

EXPLORER'S GUIDE TO KOREAN MODERN FICTION

Past, Present & Future



By
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AUTHOR'S NOTE

The genesis of this work was in my own realization, prior to two lectures I was scheduled to give, that I actually had very little organized understanding of Korean literature in translation ("translation" being a critical idea I will return to shortly). Partly, I accepted the two lectures because I believed in the educational truism that 'you never know something as well as when you teach it,' and that these lectures would force me to determine what I did know, and what I still needed to know.

So, both to create a handout for my lectures and to give myself an idea of where my understanding was on Korean literature, I began to plan out this work, beginning with a series of blog posts. I hope, that in this process I have created a kind of roadmap for understanding for all the overseas fans of Korean culture who are hoping to quickly grasp the main outlines of its literature.

I would be remiss if I didn't thank the faculty at Dongguk University who often fielded, with casual aplomb, questions that must have seemed ridiculously simple-minded. My partner in crime, professor Ed Park and his lovely and talented professor-wife Jae were helpful all along the way, and not just for introducing me to Korea and Korean literature.^{^^} In addition, Arirang's "Catch the Wave" was an incredibly invaluable opportunity for me to find and interact with international fans of Korean literature, and get an idea of what their questions were. Finally, of course, none of this is possible without my lovely wife Yvonne who, 4 years ago, packed her bags to come to Korea with me, and has provided the support I needed to go about my projects, including this one.

Finally, as to the idea of 'translation,' I should admit that I have not read the original Korean texts of the works I am discussing here. This work is not intended to be a critical analysis of the breadth, depth, or meaning of Korean literature as whole. Instead, it is intended to be an invitation for interested people overseas, to dip their feet into Korean literature; to begin their exploration. Korean fiction is awesome, but not as well known as it should be.

As part of my effort to change that status, almost 100% of the fictional works mentioned in this book are available in English, and sometimes available free online. If you are interested in any of the works mentioned here, please see Appendix I to see where you can find them.

Enjoy your exploration!

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INFLUENCES /OVERVIEW

Korea is a small country with a remarkable literary tradition and literature plays a key role in society as a whole.

According to Kim Hunggyu "more than 6,000 collections of writings by individual writers from the thirteenth to the nineteenth century are extant," (Kim, 3) and Korea is number one per capita internationally in poetry



publications per person. This long literary history is despite the fact that Korean literary history, as an object of observation is relatively recent, really beginning in the post WWII era (Lee, ix).

Korean literature can be divided into two parts, classical literature and modern literature. Roughly speaking, classical literature endured until the 20th Century, and the colonialization of Korea by Japan, and modern literature began at about the beginning of the 20th century and will be divided, for the purpose of this book, into five broad periods which will be discussed later.

Korean literature has been written in both Hanja (traditional Chinese characters) and increasingly, now almost uniformly, in the Korean alphabet, Hangul, a split which has been important in both cultural and critical terms.

In general, Korean literature exists between two poles, one featuring tremendous emotion and the other featuring control, both personal and social. These poles are the result of the early influences on Korean literature, which were Shamanism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism. Shamanism, particularly influences Korean emotionalism, while Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism in different ways influences the tendency to control and be controlled. Confucianism laid primary cultural importance on reading and writing, and thus had a profound impact on how seriously Koreans take literature. At the same time Confucianism valued order and contemplation and these two influences are strong in Korean literature. Buddhism may have had a slightly lesser influence, but it certainly led to a certain kind of passivity that one often finds in Korean literature, and Taoism also had some hand in this. Later, as Korea westernized, the west in general, and Christianity in general also became a strong influence in Korean literature.

Combined, these influences created an early literature initially expressed orally, and one

portraying a love of and relationship to nature within which man was just one part of the larger picture. The literature was often quite mannered, with evil deeds punished, good deeds (eventually) rewarded, and a series of relationships structured by loyalty – to the King, to parents, to elders, to friends and to ‘proper’ sexual relations, meaning chastity.

COMPETING LANGUAGES

One of the ongoing tensions in understanding Korean literature is the question of the two “alphabets” used in Korean literature. For centuries, the “alphabet” of Korea was actually Chinese characters. To read, write and study in Chinese was the mark of a cultured man. In many ways Chinese characters were to the Korean intelligentsia exactly as Latin and Greek used to be to the educated man in the Western world. In addition, in order to advance in life, particularly in government, men (and it was only men) had to pass national tests that were administered in Chinese and on Chinese (particularly Confucius) topics. One of the implications of this is that much early literature in Korea was heavily influenced by Chinese thoughts and the bulk of it was written in Chinese characters, although by no means to the exclusion of uniquely Korean experiences and expressions.

COMPETING IN THE WORLD

Because of its geographical location, between historical superpowers China and Japan, Korea is fiercely independent, and strives to separate itself from its neighbors. In Korea there is a saying that, "When whales fight, shrimp are crushed," and in this saying, Korea definitely sees itself as the shrimp. Korea has been invaded by the Mongols, the Chinese, and the Japanese (several times) In this regard, there has been some controversy about the inclusion of Classical Chinese works in Korean literature, particularly in the era just after Japanese colonialization revealed to Korean authors, critics, and populace, that ignoring modernization had a terrible cost (in this case, colonization of Korea), For the purposes of this book however, all language written by Korean, in whatever language, are fairly considered within the purview of the literature.

For conceptual ease, it is convenient to think of Korean literature in three ways, an oral

HANGUL: KOREA'S 'SCIENTIFIC' LANGUAGE

Hangul is a totally original letter-system, famous for its creator Kim Sejong and its manner of creation, which included

The most significant distinguishing mark of hangul is its basis on the vocal organs. For example, the " ! " shape indicates a tongue touching the roof of the mouth, while " ! " shows the mouth, and " ! " is patterned on the shape of a throat.

Hangul is a phonetic system, so that foreigners who understand the rules can easily read it and often pronounce it quite accurately, even though they don't understand the meaning of the words.

tradition, a tradition in Chinese characters, and a new tradition in Korean script, or hangul. With respect to genres, however, we need to go one step further, as does professor Chon Dong-il of Seoul National University (Kim, Hyunggu, 53) when he divides Korean literature into three categories that are recognizable to the English speaking fan of literature, the lyric, narrative and dramatic, to which Cho adds the didactic, a genre that immediately makes sense to anyone who has read classical or modern Korean literature (See sidebar).

Finally, as Korean literature began to shift from classical to modern, it was strongly influenced by 'Western' ideas, though at the outset these Western ideas were not directly imported, but rather introduced to Korea through neighbors, Japan and China.

UNDERSTANDING GENRES

Kim Hyunggu divides Korean literature into 4 genres in the following way (Please note that "Explorer" does not explain all of these forms. Kim's work is meant to be exhaustive^^):

LYRIC

- Ancient Songs
- Hyangga
- Sijo and Narrative sijo
- Light Songs
- Lyric Folk Songs
- Most classical Chinese poetry
- 19th Century poetry & most modern poetry

NARRATIVE

- Myths
- Narrative Poems
- Narrative Shaman Chants
- Pansori
- Classic and New Novels

DRAMATIC

- Mask Dance
- Puppet Theater
- New theater and Modern Drama

DIDACTIC

- Court Music (akchang)
- Ch'angga
- Diaries
- Travelogues
- Some Classical Chinese Literature

Hanja - 靑衫獨犯小寒行 청

Hangul - 삼독범소한행

English - In my blue sleeves, I alone, during the Minor Cold, am traveling.

THEMES/APPROACHES IN KOREAN LITERATURE

The previous chapter discussed some of the influences on Korean culture and literature, and this chapter will attempt to outline how these influences have affected Korean literature, particularly its themes and approaches.

The themes and approaches which result from the Korean philosophical and political history are multiple and as in the case in most societies, sometimes contradictory. In order to better understand this, it might be best to first list the themes and approaches, and then attempt to group them into logical categories. Here are some of the most important themes in Korean literature

- Loyalty
- Order
- Relationships
- Alienation
- Separation

These themes result from the relationship between a society based on predetermined and fixed social structure (primarily developed from Confucian beliefs) and a society and country constantly at threat of dissolving or invasion. These themes are repeatedly explored in Korean literature, and one resultant theme to them is:

- Resentment at all of the above

The resentment in Korean literature stems from the idea that a fixed social structure such as Confucianism is not flexible enough to deal with the alienations and separations that it creates within its social structure. **The Story Of Hong Gildong**, which we will discuss shortly, is one of the first stories that tightly concentrates on the unfairnesses that result from this fixed social structure, but that theme resounds through literary history, finding different social inequities to focus on, from era to era (Oppression by Japanese in the colonial, the lack of opportunities for educated Koreans of both sexes in the colonial and post-war periods, the split between North-South / Communist Capitalist in the post-war and industrial periods, the emerging schism between classes / country-side and city / men and women, as development took place, and finally the alienation and removal of reassuring fixed social structures during the post modern era in Korea).

- Xenophobia
- National Literature
- *Han*

Xenophobia, of course, results from the kind of international relations history that Korea

has experienced. Essentially, outside nations have rarely had good intentions with respect to Korea, and Korea internalized this into a defensive tactic. Koreans often refer to the nation and themselves as "uri nara," or "our country," and all non-Koreans, whether in Korea or in their homelands are known as waekugin, or 'foreigners.' Given this attitude towards outsiders, and the historical difficulties Korea has faced, it is no surprise that Korean literature has largely been a national one - based on issues that faced the nation, and often didactically approaching them.

Take a national literature, and mix it with the inwardness, resignation, and tight social structure of Korea and you come to one of the approaches to Korean literature that sometimes seems odd to English-language readers

Han is a Korean word that has a mixture of meanings, but might be summed up as the sadness and resignation one feels knowing that things will go as well as they could/should - that life contains deep-seated and unresolvable problems. *Han* is subdivided into *chônghan* and *wônhan*, with the first being gentle and sentimental resentment and the latter a stronger and suppressed insult that is apt to surface at any time (Freda, 7). *Han* may be thought of as the overarching philosophical concept created out of the synthesis of all the other themes and influences that we have discussed so far. It should not, however, as it sometimes is, be considered the end-all and be-all philosophy of Korean literature. Discussed a bit less, but also important, is the idea of shinmyeong, or the joy found in heightened emotional states. *Han* can be eliminated through shinmyeong and in traditional Korean plays, for instance, there are only happy endings (Cho, 15).

