the students themselves conducted these interviews in groups with their peers, they became aware of the differences between each other. They realized through dialogue and discussion that, for example, they had different beliefs than others in the group or they would be surprised that their friend was religious, or they realized that they do not know much about their religious tradition or beliefs, and that they care about many supernatural things in their everyday life. The students discussed these differences, noticing that they were related to their hometown, family, school, clubs and friends, age group, and so on.

Most students said this was the first time they had discussed topics related to religious and spiritual beliefs and practices, which may point to reasons for certain assumptions about the homogenous character of religiosity, equating it with homogenous Japanese culture.

When sharing personal reflections on religious awareness, some students responded as follows: “There were not many people who made a New Year’s visit to a shrine (*hatsumōde*) except for me!” or “I realized that there are many different ways of thinking even among the same Japanese people,” or “I was surprised at how few people believe in good luck charms and prayers.”

Engaging with different values can change the assumed beliefs and prejudices about one’s own or another person’s culture. It is essential to recognize that even within Japanese culture there may be varying religious beliefs. Comparing religious values and beliefs with those of both Japanese and non-Japanese peers can help individuals comprehend the intricate nature of these differences. Engaging in activities that promote awareness about religious differences can help deconstruct the notion of a homogeneous Japanese culture, religion, and Japanese identity, ultimately leading to a more comprehensive multicultural education programme. Importantly, to achieve such an outcome the interactive practice must happen in person, and through active participation by doing—to use Dewey’s expression.

This approach—discussing religion in teacher training—seeks to initiate a conversation about diversity within the same culture, and that opens the discussion on differences. It aims to assist in training teachers in multicultural education, which will help address a critical gap: the need to recognize and effectively engage with differences, as ultimately this can lead to a better understanding of other cultures.

From the Emphasis on Equal Treatment toward Engaging with Difference

The research raises concerns about the shortcomings of multicultural education in Japan, particularly in Higashi-Hiroshima’s public school system and higher education. It emphasizes the need to go beyond simply acquiring fossilized knowledge about different cultures and religions, and instead focus on creating inclusive learning environments and fostering intercultural dialogue. The study underlines the importance of addressing stereotypes and biases through hands-on learning activities and promoting self-awareness among teachers to establish a fair and empowering school culture. The findings suggest that an intercultural practical

approach is crucial in education to combat prejudices, promote understanding, and create inclusive educational environments for all students.

The paper also highlights the limitations of the liberal approach to multiculturalism, as it fails to tackle inequalities due to its reliance on unquestioned discussions of “culture” and cultural recognition. Some scholars in second language education have criticized prevailing multicultural ideologies and advocated for critical teaching methods to bring about societal change. They argue that simply respecting cultural differences and promoting tolerance is insufficient to address classroom inequalities. The paper introduces a practical teaching approach that can be called “transformative teaching,” as it can change teachers’ attitudes toward diversity and fixed categories. It considers the multifaceted and contested nature of culture and recognition, aiming to improve multicultural education strategies for teachers and facilitate meaningful interactions among children from diverse backgrounds. It is essential to recognize that societies are diverse, dynamic, diasporic, and hybrid, making it untenable to categorize people based on simplistic racial, cultural, or linguistic classifications. Engaging in activities that raise self-awareness of differences can help teachers acknowledge the complexity and fluidity of cultural and linguistic categories and move beyond monocultural and stereotyped perspectives.

The paper also discusses the challenges related to tolerance in teacher training, emphasizing the need to provide students with opportunities to experience the importance of differences to others, rather than just studying them. This engagement with difference is also referred to as the “practice of pluralism” (Montgomery 2021). Exploring and applying pedagogies that focus on engaging with differences, such as those developed in the international educational programme called CEDAR (Communities Engaging with Difference and Religion), can be beneficial in teacher education (Seligman, Wasserfall and Montgomery 2016; Seligman 2021).

In conclusion, the paper underscores the need for transformative teaching methods to address inequalities in education. It emphasizes the importance of recognizing and engaging with the complexity of cultural and linguistic categories while creating an inclusive learning environment. The challenges faced by foreign children and students with foreign roots in Japanese schools are multifaceted (e.g., teachers being untrained in diversity, high burden on the part-time Japanese language instructor, pressure on children to adapt to a new language and behaviour, poor classroom management, etc.), and the current multicultural education strategies in Japan need to address language barriers, cultural differences, and the need for specialized support for these students.