These themes and approaches have some very real implications for how Korean literature reads to English language readers, and sometimes these implications make Korean translated literature a bit difficult to understand. Some specific implications are:

- Lack of agency
- Relationships over plot
- Sometimes flat characters
- No need for a conclusion
- Some genres that are important to recent Korean history, but foreign to English language readers
- Romance and Comedy are often absent

Lack of agency, or the reduced role of the individual or hero, is one of the most obvious features of Korean modern literature. Even in the case of heroes, such as **The Tales of Hong Gildong** (something like the Korean Robin Hood), the 'heroism' is practically forced on them. And in many works, Korean characters put up with situations and conditions that would cause a western character to snap, but because social situations are so over-determined, and *han* is so

deeply embedded, the Korean characters plod forward stolidly. Characters often let social expectations determine their actions, and this can sometimes be troublesome to English-language readers. In Hwang Sun-won's **The Descendants of Cain**, the hero and heroine live chastely together despite the fact that they are madly (or as madly as Korean fiction allows) in love, but neither will make a move, because they are of different social statuses, and another spouse hangs around (largely) off-stage.

Similarly, plots are not always in the forefront, or a perfunctory, with the relationship of the characters often the main point. Perhaps **When Buckwheat Blossoms Bloom** is the best example of this, a shaggy dog story in which the plot is negligible. Two men, one old and one young, travel the rural salesman circuit in the 1930s and have various unimportant experiences and conversations. It becomes clear to the reader that the two are father and son, but by the stories' end this reality has never been explicitly admitted, and the point of the story is the relationship between the two men, and not what they do, or even discovery.

Sometimes flat characters are the result of the previous two influences, particularly when authors are being consciously didactic. Characters are expected to accede to the wishes of the larger social structure and/or are manipulated to further the aims of the author. In these cases, characters are often un-fleshed out, and their individual motivations are often unclear or unimportant.

Buckwheat Blossoms is also an example of a story not needing an end. The story more or less peters out, on the road at night, but because the relationship is, by Korean standards, well described, and the role of the cycles of seasons described both by the characters and the natural backdrop against which the story works out, the story works in Korea. The same is true of **The Descendants of Cain**, in which the ending is merely the decision of the protagonists that they must attempt to escape; but it is an escape attempt the reader never sees.

Finally, **Buckwheat Blossoms** also represents a genre that is still somewhat important in Korea, something like a pastoral reverie. This is a genre that has largely not existed in English literature since the time of Thoreau. The same thing can be said, to some extent, of Korean literature of separation (pundan munhak), which has no direct equivalent genre in English-literature, and has a history that is unknown to most western readers. This lack of historical knowledge, on some occasions, also lends to flat interpretations of characters by western readers; Koreans would understand as a matter of historical course why some characters act as they do, but this understanding would be opaque to westerners.

The absence of comedy is tied in to the notion of the national nature of Korean literature, but in an unusual way. It is not so much that comedy is absent in the Korean language, but what has been chosen for translation is rarely comic. This is for two reasons, first that comedy is the

hardest kind of writing to translate, and second that the importance of 'national' literature to Korea has meant that certain kinds of literature, mainly serious, have been chosen for translation. Humor, most often broad or satirical, can be found in translation (The collection **A Ready Made Life**, for instance, while focusing on the effects of colonialization, manages to include several stories that range from broadly humorous to witty).

Romance falls into a similar category in that it is not 'serious' and thus is usually only found in stories which have a strong 'national' component. In the aforementioned **Descendants of Cain**, the protagonists are in love, but this love is primarily used to explore issues of embedded class structure and the political problems surrounding land reform in the immediate post-war period.

With all that said, it is only fair to note, that in recent years choices of kinds of works to translate have broadened, and it seems fair to predict that in the years to come, English-language readers will see more translations of Korean romances and comedies. Certainly, recent works by Kim Young-ha and Pak Min-gyu suggest that there is a lot of humor to be found on the other side of the translation barrier.

This chapter may be read as saying that Korean literature is difficult, or inaccessible, but that is not the point. The point here is that like all translated literature, a little judicious choice as to what to read is recommended. Once a reader gets their feet wet in the literature, and if that reader understands why some things in Korean literature seem initially strange, that reader will have a world of discovery ahead of them.

CHAPTER ONE: KOREA'S CLASSICAL ORAL FICTION

Korea's literary preference has always canted towards poetry and song. In a pre-written environment this is common to many cultures as the rhythm and rhyme of poetry makes it much easier to memorize. In addition, written materials we, perhaps unintuitively, less robust. Unless writing is inscribed in rock, it is very fragile and the bamboo of which early books were composed was fragile during a time that Korea was often invaded and had its capitals looted. So, song/poetry, passed down from memory to memory, was the first form of Korean literature. This book will not consider modern poetry or song, as they have largely separated from each other, and from fiction as a whole. At the outset of the literature, however, they were one and the same.

The Ancient Age of Korean literature was the apogee of Korean oral literature. Unfortunately, for reasons that we will discuss shortly, most of this literature has disappeared, and we must judge it by the evidence about it that still remains.

Chinese dynastic histories including the **Bamboo Annals (*Chu-shu*)**, **History of the Later Han Dynasty (*Hou Han shu*)**, and **History of Wei (*Wei chich*)** record the performance of religious oral literature by the Korean people as well as the performance of origin myths and histories at early state meetings and early shamanist-type rituals. In fact these Chinese documents describe the Northern tribes as "the people who enjoy singing and dancing," (Lee 1) a name that might seem to apply to Korea to judge by the international success of the Korean Wave. Further, and not surprisingly for a culture which has for the bulk of its existence focused on communality, nature and natural relations, poetry

THE POETRY OF CLASSICAL KOREAN FEMALE WRITERS

While female writers existed from the Ancient Joseon to the last years of the Korean Empire, and represented all social levels, it is primarily from the 16th Century that females wrote in bulk, or consciously took on the role of 'writer.'

Interestingly, and unlike male poets, most of the female poets did not attempt to save their oeuvre's for posterity. Some suggest that this is due to the subservient role of women at the time in which writing was not considered a role for women. Additionally, there was a question of exposure - it was much less likely that women would want their private thoughts to be known to the public world, and likely that an effort to do so would be taken poorly. This means that only a few poems, out of a larger original body, have survived.

One of the earliest and most famous female poets was Hwang Jini (1506-1560) a gisaeng also known as Myoengwol, who is famous even today, for her wit, beauty, intellect and assertiveness. Some eight of her poems remain in Chinese.

In the latter half of the 16th Century larger numbers of female writers emerged, including Song Dukbong, Yi Maechang, Heo Nanseolheon, and Lee Okbong, each of whom lived at different levels of society from noble family to concubine.

Noble ladies tended to write about family problems while poems of lower classes wrote about regret, unease, unfulfilled desire, complaints, and emotions including extreme sorrow or anger.

Even with those differences, all classical female poets seemed quite aware of their shackled positions in society, and frequently commented on it.

MORE READING: The Poetic World of Classic Korean Women Writers.

and singing were seen as a way to communicate to and build relationships between Heaven and Earth.

Oral literature, including song, must be considered a form of Korean literature because of the particular ways that Korea literature split. As previously mentioned, the yangban practiced literature in Chinese, while the rest of the Korean world (lower classes and women), used the Korean language. As Chinese-characters were introduced, narrative (folk) poetry was replaced by lyric and didactic poetry known as *hyangga*. These poems were simple, often short, polished, and quite lyrical

and/or philosophical. During the era of *hyanggch'al*, this literature could be recorded in Chinese characters, creating a slight bridge between the two language, but the creative process was still in the Korean language. At the same time, the bulk of the vernacular or common story telling was done in the Korean language, in verse or song. When *hyangch'al* dissappeared, the schism widened with literature proper, that is the written form, exclusively done in Chinese. This left the remainder of literature in the hands of the singers and poets. After *hyangga*, *sijo* emerged (don't worry about these names, we'll be explaining them next!) and lived alongside *kasa*. While *sijo* continued in the lyrical spirit of *hyangga*, *kasa* was didactic. This split between the lyric and didactic was exacerbated by the introduction of *hangul*, which finally gave the vernacular or common literature an outlet in which to be recorded. So, while reading the following pages, please be awars that when we say poetry, we are often-times referring to sung poetry.

Korean poetry has had a handful of predominant forms, most of which we have already mentioned; *Hyangga*, *Pyolgok/Changga/Koryo Kasa*, *Sijo*, and *Kasa* and these forms are partially associated with the empires in which they flourished. These are the particular forms of poetry we will look at, as they help create a broad outline of the development of Classical Korean literature.

SONG DEOKBONG

Song Deokbong lived in the early 16th ceuntury and was the wife of Confucian Scholar Yu Huichung. Her husbad was temporarily exiled and she traveled to Macheonryeong to see him. On that journey she wrote this poem:

Walking walking finally reached Macheonryeong
Boundless waters of the Eastern Sea
For what reason has a woman traveled 10,000 ri?
Loyalty to the Three Relations is grave while this
one body is light

HYANGGA

Very little remains of the literature of the Silla Period (57 BC to 935 AD). What does remain is the form of *Hyangga* poetry, which was written down in *hyangch'al* script (please see sidebar). The word *hyangga* means "rural village song" deriving from what the Silla people called their empire. A total of fourteen poems were passed down in the **Samguk Yusa (Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms c.1285)** and 11 more have been passed down in the **Kyunyojon (Tales of Kyunyo)**. The very first of these is recorded in the Samguk Yusa, which tells us that the poem was sung by members of the Karak State during the third moon in the year 42,

The *hyangga* poetry of the Silla period signaled the beginning of a unique poetic form in Korean literature. The *hyangga* were recorded in the *hyangchal* script, in which the Korean language was written using "sound" (eum) and "meaning" (hun) of Chinese characters. Fourteen poems in the *hyangga* style from the Silla period have been preserved in the **Samgungnyusa (Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms)**.

The form of *hyangga* is varied with some 4-line, 8-line, and 10-line poems. 4-line *hyangga* are one stanza, 8-line *hyangga* are two 4-line stanzas, and 10-line *hyangga* are two 4-line stanzas concluding with one two-line stanzas. In the 10-line 10 *hyangas* the first section is the poem; the second section either distills or distorts feelings related to the topic, and; the third section, only two lines, begins with a declaration and then comes to a strong conclusion. This general form of construction is quite similar to that of the *sijo*, which we shall discuss shortly. The *hyanga Requiem for My Sister*, by the Buddhist monk Weolmyeong, demonstrates this structure and until its rather traditional and predictable religious end, is quite beautiful.

The road to life and death
Stands fearfully before us.
Without saying good-bye,

THE UNUSUAL HISTORY OF KOREAN LITERARY LANGUAGE

There were three eras of language in Korean literature.

THE ANCIENT AGE (Pre- First Century on)

- Purely Oral (Spoken in native Korean)

THE MEDIEVAL AGE (First to Fifth Century on)

- Oral literature dominates, some recorded in Chinese characters (Hyangchal).

- Oral literature alongside works in classical Chinese and Hyangch'al.

- Classical Chinese dominates literate classes, while oral literature continues to dominate the lower classes.

- Hangul is created in the mid 15th century making inroads in so-called "women's literature" and common literature. This coexists with Chinese.

THE MODERN AGE (Late 19th Century on)

- Chinese loses its status as the social system upon which it rests is destroyed by modernism and colonialism. The printed word overtakes oral literature.