The limitations of this research approach include the possibility that implementing practical group activities may not be sufficient to reshape teachers’

misunderstandings of culture and attitudes toward diversity. The deficiencies in teachers' diversity approaches may stem from systemic issues beyond the scope of practical group activities, such as institutional policies or societal biases. Additionally, the study's evaluation of multicultural education is primarily focused on teaching practices within both the public school system and higher education in a college city. While these findings may be relevant to other regions in Japan with significant immigrant populations and children with foreign roots, such as Aichi, Osaka, or Tokyo, they may not accurately represent the overall situation of multicultural education across the entire country. It is crucial to adopt a comparative approach that considers local specifics while also acknowledging the impact of domestic and global trends.

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BOOK REVIEW

Joseph Sung-Yul PARK:

In Pursuit of English: Language and Subjectivity in Neoliberal South Korea

Reviewed by Seung-hwan Leo KIM

(2021. London: Oxford University Press. 192 pp. ISBN: 9780190855734)

In Pursuit of English presents an incisive aetiology of South Korea's national obsession with the acquisition of English ("English fever") and, more broadly, demonstrates the importance of subjectivity—emotions, perceptions, beliefs and the like—in understanding the relationship between language choice and the speaker's situated environment. Park argues that 1) recent history and policy choices have turned English into an index of wealth, prestige, and good moral character in South Korea; and 2) the resulting subjectivities of language, consisting of such affects as desire, moral responsibility, anxiety, and insecurity, now perpetuate English fever as a neoliberal self-development project. In doing so, Park successfully makes the case for us to examine attitudes toward language-learning as a mechanism born of, and now serving, a particular political-economic and social paradigm.

Park introduces the book in Chapter 1, then provides a detailed overview of his theoretical and methodological frameworks in Chapter 2. For Park, any study of neoliberalism requires a synthesis of a Marxist material and ideological view and a Foucauldian view based on subjective experiences (pp. 25–27), and language provides an ideal window into neoliberalism due to its place "at the intersection of material practices, subjective experiences, and ideological processes" (p. 21). Park proposes the analysis of metapragmatic discourse, or talk about language, to gain insight into the subjectivities of Korean pursuers of English, with particular attention being paid to how such discourse constructs an ideal neoliberal model or "figure of personhood" (p. 29) as a target of emulation. Chapter 3 paints neoliberal South Korea as a "portrait of Hell" (p. 33), the result of a series of market-liberalizing reforms in pursuit of competitive power and the status of a developed nation in the globalizing world. Against this background, Park argues that South Korea's

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English fever is an “integral part of that neoliberalization process itself” (p. 43), an inextricable merger of English competence with self-improvement, market value, and moral worth, and that the “range of intense feelings and affects pervad[ing] Koreans’ experiences of English” (p. 49) makes subjectivity a key dimension of English fever.

Chapters 4 through 7 comprise the meat of the book, each exploring the interaction with neoliberalism of a particular dimension of the subjectivities of South Koreans. Chapter 4 explores *desire*, not merely for the economic benefits of English but for the “pure potential” (p. 58) of a modern, cosmopolitan identity on the global stage, unshackled from the provincial confines of Korean society. Discourse among Korean parents envisions English as a language “free from prejudice, manipulation, and sophistry” (p. 66) that could afford their children a “wider world of possibilities, where their children can become whatever they want, and where they can find their true selves” (p. 75). This misguided cosmopolitan desire, argues Park, perpetuates the self as a container of human potential, ready to be developed and used.

Chapter 5 explores *morality* attached to the successful pursuit of English. Despite the enormous difference in investment in English education between rich and poor households (p. 81), “success stories” in newspapers in the early decades of English fever portrayed English competence as evidence of learners’ hard work and responsibility rather than their financial background. Park observes that such stories downplayed the successful learners’ socioeconomic status, often asserting that most upper-class Koreans are poor speakers of English, and exaggerated the time and effort invested by the learners. This popular discourse, Park argues, has led Koreans to accept the moral equation of English ability with merit as common sense, and to treat the study of English “as an ethical way of being in the neoliberal world” (p. 98)—an example of Foucault’s “technology of the self” (p. 83).