Have you left me?
The early morning wind in autumn
Scatters leaves here and there.
Though from the same branch
They know not where they've gone.

Oh my dear sister, to see you again in Amitabha's Paradise,
I shall wait, perfecting Buddha's way.

Trans. Rober Fouser (Kim)

What is interesting to note is that in comparison to Western poetry these poems are quite short, and as we shall see this tradition partially continued as Korean literature developed. Thematically, the Hyangga are Buddhist and/or warrior-based and they are often eulogistic – a manifestation, perhaps of the Korean love of social structure.

PYOLGOK/CHANGGA/KORYO KASA

During the Koryo Dynasty (918-1392 AD) the use of *hyanggch'al* disappeared as conventional Chinese characters came to dominate Korean literature. *Hyangga* did not entirely disappear, but it became a religious form rather than a literary one and the so-called Goryeogayo (Goryo Songs) appeared. The disappearance of *hyanggch'al* meant that there was no even approximate way to write down Korean poetry, so it continued to primarily be expressed orally. During the Koryo dynasty the elimination of *hyanggch'al*, admittedly a very complicated system, and the failure to come up with a successor, meant that Chinese characters became the language of Korean literature. As this occurred, and the Koryo dynasty became increasingly effete, it also looked down its nose at poetry composed in *hyanggch'al*, and wilfully refused to record and reproduce it. The new form of poetry that developed was the Koryeo Kayo (or *pylogok*). Although this form was primarily oral, it lived long enough to be recorded in writing (Hangul) in the Joseon Dynasty. Unfortunately, for reasons having to do with politics and the language shift, the new dynasty was not particularly interested in saving the literature of the previous dynasty and both through conscious destruction and indifference, much literature was lost.

As the Koryeo dynasty declined, this loss of literature overtook much of the Koryeo works as well and when the Joseon Dynasty succeeded the Koryeo, it adopted a stance similar to that of the Koryeo had before it: expunge 'inappropriate' and 'obscene' poetry of the previous dynasty. Thus there are barely 60 titles of surviving Koryeo poetry.

In any case, the *Kasa* took two forms, a short (one stanza - *dallyeonche*) form and a longer form (*yeonjanche* of multiple stanzas ranging up to thirteen). Each stanza includes a refrain in the middle or at the end that was intended to establish the mood of the piece or tie the stanzas together. In addition, the *kasa* was less formally structured, and took on far bolder topics including love, which was often discussed rather bluntly. The *kasa* was often performed by *Kisaeng* (see sidebar), which may give some clue as to why they were more direct and sexual

KISAENG AND YANGBAN

For over five hundred years, *kisaeng* (female entertainers) were important contributors to Korean culture, performing as professional entertainers at the royal court.

The relationship between *kisaeng* and *yangban* was both free and open, and completely socially limited. *Kisaeng*, from the lowest social class, entertained *yangban* by reciting poetry to them, drinking with them, and sometimes becoming their concubines. However, *kisaeng* could never become official partners of *yangban*, nor could their children be recognized. It was also extremely likely that *kisaeng* would eventually be abandoned by their *yangban*. Consequently, *kisaeng* poetry, while emotive and lyrical, is also typically infused with melancholy and a longing for things that can never be.

than their predecessors. In general, this form is considered as relatively unimportant during the Koryo period and is important primarily as it was the basis for the more robust and well known *kasas* of the Joseon Dynasty. *The Manjeoncheun* is an anonymous love poem likely from the mouth of a *kisaeng*.

Were I to build a bamboo hut on the ice
Were I to die of cold with him on the ice,
O night, run slow, till our love is spent.

When I lie alone, restless, vigilant,
Only peach blossoms wave over the west window.
You have no grief, welcome the spring breeze.

I have believed those who vowed to each other;
"My soul will follow yours forever."
Who, who persuaded me this was true?

"O duck, beautiful duck, why do you come
To the swamp, instead of the shoal?"
"If the swamp freezes, the shoal will do."

A bed on Mount South, jade pillow, gold brocade.
And beside me a girl sweeter than musk,
Let us press our hearts together, our magic hearts.

SIJO

During the Joseon period (1392 – 1897) the focus of Korean poetry shifted to the *sijo* and *kasa*, and this change took place in the company of another epic shift in Korean literature, the introduction and continuing use of Hangeul (Hangeul was completed in late 1443 or early 1444, and was officially described in 1446 in a document called *Hunmin Jeongeum* or the "The Proper Sounds for the Education of the People"), the first natively Korean alphabet (see sidebar). Hangeul was first regularly used in notating musical scores, but over time spread to more general uses.

The *sijo* form was developed in the late Goryeo dynasty, but it was not until the Joseon Dynasty that it came into common use, and it was not given the name by which we know it today until the 18th century. The original *sijo* poets were yangban who composed them the pass time and amuse their friends. Consequently themes were often Confucian in nature and focused on the theme of loyalty. *Sijo* had three stanzas (often expressed in lines) of four feet each and can be compared, in some ways to the Japanese haiku, though the longer form of the *Sijo* allows greater explication of themes.

In some ways, a western reader might consider the *sijo* the Korean version of the haiku. The form of the *sijo* is regular – three lines of 14-16 syllables each with total syllables between 44 and 46. The first line introduces the theme of the *Sijo* in a 3,4,4,4, syllable structure. The second line elaborates on that theme in a 3,4,4,4 structure. The final line introduces a counter theme in 3 and then 5 syllable feet and concludes with a completing thought or exhortation in a 4 and then 3 syllable foot. This structure is the idealized form, and as Kim Hunggyu notes, of surviving *sijo*, fewer than 10 percent follow the form precisely. A more narrative way of exploring the form notes that a situation is introduced in the first line, explored in the second line, and then given a surprise twist at the outset of the third line, and then concluded by the end of that line. This structure is intended to create an aesthetically 'complete' poem that unfolds without hurry.

There are a number of quite famous *sijo* poets, known as scholar-poets, beginning with Yi Hyeon-bo in the late 15th and early 16th century and the Neo-Confucianist Yi Hwang (1502-

METER AND KOREAN POETRY

It is a bit artificial to use western poetic conventions to explain Korean poetry. The idea of syllables, for instance, is not entirely accurate to explain Korean poetry which focused more on sounds than syllables. As Cho Dong-il write:

The special characteristics of Korean literature are evident in the rules of versification. Even the standard verses that follow all of the rules show a varied number of phonemes within a meter and lack of rhyme Korean verses allow a different number of phonemes within a metric unit and the rules of versification metamorphosize freely?

Which is a complicated way of saying, listen for the sound flow, not the syllables.^^

Admiral Yi Sun-sin

Yi Sun-sin (March 8, 1545 - November 19, 1598), is perhaps the best known military hero in Korean history. Admiral Yi led the fight against the Japanese fleet during the 1592 invasion. Admiral Yi invented the "turtle ships," which were key in defeating the Japanese. Yi spent his life in and out of favor with the government, but he was always available when Korea needed defense. He was killed by a stray bullet during the final battle at Noryang, although he had his son dress up in his clothing, so his fleet would not believe he was injured, and would not lose heart.

1571) and Yi I (1536-1584) who wrote works

While *sijo* originated with the yangban expressing philosophical or religious concerns, its popularity quickly spread among common people in the eighteenth century, particularly under the influence of the *Sirhak* (popular learning) movement of the era. With this development of popularity among the masses, the form of the *sijo* also began to change, including an increase in its length, with the new form of *sijo* being named the *p'yong* (flat) or *changhyong* (long form) *sijo*. The new *sijo* also tended to be less rarified, often focusing on commonplace emotions and satire. The first printed

compilation of *sijo*, the *Cheonggu Yeongon* was not printed until 1728, and many *sijo* remain scattered in the private collections of the families of the yangban who wrote them.

The following *sijo*, is said to have been composed by Admiral Yi Sun-sin (The famous "turtle boat" general whose repeated victories against the Japanese were somewhere between unlikely and impossible) in 1599, on the eve of a battle with the Japanese, a battle he won, but in which he was unfortunately tragically wounded and died:

Moon-bright night on Hansan Isle
and I sit alone atop the lookout.
I hold my great sword by my side,
and as my worries deepen,
from somewhere comes the single note of the Mongol flute,
piercing to the very bowels.

(Early Korean Literature, 147)

JOSEON KASA

The Joseon *kasa* was free verse, based on a rhythm of doubled feet with three or four syllables. This non-poetic structure has led some critics to consider it a form of essay and not poetry. *Kasa* themes were mixed, including traditional themes like nature, gentlemanly virtues, and romantic love. The *kasa* also often included moral advice and specific themes including sadness and weariness.

In general the Joseon *kasa* is different from its predecessor the *changga* in that it is not divided into stanzas, a feature of its free-verse form, and its focus tends towards the narrative and descriptive, rather than its rather more high-minded predecessors. Evidence of this change can be seen in works like the *Il-tong chagyu ka* (Song of a Journey Japan, 1764), by Kim In-gyeon, which contained more than 4,000 lines of almost reportorial travelogue.

The earliest known *kasa* is *Sangch'un kok* (Hymn to the Spring, late 15th century) and by the end of the 16th century the form had been perfected and was practiced at a high level by poets including Heo Nanseorheon (1563-89) and Pak In-no (1561-1643).

Here is an excerpt from a *kasa* by Jon Geuk-in, a poet of the early Joseon Dynasty:

There is between heaven and earth
many a man who's worth as I.

Why don't they know the great Joy
Of living in the wooded mountains?

With a grass hut of a few bays
built to face a clear blue stream,

In the lush wood of pine and bamboo
I am the master of wind and moon.

The Spirit of Korean 26-102

Kasa themes and authors expanded over time, coming to include *kasa* written by women and as these expansions occurred, *kasa* became more quotidian in subject and longer in execution.

PANSORI

One form of literature of particular note, and that is still enjoyed today, is *p'ansori*, or a 'story-in-song.' *P'ansori* was a form of spoken, narrative poetry the topics of which primarily focused on real life and reflected the interests of the common people. *Pansori* is believed to have developed from the shamanist chants of South-Eastern Korea in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

To western eyes, *p'ansori* may seem less like literature and more like song and dance, but this stance is not shared in Korea, where *p'ansori* is considered a form of literature (of course it is also recognized as song and dance!). It is a long (up to 8 hours long) narrative musical performance with two performers, a drummer and a singer. Its name derives from the Korea word for a location to sing music or act out a play (*pan*) and the word for 'sound' (*sori*). *Pansori* consists of two subsidiary musical forms, the main song called *ch'ang* and a rhythmic spoken called *aniri*, with the *aniri* serving as connective tissue between the *ch'ang*.

P'ansori's emergence was from a primarily oral tradition, and one that revolved around superhuman characters, myths, etc, but the late Joseon period, *p'ansori* had evolved into stories based on quotidian events using human characters, and the plots, therefore, became increasingly "true to life." *P'ansori* mixed prose and verse as well as mixing the vernacular, including slang, sarcasm and jokes, with the more traditional classical language of the past. At the same time there was a strand of *p'ansori* that continued to depict the lives of the royal court, including **Hanjungnok (Record of Leisurely Feelings)** and **Inhyon Wanghujon (Tale of Queen Inhyon)**.

Although *p'ansori* began in oral traditions, they were passed along from generations to generation and increasingly memorialized in print. There were two different strands of *p'ansori*, the sung (indicated by the Korean word "ka") and the written (indicated by the Korean word "cheon").

According to Kim Hyunggu the three most popular *p'ansori* novels were *Tales of Shim Cheong*,



The Tale of Chunghyang, and the Tale of Heungbu, the story of which is still popular as a children's tale, even today. As the popularity of these and similar works grew, and as they were transmitted both orally and in written form, but increasingly in written form from the eighteenth century forward, novels that appealed to common tastes were increasingly read. Over time, *p'ansori* moved away from relentless focus on one main character and so-called "family novels" become more popular. In general, this period represented the first mercantilization of Korean literature as it is here we see the focus of the works moving away from self-expression and meditations of the yangban to a focus on success in the emerging general market for fiction.

CHAPTER TWO

CLASSICAL PROSE

Because of the strong emphasis on oral tradition and poetry as literature, Korean written literature is not as robust as one might expect. While the oral and poetic traditions date back to the Silla period, the classical written fiction appears relatively late in the Joseon Dynasty. There are only a few written records predating the 12th century, so as a practical matter we can date the start of Korean classical prose from this time. It began with historical records, notably the **History of the Three Kingdoms (Samguk Sagi)**, the collection of which was orchestrated by Goryeo's King Injong (r. 1122-1146). Another work of note was created by Buddhists. The **Tripitaka Koreana** collects the Buddhist scriptures in the form of woodblock carvings.

CLASSICAL NOVEL

Korean novels of all eras have a slightly different look and feel than in the west as the form of the Korean novel (the *soseol*) includes short stories, novellas, and novels, and the differences in length can be quite dramatic with some 'novels' clocking in at under 40 pages (Kim Young Ha's modern **Photo Shop Murder** is a prime example of this) and other novels being produced in massive multi-volume collections (Park Kyung-ni's *The Land*, which checked in at five volumes).

Classic literature began with the **Tales of Kumo (*Kumo Shinwa*, or *New Stories from the Golden Turtle*,)** Kim Shi-sup in the mid 15th century and **The Tale Of Hong Gildong (*Hong Kil-tong chon*)** by Hyo Kyun in the late 16th or early 17th century. Indicating the language split that still existed in literature, **Tales of Kumo** was written in Chinese, while **The Tale of Hong Gildong** was written, or at least recorded, in Hangul. Not surprisingly, the latter work has had more of a lasting impact on Korea (see sidebar). These works began to move away from the tightly biographical and to directly deal with social conditions.

From the 17th century on other written literature became more popular and a larger reading public developed. Later, when commercial publishing (see sidebar) developed in Korea,

The Samguk Sagi and Tripitaka Koreana

The Samguk Sagi is a historical record of the Three Kingdoms (Goguryeo, Baekje and Silla) of Korea, ordered by Goryeo King Injong. Completed in 1145, it is the oldest Korean history. The Samguk Sagi are recorded in Chinese characters.

The Tripitaka Koreana is a Korean collection of Buddhist scriptures that, during the 13th century, were painstakingly carved into 81,258 wooden printing blocks. It is the world's oldest, most complete version of the Buddhist scriptures, carved in Hanja script, with no known mistakes in its 52,382,960 characters.

book rental operations did brisk business.

Subject matter expanded to include attacks on social problems of the day as well as ridicule of them, and the potential cast of characters, as the parable-based nature of fiction decreased, increased.

Characters of 'lower' social status, characters of mercantile nature, criminals, and even kisaeng, began to populate literature.

These diversions were no doubt hastened by, and at least accompanied by, an increasingly large number of works being created in Hangul. While **Hong Gildong** is the most notable, these works also included **Sassi namjonggi** (**Lady Sa's Southward Journey**, 18th century) and Kim Man-jung's **Kuunmong** (**Dream of the Nine Clouds**). These were widely read by women and common men, as Chinese was still the language of the literati. Other fictions of the late Chosun Dynasty were concerned with proceedings of the court, including **Hanjungnok** (**Record of Leisurely Feelings**) and **Inhyon Wanghujon** (**Tale of Queen Inhyon**). As these works were being written, as hangul spread throughout society, and as external forces marshalled themselves to invade Korea, the groundwork for Korean modern literature had been laid.

Hong Gildong - Korea's First Great Work in Hangul.

Hong Gildong explored the socially inferior position of children born to yangban and kisaeng. Hong Gildong is the Korean Robin Hood, and the work lampoons some of the absurdities of the life and social structure of the time.

Still, **Hong Gildong** is a very traditional work, and all Hong Gildong really wants is to be re-united with his family and gain social position.

The work is so popular that it lives on today in fictional 're-writes,' musical productions, and television dramas.

The name "Hong Gildong" is also used like the name "John Doe" in the United States - given as a temporary name to bodies of unidentified corpses.



Japanese Colonialism

(and perhaps at least part of the stage after that), that is the colonial. The prison's construction began in 1907, it was opened in 1908 at which time it was known as Gyeongseong Gamok. In 1923 its name was changed to Seodaemun Prison, and it was used during the period of Japanese colonialism to hold up to 500 anti-colonial political prisoners at one time. As a tool of Japanese colonialism, a site of the torture of Koreans it is a potent symbol of the oppression and sometimes helplessness that Koreans felt in the era, and that deeply affected the literature, in sometimes divergent ways. Interestingly, after the Korean War, the prison continued to be used for political purposes, but by the South Korean government. The effects of Japanese colonialism are discussed, quite differently in works such as Yi Sang's **Wings (Nalgae)** and *In The Mountains*, by Yi Hyo-seok.

The 38th Parallel, named for its latitudinal position, is a better-known symbol. The 38th was initially proposed in 1896 to divide Korea between Imperial Japan and the Russian Empire, a potential division which was rendered moot by the Japanese taking full control of Korea in 1910. After Japan's surrender in 1945, but parallel was established by the United States as the demarcation between US and Soviet zones of influence, became the border between North and South Korea in 1948, when the countries were split, and then became the permanent dividing line at the end of fighting. Since that time, heavily guarded and a zone of sometimes military contention, the parallel has been a powerful symbol of separation. In works such as **Obaltan (Aimless Bullet)** by Lee Beom-seon, the 38th parallel is openly addressed. In that work, the narrator's mother is driven to madness by the separation, and lies in bed only to occasionally arise and scream, "let's go!" (across the parallel). But even in works that don't explicitly mention the parallel, its presence is always there as a reminder of the separation of a nation.

Next, and overlapping the results of the war, came the so-called "Miracle on the Han," (1963-1996) the economic development that catapulted Korea from third-world to first-world economic status. Essentially, in only 20 years Korea undertook and underwent a complete "Industrial Revolution," which took the West some 80 years. This process was facilitated by the extremely authoritarian government of Park Chung-hee, and it came at substantial cost to some levels of society and to democracy and human rights. The two-decade nature of the "Miracle"

also meant that society had no generational time to adjust, and that subsistence agriculture/hunting gathering coexisted with modern industry and sophisticated tastes. Works such as Cho Se-hui's **The Dwarf**, the story of the dissolution of a poor family under the pressure of urban renewal addressed the human costs of the pell-mell rush towards the future. Yang Kwi-ja's **A Distant and Beautiful Place** dealt with the fates of those who could not compete in the new "hurry, hurry" (balli-balli - see sidebar), world, and authors such as Park Wan-so considered the costs of "success" within the new and affluent society that was created.

Finally, the current period of Korean literature, which I choose to call Post-modern, can be said to date from the mid 1990s, and certainly from the IMF Crisis in 1997. The IMF crisis, with its evisceration of the Korean stock market and collapse of the won, was profoundly unsettling and it called into question all the assumptions on which Korea had been working, not the least of which was that hard work would continue to make the future sunny. Perhaps the beginning of this period can be found even earlier, in the writing of feminist authors, including Park Wan-so, who wrote of the ennui that followed success - but the threat that success could be withheld or taken back was an even bigger shock to the system, and this led to larger questions being raised. Novelists such as Kim Young-ha, in works including **I Have The Right to Destroy Myself**, portrayed a world in old social bonds were tattered, and life had no meaning beyond possessions; an existential prison. Other writers, such as Pak Min-gyu, explored the absurd and even more traditional writers like Shing Kyung-sook (**Please Look After Mom**) wrote books that, in looking back fondly on the "old days," indicated those days were long gone.

Perhaps the most obvious thing, and perhaps rendered obvious by the historical schisms noted above, about Korean modern literature is how completely it sunders itself from Korean classical literature. Its forms are different, its themes are different, its style is different, even who can be considered a "writer" is different. And even among these meta-changes, internal changes, struggles and disagreements existed, so across the nearly 150 years of modern literature, many changes, disparities, schisms, and disagreements evolved. Still a few general observations can be made about Korean modern literature, or at least the bulk of it. The first is that Korean modern literature is intensely national - it is concerned with the status of the nation, the power of the nation, and the relationship between citizens and the nation and the nation and the world. Some of this represents a major change from classical literature, which we have seen was initially quite internal in focus, with the concern of the yangban contemplating his navel, or local circumstances predominating. In some ways, **Hong Gildong** may be said to have been an early herald of Korean modern literature, as it systematically held a light to the social system of the Korean nation, not just local instances of it. Still, **Hong Gildong** was essentially inward looking with

respect to the world, so it can only be said to be the first step of modernization. The second thing that is noticeable is that, allied with the national character, and perhaps derived from the sutras of Buddhism and the rules of Confucianism, Korean modern literature was often quite didactic - it was written to comment on the state of the nation and often to imply what should or should not be changed.

Two general points should also be noted; the first being that all of Korea, including literature, modernized at astounding speed, and the second being that, one way or another, much of this modernization was accomplished at the point of a bayonet. In fact, Korea was modernized twice, at epic speeds, at the point of bayonet, first by the Japanese, and then by dictatorships after the Civil War knocked Korea back to pre-modernism. These two points have profoundly affected Korean modern literature. One of the most profound effects of these two influences has been that Korean literature has been profoundly national in nature. As mentioned above, the often didactic nature of Korea's literature militated towards a literature based on nation. After all, what better or better known subject for discussion is there than the nation itself, particularly in a high-context culture such as Korea, where shared history, language, and culture could be assumed? Add to this the fact that bayonets were often pointed at Korea from the outside, that is to say Korea's role as a small nation among superpowers, and you have another strong impetus towards a national literature. In an environment in which the cherished nationhood (*uri nara*, or 'our country') was always under threat, the issue of what to do to make the nation, stronger, how to defend it, were necessarily of primary importance in all aspects of culture.