Chapter 6 explores *anxiety* stemming from the idea of “youth as a valuable resource” (p. 100), that the critical period of language acquisition must be harnessed before it is lost. Park applies Foucault’s biopolitics—human lives as objects of political strategy—to youth conscripted by governments worldwide through early English education for economic growth, and to interviews with children on “early study abroad” (*jogi yuhak*) and their families, whose lives are tightly planned and managed to ensure a future payoff for the enormous costs of *jogi yuhak* to the household. Park suggests that such anxious childhoods provide a model for adulthood, resulting in the acceptance of intense competition, self-management, and disillusionment that characterize Korean millennials (the “N-po generation”) today (pp. 122–24).

Finally, Chapter 7 explores *insecurity*. Analysing interviews with Korean managers at English-speaking multinational firms, Park identifies two conflicting ideologies among learners: a colonial, essentialist ideology which posits that only native speakers speak legitimate English, *versus* a newer, individualist ideology which posits that legitimate English transcends ethnolinguistic backgrounds (pp. 139–40). While individualist ideologies motivate the learner to pursue English as an acquirable, “commodifiable skill” (p. 140), the essentialist ideologies still maintain that the learner is an “illegitimate non-native speaker” (p. 146), constantly dependent on the native speaker’s approval. It is this contradiction, Park argues, that keeps learners toiling without questioning if they “haven’t already done enough to deserve the fruits that English as a language of neoliberal self-development promises” (p. 147).

After exploring these four aspects of South Koreans’ subjectivities with respect to English—desire, morality, anxiety, and insecurity—Park in Chapter 8 considers how the pursuit of English has a hand in “justifying, extending, and reproducing the neoliberal social order” (p. 150). Park questions the “promise of English” itself by following the diminishing value of the TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication) exam on the job market. Once the gold standard of English ability, TOEIC’s value soon came into question as Koreans began to score higher on average, and oral interviews in English were soon widely added as an additional criterion, increasing the burden on applicants. The constant recalibration of what counts as “good English”, Park argues, is an “iconic model for neoliberal subjecthood” which enforces “precarity as a way of life” (p. 162)—the worker, unquestioningly, takes responsibility for falling short of constantly moving goalposts. A brief conclusion follows in Chapter 9.

The conciseness of *In Pursuit of English* is both a strength and a weakness. In just 170 pages, Park manages to deliver an easily readable, intensely focused punch of an argument. However, some readers may disagree with Park’s choice to ignore the contributions of Confucianism, historical “deference to great powers” (*sadae-ju’ui*), and “Korean emotionalism” (e.g. the concept of *han*) to English fever. Park does so to avoid labelling these ideas as essential traits of Koreans (pp. 54–56), but these ideas—no matter their origin—certainly inhabit the subjectivities of Koreans at least as much as the newspaper articles in Chapter 5 do. Further, it would have been fruitful to include in Chapter 7 (“Insecurity”) considerations of Korean teachers of English, who must grapple with questions of legitimacy as non-native speakers of English who must act as authorities on English to earn a living. However, Song and Park’s previous (2019) article serves as a good exploration of this topic.

In Pursuit of English is notable in its explanatory power. An emphasis on subjectivity has the potential to render the project into a series of anecdotes or fail to add much beyond mere description. However, Park manages to weave theory and careful analyses of metapragmatic discourse into a compelling argument, revealing surprising insights about the importance of subjectivity in the relationship between language and the speaker's situated circumstances. The fact that English language study is reduced to a source of mental and financial burden for Koreans rather than a socially and culturally enriching experience can only be fully understood in view of their subjective feelings and beliefs. In this way, *In Pursuit of English* is a serious and successful attempt to explain rather than describe, or to "move beyond the preliminary stage of "Look here! Neoliberalism really exists!" and, consequently, [begin] to explore what makes the various programs tick in particular political settings" (Mirowski 2019).

References

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