ENLIGHTENMENT FICTION

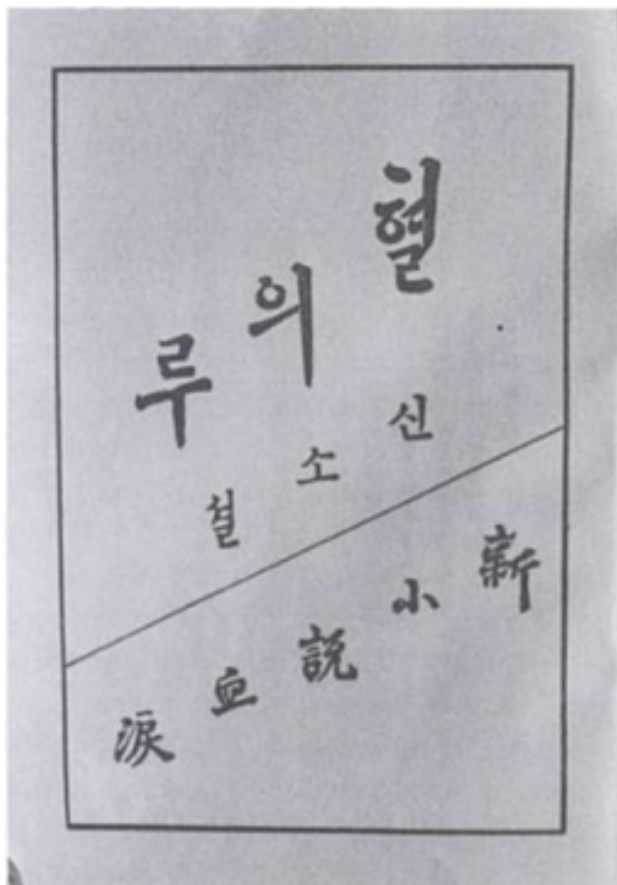
By the 19th century the Joseon Dynasty was collapsing into intrigue and impotence while to the south the Japanese empire was in ascendancy. At the same time, in the late 1800s, western influences including literature began to seep into Korean culture and affect Korean intellectuals including writers. At the same time, China, at one time perceived as the exemplar civilization, was now falling into disrepute as intellectuals attempted to reconstruct Korea as an independent nation. This led to, among other things, a repudiation of Chinese as a language.

Against this backdrop Korea began its first foray into modern literature during the so-called enlightenment (*kaehwa kyemmong*) era. The enlightenment period was a bit confused, and certainly brief as it was halted by Japanese colonialism, which had its own social and literary goals that would soon come to dominate all aspects of Korean cultural existence. The period is most interesting in that it is proof that Korea was trying to work out a path to literary modernization, and that it gave some tantalizing hints as to where that modernization might have gone.

The shift in literature was substantially a result of two specific social movements, the New Education (*sirhak*) and Korean Language and Literature Movement. In 1884 the Kabo Reforms introduced a new western style of education. At the same time publishing/information technology was changing as the 'new media' of newspapers was becoming increasingly important. The first newspaper published in Korea was the *Hansong Sunbo* (1883) and the government also

published, initially in Chinese but eventually in Hangul, the *Pak Mun-guk*, the mission of which was to proliferate new ideas. 1896 the short-lived *The Independent* (*Tognip sinmun*, 1896-1899) was published entirely in Hangul, then shut down due to government interference and in quick succession more newspapers followed including the *Capital Gazette* (*Hwangsông sinmun*, 1898-1910), the *Korea Daily News* (*Taehan maeil sinbo*, 1904-1910), and the *Cheguk Sinmun*. The vast majority of these newspapers populated some of their pages with serialized novels, as well as *sijo* and *kasa*. Concurrent with this, the development of modern printing techniques made mercantile publishing possible.

These developments allowed the possibility of the



professional author, as opposed to the troubador, scholar, or didact of the classical era. Authors including Ch'oe Chan-shik created a new form of literature call the *shinsosol* (new novel), and readers flocked to read these works.

Thematically, these works focused on issues of popular control, the importance of education (which, although different in suggested content and approach, still coincided well with established Confucian doctrines and social norms), attacks on arranged marriage, and attacks on the evil of "old" beliefs, including superstition. Subjects tended to be contemporary with a descriptive and analytical style which diverged from the narrative and chronological style of classical literature. A kind of moral didacticism still pervaded these works, with evil punished and good rewarded, and characters still tended to be archetypes and not individuals. Happy endings also tended to predominate. These works dealt with large problems in daily contexts and thus drew readership while at the same time creating a second generation of authors

One of these writers was Yi In-jik who, in 1906 had his work **Hyo ui nu (Tears of Blood** - please see sidebar) serialized in *The Independence News*. **Tears of Blood** told the story of a family in P'yongyang suffering during the Sino-Japanese War. Ongnyon is separated (there is that theme) from her family but finds the way to enlightenment while the Japanese impose colonialization. Following Yi In-jik came Yi Kwang-su, who would come to be considered the father of Korean modern literature, although also incredibly controversial as the colonial period stretched on. Yi Kwangsu advocated for shockingly modern, particularly shocking in Korea, beliefs including a scientific approach and the introduction of romantic love. We will return to this author when we discuss the colonial period.

In any case, as the path was blazed, the path was followed and the *shinsosol*, which it should be noted were uniformly written in Hangul, continued to become more popular across this period. While they were strongly didactic - always espousing Enlightenment ideals - they broke with the abstractly contemplative and highly artificial novels of the classical period. The novels

Serialization and Korean Literature

Korea's first newspaper was the Hansŏng sunbo, which published three times a month. Hansong sunbo lasted only one year but more newspapers quickly followed. Korean newspapers have generally been far more literary than those in the west – in fact quite consciously so. Newspapers have sought out links with authors and prior to 1945 this was the standard way for novels to get into print.

Serialization continued as in the example of Cho Se-hui's "The Dwarf" which although technically a one-man yŏnjak sosŏl, was also serialized across several magazines (although not in exact order).

In the current environment authors are making moves on going back to serialization, not on newspapers, but on the internet.

This model is not unknown in the west as many Victorian novels were first published serially in magazines or newspapers. Charles Dickens' *The Pickwick Papers* (1836) is one of the most famous examples of this kind of publishing in the west.

included new narrative techniques ('out of time' narratives) and more prosaic voices.

Biographical works were also popular, although their focus changed to suit the tastes of the enlightenment audience, meaning calls to the emerging national consciousness and strong appeals to patriotism.

Tale of the Patriotic Lady (Chang Ji-yon, 1907) was perhaps the most representative work of this genre.

The influence of the West was often strained through China and Japan, but more and more it became direct. In 1895 Yu Kiljun, the first Korean to study in both the US and Japan (Kiim Hyunggu, 32), published his **Things Seen and Heard on a Journey**

to the West (Seoyu kyeonmun). In 1895, John Scarth Gale, a translator of impressive religious output, translated (WorldCat) John Bunyan's **Pilgrims Progress (Cholloyokjong)**. Gale was also emblematic, as he translated many religious works, of the process by which Christianity was introduced into Korea. From 1895 on, Gale was busy producing translations of parts of the bible, and in 1910 a complete text of the Bible was finally translated and published in Korea.

This conversation brings us to the cusp between the Enlightenment and Colonial Periods, and it is time to move on to the latter.

Christianity and Korea

COLONIAL PERIOD: 1900 - 1945, THE BACKGROUND

The colonial period, which on a larger social level was completely impacted by Japanese colonialization that in fact amounted to invasion and conquest), featured two main literary approaches. One approach, which was partly adaptation to and partly reaction against colonialization was to continue the didactic nature of enlightenment literature. The second approach was more 'literary' in the Western sense in that it assigned no task to literature other than to be art, that literature should be entirely autonomous.

As we tour through the colonial period, this schism, which was often quite contentious, should be kept in mind. We will also explore the continued emergence of the modern novel, the emergence of separation and alienation as two major themes of both

literary approaches, the slight emergence and rapid destruction of Korean female authors, and always underlying that, the impact that colonialization had on Korean literature, in all aspects.

Although the enlightenment period had displayed several features of modernization, it would be far to simple to say that Korea was in the process of modernizing as the power of the Choseon state remained strong, despite that state's lack of vision. But the threat to Korea was not internal, rather it was external, and regardless of the attempts of more modern Koreans in the late 19th century, in 1910 Korea was colonialized by Japan, a process which had been taking place for some time. It is useful to break the colonial period into three subcategories, from 1910-1919 (initial colonialization), from 1919 to 1930 (a kind of thawing), and from 1930 to 1945 (during which time Japanese interference became harsher and harsher. What follows is thumbnail sketch of these periors.

Initial Colonization, 1910-1919

The Japanese colonial infrastructure was built with two things in mind; political control, and economic piracy. As part of the first project, freedom of speech and the press were limited, This had effects all across the Korean spectrum, but in an environment in which literature was often first presented serially in newspapers, it had a particular strong effect on literature. The Taehan Maeil Shinbo, which had been an unfettered outlet for Korean authors, was taken over by the Governor General. In 1910 Korean newspapers were closed,

Colonialization History

False Thaw: 1919 to 1936

On March 1st, 1919, an avalanche of anti-colonial activity swept across Korea. The March First Independence Movement featured masses of Koreans gathering in peaceful rallies. The March First Movement was brutally suppressed by the colonial government, but the movement did lead to several important changes, including an increase in freedom of the press (that was later revoked during the second Sino-Japanese War and World War II). The Movement also changed the nature of Korean literature, with many writers adopting more optimistic outlooks and an optimism that was enhanced by the development of new nationalist newspapers. Korean intellectuals, including writers continued to focus on education and extending the principles of enlightenment. Korean authors, literature, and schools of thought about literature bloomed in this era. In January 1920 the Japanese granted permission for three daily newspapers in Seoul, however under less than perfect conditions as they were subject to regular deletion, arrest of reporters, confiscations of entire issues, and in some cases suspension of printing. Literary magazines were founded at this time including Creation in 1919, Ruins in 1920, and White Tide in 1922. (Beck)

Winter Falls 1936-45

The concluding years of colonialization, however, were far from as optimistic and enlightened. "Cultural nationalism," as the Japanese saw Korean efforts to support or portray their own culture, was slowly extinguished and the second Sino-Japanese war and World War II meant new levels of colonial suppression. After invading Southeast Asia and China, Japan began to mobilize for all out war in the Pacific Ocean. This meant that the Japanese planned to squeeze as many humans and as much economic resources as it could out of Korea. The Japanese government's motto, "Japan and Korea are one body," was a hint of what it planned. Its plan was nothing less than the complete cultural obliteration of any traces of a non-Japanese Korean cultural identity. The use of the Korean language was prohibited and Koreans were assigned Japanese surnames. In 1940 Korean newspapers publishing in hangul were closed and a Council for Korean Theater was created to censor plays, while playwrights were coerced into collaboration. In 1941 the remaining two Korean literary journals were also closed, and the following year the leaders of the Korean Language Society were imprisoned. Finally, all literary works at this time were required to be published in Japanese.

and with two bangs, one at Hiroshima and one at Nagasaki, and then a whimper. Suddenly, Korea was free, but to do what?

Before we look at that question, let us delve more deeply into the colonial period.

COLONIAL PERIOD

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the questions first asked in the Enlightenment continued to be asked in the colonial period, but the colonialization by Japan made it clear to Korean intellectuals that the stakes had risen tremendously. The reaction was swift. In 1915, one of the fathers of modern Korean literature, Yi Kwang-su, laid out his modern manifesto. "We are a new people, without ancestors, without parents, that came from Heaven in the present." (Kim Hunggyu, 194.) This belief was amplified in 1930 by Cho'oe Caeso, who argued, "In terms of contemporary culture, our attitudes are dominated by those of Western culture, and not by those from the Choson period and before.... This will and must continue in the future (Kim, loc. cit.)."

This catastrophism paralleled the very real shakeups which Korea had endured including the stresses of a modernization movement already somewhat underway; the collapse of the Joseon/Confucian sociopolitical structure, and the harsh realities of Japanese invasion and colonialization. As noted previously, conditions had been preparing for modernization including, increased education, the shift to hangul across society including into newspapers and books, and the introduction of modern western concepts. The latter introduction had begun to chip away at how Koreans and Korean authors saw themselves at the same time increasing the importance of internal agency and of the exigencies of daily life.*

YI KWANG-SU

Early literature and study was largely saved for men, and done in Chinese, in which women were not well-educated. The introduction of hangul, however, changed this and in the 15th century the so-called "internal style" (meaning internal to the house, where women resided), or naeganch'e developed in hangul. This split in language meant that female and male writings diverged, often even to the level of language. This is not to say that men did not use hangul, in fact men did write in naeganch'e, but Chinese characters were still considered the mark of an educated man, and educated men were 'writers.' This meant that much of the naeganch'e content was more prosaic, having to do less with contemplation and more to do with everyday life.

Baby Steps: 1910-1919

If the Enlightenment was the conception of modern Korean fiction, this period might be considered its infancy.

The apogee of this approach was reached by Yi Kwang-su in 1917 when he published **Heartless**, a clearly didactic work, but one that focused on the necessity for Koreans to fix their social lives before being concerned with political reality. In *Heartless* Yi Hyong-sik is an orphan and teacher who works to make education more modern and less Confucian. His youthful crush Yongchae becomes an entertainer and he leaves her to marry the daughter of a wealthy diplomat. Yi Hyong-sik wants a modern marriage, one based on love, and while he does love Sonhyong he harbors the suspicion that she has married him at the

will of her father. Yongchae, meanwhile, contemplates suicide but is dissuaded by a feminist, Pyongguk, who persuades Yongchae that Yongchae's life is worth more than the wish of her parents and a wife's life, similarly, is worth more than the wishes of a husband. Yongchae, the feminist argues, is free to choose the traditional paths, but she can also create her own life. As the book ends Yi Hyong-sik and Pyonguk persuade Yongchae and Sonhyong to work with them in the struggle for their personal enlightenment and that of the nation.

Another classic story of the era is Yom Sang-Sop's *On the Eve of the Uprising*. Yom is the same guy who wrote the epically long **Three Generations**. This story was strongly influenced by Japanese writing style (first person, confessional) of the time. It is a relatively straight-forward account of the Korean situation before the March First Movement. The narrator is a rather selfish man named Inwha, a Korean studying in Japan. He has to return to Korea when he gets a telegram saying his wife is on the verge of dying. He has adopted a philosophy of self-reliance that is actually more like a philosophy of use everyone around you, but the trip home makes him aware of his personal colonial position and that of his country. He suffers from constant racial discrimination, both in Japan and at home. When he hears that his wife is dying (he was married quite young and she got ill during childbirth, which occurred while he is in Japan. Inwha is also a bit of a misogynist, and women might not enjoy reading his treatment of them, particularly his dying wife. Yom uses the tomb as a recurring symbol of his wife's condition, his condition, and the condition of Korea as a nation.

Censorship

<http://koreanliterature.wordpress.com/>

While these books were being written, the Japanese were tightening their colonial control. Private newspapers were shuttered while the Korea Daily News, the largest newspaper before colonialism, was converted into a mouthpiece for the state. Censorship was common and the 1907 Newspaper Law and 1909 Publication Law severely restricted who could publish. Needless to say, this resulted in a great deal of pressure that would come to a boil in the March 1st Movement.

1919 - 1936

The March First Independence Movement of 1919 led to the Korean people developing more positive outlook. Even better, the movement led to substantive changes. In 1920 the Cultural Policy rolled back some of the restrictions on publishing and the results were immediate. In the first year of the new policy some 409 permits were given for journals and magazines. In one year, this represented an increase of nearly 400 permits over the number given over the entire previous decade

After the shocks of the collapse of the Joseon Dynasty and the Japanese invasion, the relative successes of the March First Movement led to increased emphasis on themes of individuality and self-discovery. The literary magazines previously mentioned *Ch'angjo* (Creation) (1919), *P'yeho* (The Ruins) (1920), and *Paekcho* (White Tide) (1920 or 1922?) gave authors places to publish, and literary groups began to cohere. *Ruins* and *White Tide* were consciously anti-didactic, focusing on "pure" literature, and it was at about this time that a split began to develop between pure and didactic literature. The split was by no means complete, as authors like Yom Sang-seop and Kim Dong-in managed to combine biting social commentary with entirely realistic portrayals of life. At the same time, national newspapers evolved (including the *Chosun Ilbo* and *Dong-a Ilbo*) and these provided sites for the serialization of new Korean fiction

The new novels took some of the trends of the last of the Classical period, particularly a focus on real-life and real-life problems, and melded them to conceptual concerns of the enlightenment period and that of the newly subjugated Korea, the failure of aspects of Confucianism, modern education, and political sovereignty. Stylistically, the new novel was similar, melding approaches that had gradually evolved in the enlightenment, specifically and

increased focus on realistic prose and realistic verbal description. The issues of the day, became the plots of the novels of the day, as description replaced narrative and analysis replaced chronology. The novels were still overwhelmingly didactic, almost universally following "the reproof of vice and promotion of virtue (Lee, 11)," and failing to feature individually described characters in favor of clichés (evil stepmother, murderous villains), and contrived happy endings. New novels were typically in common speech, printed in hangul, and focused on modern education, and a new focus, sexual equality.

The path Yi Kwangsu had blazed was quickly followed by other writers including some who were not didactic. Kim Tong-in was paramount among the "art for art's sake" writers and was one of the co-founders of the journal *Creation*, in which his debut story, the *Sorrows of the Weak* was published. Kim rejected the argument that literature must be didactic at the same time he rejected the idea that art must reflect reality exactly. Despite his "literary" approach, Kim was not immune to writing works with clear didactic message, or realistic ones.. In 1925, Kim published one of his most famous works, *Potatoes*, which was a breakthrough in Korean "realist" fiction, but also a scathing portrayal of the wrong a social system could inflict on individuals. In *Potatoes*, a young girl from a moral family is sold in marriage to an older widower who is in decline and over time she is dragged into a sewer of sexual depravity, in which she is finally killed.

Korean literature of this period was also split into national and class literature, with the class literature expanding in the mid 1920s and focusing on class consciousness and the creation of "farmer literature" and "labor literature." The national literature of the first half of the decade often focused on romantic representations of individual and his/her hopeless position in society. Hyeon Chin-geon's *A Society That Drives You to Drink* (1921) is a prime example of this kind of work (as is Na Hye-Seok's *Kyunghui*). In 1925 KAPF (Korean Artists Proletarian Federation) was founded with the intent of class liberation. KAPF used socialist realism to increase class consciousness and to reveal the plight of the working classes. This was obviously problematic to the Japanese, who regularly harassed KAPF, but allowed it to exist, partly because it represented a schism within Korean literature between activists and naturalists. With respect to class literature, Professor Bruce Fulton particularly notes Yi K-Yeong's (Who

eventually migrated to North Korea and then disappeared) *A Tale of Rats* as an example of this kind of fiction. (Kim Chong-un, 3). *A Tale of Rats* explores Korean society, particularly its unbalanced economic structure, from the perspective of the amusingly wise Thunder Giant, an enormous rat with a fine sense of philosophy and irony who notes the differences between the lives of landlord Kim and tenant farmer Su-dol.

The new fiction that developed during this period often focused on individuals out of step with social realities, including intellectuals unmoored from reality, and the horrific existences of the lower classes. Over the decade of the 20s the literature moved from the romantic, descriptions of individual trapped in melancholy, to more realistic descriptions. *Lucky Day*, by Hyon Ching-gon used very precise detail to explore the kind of Issue that Yi Sang explored in the 1930s with expressionism: The daily problems people faced in dealing with the horror of their daily lives. One of the classic works of this period, though a bit long is Yom Sang-sop's previously mentioned **Three Generations** which, as its name suggests, follows three generations of Koreans, and in doing so neatly outlines the impacts of the Joseon Dynasty, modernism, and colonialism on a Korean family.

1936s - 1945

In the 1930s the Japanese increased their militarism and began to apply ideological pressure across the Korean cultural spectrum. The search for a common, "Korean" ideology, which had been the focus of the first two sections of the colonial era waned, and the literature began to fracture and explore new approaches and tactics. Yi Sang's *Wings* (Nalgae), mentioned earlier, is one of the prime examples of this. Yi used alienation, dissasociation, even schizhophrenia to separate his narrator from the world in which he lived. *A Day in the Life of Kubo the Novelist*, by Pak Tae-won is consciously modern. As the title suggests it is one day of Kubo's life, recorded by order of events, and told in a present tense stream of consciousness interspersed with a stream of consciousness forays into memory. As an added bonus, this story is illustrated by Yi Sang, The two, apparently, were best friends. Kubo takes us on a tour of Seoul, traveling to Gwangwhamun, bars, teahouses, a train station, even past a row of prostitutes. There are little black and white drawings by Yi, that capture the vignettes Kubo tells.

Kubo's day ends on a little note of random happiness, and this is a fun story to read, and told in a very comprehensible way.

As war drew closer and closer, Japan clamped down harder and harder. In 1935, the Japanese forced the KAPF out of existence, but by this time censors had already stamped out any published reference to socialism or any political issues that might reflect at all upon Japan.

Escaping to the Rustic

On the other hand, some authors chose to avoid the impact of colonialism by writing outside of its purview. In *The Mountains*, by Yi Hyo-seok the colonial influence on which is explained in a brief explanatory note which notes that the naturalist tone of the work was forced by Japanese; Yi originally wrote political works, but the Japanese colonialists suppressed the proletarian literature movement in Korea, forcing authors to less controversial subjects. In any case the story follows a man forced out of the city to the bliss he discovers in the countryside. Yi Hyo-seok operated along similar lines in *When the Buckwheat Flowers Bloom*. *When the Buckwheat Flowers Bloom* may read as a bit of a shaggy dog story to western readers - it is the story of two men who are obviously son and father, but unaware of it, traveling the circular route of itinerant salesmen. Kim Yu-Jeong, whose *Camellias* is one of the few translated works of the era that manages to be funny as well as romantic. *Camellias* is a "first-love" story in which a rather bumpkin-ish boy confronts Jeomsun a rather higher class girl who loves him. The tone is rough and humorous as Jeomsun is only capable of showing her interest through aggression – the "potato incident" and the "cockfight" being two of the more amusing cases of her sublimated love. The young love is complicated, too, by the fact that Jeomsun is the narrator's social superior, and this causes him to see Jeomsun's solicitude and aggression as a form of class warfare. Of course it is, in a way, as Jeomsun pulls stunts that would get a social equal smacked on the head, but Kim plays this for broad comedy and the unnamed narrator's denseness nearly justifies the lengths that Jeomsun feels she has to go to in order to demonstrate her love. The story ends happily, with the narrator in a symbolic fashion, crawling towards a greater destiny: "I had no choice but to crawl away on hands and knees, up along the rocks towards the mountain peak."

Kim's stories are usually set in the the mountains of his hometown, outside of Chuncheon. Kim does not see his subjects ideologically, either as potentially 'enlightened' or as potential recipients of class consciousness. Some authors, of course, managed to appear rustic, while actually making political points. Even Kim Yu-jeong's amusing *Camellias* contains a healthy amount of commentary on both class structure in Korea and the impact of colonialization.

Female Authors

For female authors the colonial period was bleak. While the focus on modernism and a kind of sexual equality did open some intellectual doors for women, it also failed to provide any outlets for women who might become ideologically/intellectually aware. Perhaps the finest example/explanation of that problem can be found in Na Hye-seok's *Kyonghui* (1918). While *Kyonghui* reads as a painfully didactic work to modern eyes, it was exploring completely new ideas in Korea, that women could have education, and could have ideas of their own.

Another story of the same era is *A Girl Of Mystery* (1917) by Kim Myeong-sun. This is a subtle story of a young girl of uncertain origin, unhappy and partially hidden, and eventually on the run from larger social forces that she cannot control.

Kim Weon-ju's *Awakening* (1926) has a clever double-epistolary structure. It is also much more ideologically varied than its predecessor, *Kyeonghui*. It begins with an apparently happily married woman (though when her husband leaves for Japan he shakes her hand!) who goes through a process of discovery that leads her from a life entirely dependent on him, to one entirely separated from him, even contemptuous of him. In fact, he creates this contempt, and when the narrator concludes with a bit of semi-moralizing about what she has learned, it is the knowledge earned by the story, not the empty lecturing of *Kyeonghui*.

The careers of these first Korean female novelists, unfortunately, are also a kind of narrative history of the risks that women took in writing. In 2010, Columbia Press published **Questioning Minds**, a collection (which includes the three stories just considered) of female Korean authors across the 20th century. The book includes biographical information on all authors and reveals the unbelievably unfortunate endgames for the three authors just mentioned; stories which must have made it a very daunting prospect indeed, for female authors to follow. All

three were initially successful and then, for a variety of reasons, destroyed by society. Na Hye Sok, particularly, became a symbol of the risks that women took by writing. Na's name was often invoked to stifle the aspirations of women who wished to write with, "Do you want to become another Na Hye Sok?" was a phrase frequently used to defer daughters or younger sisters from writing (Ji Moon Suh). In truth, Na's story is very sad. Living the beliefs of the time, she married for love, but the marriage collapsed under the strain of separation and accusations of adultery.

The resulting divorce disgraced Na. Although she continued to paint and write, her fortunes declined and she died in a vagrants hospital, and to this day the site of her grave is unknown. Kim Myeong-sun's high point was in 1925, when a collection of her works was published. After that, she bounced between literature and cinema, but by the early 30s was essentially done. She moved to Tokyo in 1939. lived destitute, and died in an asylum. Kim Weon-ju, at least, apparently retreated from society on something like her own terms. After writing a scandalous article *My View of Sexual Purity*, in which she argued that spiritual purity outweighed its physical counterpart, she slowly retreated into Buddhism and eventually died in a Buddhist temple.

Summary

The Colonial period was a tumultuous and exciting one. While Japanese colonialism cannot be defended, the fact that Korea had been so easily coopted caused its intellectuals to re-examine all the things they thought they stood for. At the same time, under the Japanese heel, resistance, collaboration, and accomodation all co-existed as Korean writers attempted to confront or deal with the nature of the colonial beast, and always from a position of lesser power. Some, like Hwang Sun-won performed heroically, while others including Yi Kwang-su performed in a more ambivalent ways. Still, the literature of this era is a vivid portrait and reminder of a time in which Korea did not control its own destiny while still being a time of rapid development. The collapse of Japan, of course, ended all this, and after a brief interregnum, the trauma of colonialism was replaced by the trauma of civil war.

POST-WAR MODERN LIT

The postwar period of Korean modern literature is a bit less clear than the colonial period. In some ways the Japanese invaders determined what would and would not happen in Korean literature during their years imperialism. Once that controlling factor was removed, Korean literature was free to choose its own path. At the same time, for a strongly national literature, history and the rather important and traumatic events that it contained, had to have strong impact on the culture.

Korean post-war literature can be divided in multiple ways, but for the purposes of this book we will divide it into war/postwar/division literature, the miracle on the Han, 'modern' literature, and post-modern literature.

These overlap substantially, with division literature, as an example, continuing to be produced to this day.

The Korean war left a deep wound in Korea's history. The 38th parallel marks the de-militarized zone, the split between North and South Korea. This division has been one of the most important themes in Korean literature.

War literature boomed in the 1950s, In the 1960's war literature began to wane as writers began to view the war more objectively, after April 19th, the question arose why the war had been necessary. *The Square* was a representative work of the time. The narrator cannot find peace in either the North or South, gives up and leaves for a neutral country, but kills himself at sea. In the 70's and 80s literature of the Korean division becomes more active. Works focus on the pains of the victims of national division particularly on the pain of families that had been torn apart by the division.

Separated Country and Separated People

Korea has always been concerned about separation and diaspora. Originally the threat was to the nation itself, from China and Japan. The colonial era affirmed Korea's worst fears about Korea's vulnerability. But even beginning in the late 19th Century, Koreans had to leave for Manchuria, Siberia, Japan, The United States and Mexico (See Kim Young-ha's *Black Flower*, for a fictionalization of the Mexican diaspora).

However, the numbers of these voluntary separations from Korea were dwarfed by the separation forced by the Korean Civil War. Estimates of sundered families range from 500,000 on the low end to nearly 7,2 million on the high end.

Worse, this separation is enforced by the physical split of the country into North and South. This ongoing, current, and quite realistic concern about separation and diaspora has always been evident in Korean literature, and at no time as obviously as the post-Civil War era.

In the 80's the literature of division turned to the idea of unity. Yi Munyol's *An Appointment with my brother*. In the 1990's that continues, with an additional focus on re-examing the reasons for the division. Finally, as the century ended, Korean literature moved to what could be called "post-modern" literature.

WAR AND SEPARATION

Several themes developed, or continued, in Korean literature after the Korean War. Division of country and families, as well as the fratricidal struggle between true-believers on separate sides of the ideological gulf, were among the most common. Woven in with these themes were some themes that had been developing since the Enlightenment including the tension between traditions that dated back to the early years of the Joseon Dynasty and the modern world being ushered in both both willingly by some Koreans, and also imposed by external forces, first Japan then the United States. Emerging capitalism and the late introduction of Christianity, were among the powerful new forces that began to emerge at this time, and would continue to shape Korean literature far beyond the strict era of pundan munhak. While the inception of the war and separation literature was obviously the war itself, it cannot be said that separation literature has ended, even as this book goes to print.

Most of the writers of the in the fifties were a new generation of writers who had been born in the 20s and 30s. After the brief hope of a thaw, with freedom and peace in Korea, the civil war, of course, dashed all hope of it. In this sense, the works from 1945 and 1950 might be described as the dying gasps of the previous generation of writers. In a new environment of political, social and ethical collapse, and one that featured incredible amounts of violence, both military and political. much of the literature focused on the death, devastation and pain that the war and its aftermath delivered to average people. Other themes included the implosion of Korea's traditional value systems, and during this period literature considering the issues of national division also began to appear. Translated authors who adressed these issues were numerous, Partly, this was a result of the fact that most authors, if not all, were participants in the war including, Yeom Sang-seop, Hwang Sun-won, Kim Dong-ni, Park Gyeong-ni, Seo Gi-won, Oh Sang-won, and Lee Beom-seon, to name authors who have been translated into English. Literary Critic and Professor Kim Chi-su notes several main themes of the fiction of the time:

Pundan Munhak

In pundan munhak, the most common subject matter is the suffering of ordinary people. The so-called witness literature encompasses various kinds of misery such as family dispersion, unfulfilled wishes, and poverty. The majority of these works share the feeling that national division and war have (8-3, p. 29) been the primary cause of all these agonies.

Han Moo-sook

Pundan Munhak can be difficult for western readers to understand. The combination of the social influences creating a lack of agency in some characters and painful acceptance in others creates one barrier. The other barrier is the lack of historical knowledge that many readers will bring to this type of literature. All of the books listed here, however, have the advantage of being able to stand alone as literary works, and not depending on particular understanding of Korean history.

First, ideological struggle, particularly that of the communist ideology against landowners; Second, the utter destruction of humanity that the war sometimes created; Third the destruction of family particularly for the young, and the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder that this caused; Fourth the abandonment of children that the war caused, and how these children did or didn't overcome it; Fifth, the power of love, particularly as expressed by women, as they sacrificed themselves for their families, and; Sixth, the refugee experience in general.

Ch'ae Mansik, who we discussed earlier in the context of the colonial period, was one of the more amusing writers of this era, after having undergone a conversion to collaboration and then back. In *Constable Maeng Ch'ae*, through the eyes of a constable, gives a snapshot of Korean history just after the Japanese colonization has ended. As serious work written in a light-hearted tone (just check out the constables' definition of what it means to be a non-corrupt policeman!), it is marred only by a rather didactic final paragraph, the hammering of which destroys some of the light tone that has preceded it.

. *Kapitan Ri*, by Chon Kwangyong, is a remarkably cheery portrayal of collaboration. Dr. Yi Injuk is a collaborator with a "can-do" attitude extending to everyone except Koreans. He is exuberantly proud of past collaborations and the story is partly of his accepting his new collaborators. Yi reminisces on the fruits of collaboration with the Japanese, recounts how he came to terms with the Soviets, and realizes that the American "big-noses" are another such opportunity despite his discomfort that his daughter is marrying one.

But most works of *pundan munhak* were far less satirical and focused instead on the costs of a nation sundered. Hwang **Sun-won's Descendants of Cain** (1953-54), *With Her Oil Lamp on that Night*, and later, *Obaltan*, were all works exploring the various costs of separation. Other works, including Yi Mun-yol's **An Appointment With My Brother** explored the later manifestations of separation, and as late as 2010, **Drifting House**, written by Korean-American

Hwang Sun-won: Korea's Dickens?

Hwang Sun-won was born in 1915 near Pyongyang and educated there and at Waseda University in Tokyo. He was barely twenty when he published his first collection of poetry, and in 1940 his first collection of stories was published. Hwang's literary range was astounding, from incisive short stories to epic novels (**Trees on a Slope**, a story of three men attempting to return to normal life after war-time).

Hwang was also a patriot, who not only went underground to avoid being impressed into the Japanese war machine, but also continued to write his fiction in Korean at a time when the Japanese colonialists were insinuating on Japanese as the language of Korea. This brave stance, particularly at a time when Japan seemed invulnerable, might well have doomed Hwang's work to oblivion.

Fortunately, as events turned out, Hwang's beliefs were validated by history, and today a great deal of his work is available in translation.

(to stretch the definition of translated Korean fiction!) Kryss Lee, was considering the same fractured terrain.

Some, but surprisingly few, of the works focused on the war itself. In general, these stories were of a small scale, often featuring a handful of soldiers in an isolated location. Non-Koreans who read Korean war-time stories in translation often note that the stories are not about the war, or even battles, but rather vignettes of participants.

Some authors struggled to suggest that reconciliation could be found. Hwang Sun-won's *Cranes* was an early example. Published in 1953, it was set near the thirty-eighth parallel and featured the reunion of two childhood friends, Tokchae a former vice-chairman of the communist Peasant's League and his friend/captor Songsam, a South Korean police officer. Tokchae is to be taken away and shot. At one point as Songsam chaperones Tokchae to his fate, he is reminded of their shared experiences, including sharing chestnuts and freeing a crane that the duo had bound. In the end, in a burst of natural lyricism, Songsam performs an act of a mercy that suggests that, perhaps, all hope of mercy is not lost.

Other works were not quite as positive. Ch'oe In-hun's *The Plaza* ((1960) attempted to explain separation using symbols of ideology. Remarkably, Ch'oe wrote this work while only twenty-four years old, and partly in response to the political relaxation which followed the April 19th student rebellion in 1960. Myong-jun, the 'hero' of *The Plaza*, is unable to find an ideological home. Ch'oe separates South and North Korea into the closet and the plaza, respectively.

During this period some writers moved away from war and post-war literature, seeing it as nostalgic and no longer relevant to the Korean experience. Many of these authors began to grapple with the political realities presently at hand. Consequently, much fiction moved to the openly political. At the same time, Western Modernism began to affect Korean fictions. While division literature continued to be popular and the ideas of division and diaspora are always present in Korean fiction, new themes emerged as Korea began to emerge from the shadows of its civil war. In the 1960's, as the next chapter will demonstrate, entirely new kinds of fiction emerged based on economic, then political development which can loosely be characterized as *The Miracle on the Han*, but it did little to staunch the flow of separation literature.

A good example of late-era separation literature is Kim Won-II's **Evening Glow**, the story of a businessman, Kim Kapsu, returning to his countryside home for a funeral and re-connecting with and re-assessing the complicated strands of his previous life, one lived in the turbulent period of Korean civil war. The story is based on fact, revolving around a brief but violent communist uprising in Kyongsang (Hahn Moo-sook).

The story begins with Kapsu the son of a butcher (a problematic social status at that time, something akin to being an untouchable in the Indian caste system) returning to his hometown

and remembering the events of the past. Kapsu is a sickly and clever lad; half the story is told from his vantage point as a child, and the other half told from his adult perspective as a successful businessman. In a flashback we see his father the butcher becoming a strong North Korean partisan and leading a local, and doomed, rebellion against the post-war status in his village. Kim Won-il presents the butcher as a cruel and capricious character, but does not explicitly judge him. The butcher, it is clear, has his own experiences and reasons for what he chooses, and Kim refuses the Korean authorial tendency to be didactic, instead allowing the butcher to die on something like his own terms, and with his belief intact.

As the title suggests, the story begins and ends with two sunsets ("evening glow"), although sunsets that are described entirely differently. The first sunset is blood-red, emblematic of the blood that flows freely in this novel, and undifferentiated, "The color of dry blood, the evening glow picked up the end of the thread of flickering memories." (3)

The final sunset is much more complicated:

You could not say the sunset was simply red. Close examination would reveal an exquisite mixture of colours, but people say an evening glow is red. Dark yellow, pale blue, even gray were mixed with it. Was it because people liked to lump things together that they called it "red?" (258)

This symbolic change, of course, is meant to represent a change in Kapsu's understanding of his own history and how it impacts his present; a message, obviously, that Kim intends/hopes to apply to the greater Korean society.

A similar kind of story, though one that deals with the physical halving of the country and the overpowering desire for re-union, is Yi Mun-yol's **An Appointment With My Brother**. Yi Mun-yol's **An Appointment with My Brother** is a full-fledged political lecture wrapped in the garb of a short novel. Yi makes no effort to hide the fact that the central discussion is, in many ways, a minor part of the formal plot, although it is also quite clearly the important part of the novel. It is to Yi's credit that he personalizes his protagonists so well that, even as they (The two step-brothers as well as a businessman who appears in the novel) argue what is essentially predictive political theory, both the story and the argument seem lively and important.

The plot is fairly mechanical. The narrator meets with his stepbrother, a child from their father's second marriage. The father's second marriage occurred after he defected from South to North Korea. This plot is reminiscent of Yi's own life, which was substantially complicated, both economically and politically, by the fact that his father defected to North Korea. The meeting takes place in China and the meeting is between stepbrothers because their father, whom the narrator had initially hoped to meet, has died.

The meeting between separated brothers is an old trope in Korean modern literature, “In Korean popular discourse, the division of the peninsula into two separate nations after the Korean War is often symbolized as two brothers who, in the shadow of their parents’ death, are tragically separated across an artificially imposed national line.” (Wood 129) Presaged by political discussions between the narrator and, successively a businessman and a professor, when the two brothers meet the conversation becomes a nationalistic one with each brother retreating to the platitudes of his homeland. This leads to some fairly crackling interactions, including one of my favorite passages:

I heard that the traitorous plutocrats have millions of square meters of land, and that all the scenic places are taken up by their deluxe villas where they cavort with young whores.

That’s some funny writing and also does a good job of relaying the overblown oratory-style the North Koreans sometimes use when discussing the South at the same time it limns the lack of sophistication of the North Korean brother. Other characters have similarly vivid personalities and Yi does an excellent job of weaving them in and out of the story.

The brothers struggle to find common ground and in a very “Korean” scene, their differences are bridged by drinking soju, and the brothers perform a joint memorial service for their father. Nationalist sentiments never quite quit intruding, there is an amusing scene in which the brothers argue over the meaning of their offerings to their father, but in the end familial unity is restored and a sort of judgment seems to be reached, when the Northern brother accepts a gift of cash from the Southern one. This action also echoes one of the ongoing political themes of the novel, that re-unification may end up being an economically costly process. That is only one of the political/economic options the book explores with respect to re-unification, and it is one of the minor miracles of the book that Yi makes all the options/predictions stand on their own two legs; in most cases he is quite good at leaving judgments out of his text.

The Rainy Spell by Yun Heung-gil is one of those rare “classic” works of Korean separation literature that manages to stand in its own right as a work of literature and despite some rather formidable hurdles on the basis of translation alone.

The story was written in 1978 and immediately became a Korean classic. *Jangma*, or in a different English translation *Spell of the Monsoon Rain* (To be honest, that seems ridiculous from the Korean) focuses on a post-war family with two grandmothers and their shared grandson in the 3rd grade. The grandmothers agree to live together, but when the war comes the maternal grandmother’s son fights for the South while the paternal grandmother’s son fights for the Northern guerillas who continue to fight on in the South. This fraternal split also splits the

grandmothers, although they continue to live under the same roof.

The family splits even farther when the “Southern” son is killed by North Korean soldiers. The young grandson, giving in to the lure of chocolate, reveals to secret police that the “Northern” son has been in his grandparents house, and at this point the entire family comes under state suspicion. The surviving (guerilla) brother is shortly captured. This drives his mother nearly mad and after a visit to a shaman she comes to believe that he will return to the house on a day the shaman has predicted. Instead, a massive snake appears and the paternal grandmother passes out in shock. The maternal grandmother soothes the snake and persuades it to leave. This event fits a shamanistic narrative – that the snake is the spirit of the dead son – and the grandmothers re-unify over this event, although one of them shortly dies.

This plot is custom made for Korean readers, with the family bifurcated to directly resemble the national bifurcation, but Yun handles this subtly and you don’t have to know the particulars of Korean history to feel what is happening within the family.

While these themes continue to be worked out in Korean literature, other events were also taking place that had substantial impact on Korean literature, and perhaps the greatest of these was the combined economic and political impact of the Miracle on the Han, which is the subject of the next chapter.

MIRACLE ON THE HAN AND CONTINUATION OF PUNDAN MUNHAK

1970s Korea was marked by two distinctive but related features. First was political trauma and second was economic success. Korean President Park Jung-hee suspended the National Assembly, radically restricted political freedom and in 1972 extended his military dictatorship without limit. At the same time, due to mandated economic programs this decade was also a time of spectacular economic growth. The economic growth, however, came at a price as traditional agriculture imploded, economic disparities grew, and a host of new problems, attendant to industrialization, arose. Traditions eroded, pollution exploded, and economic development proceeded quite unequally. Cultural changes occurred as well, as the political oppression of the time led to a desire for freedom, and protest, in the forms of music, clothes, long-hair, and open demonstration. With the beginnings of economic success and the imposition of dictatorship came a kickback from authors. In the early 70s authors began to address the problems resulting from rapid industrialization including the destruction of traditional village life, including farmers, the commodification of relationships, the growing gap between rich and poor, the destruction of the traditional family unit, and increasing materialism. Pundan Munhak continued to be popular, as the issue of the split country was no closer to being solved. However most of the focus turned to social issues and this also meant that literature continued to focus on the real problems of real people. Particularly, authors began to focus on characters who lived on the periphery of society or who had been marginalized by the rapid rate of economic and social change.

One result of this tendency was the emergence of "labor" fiction which focused on the status of workers as they attempted to negotiate industrial development in Korea. Shin Sang-ung's **Our Friend's Homecoming** explores some of the lesser known costs of Korean

What was the "miracle?"

economic success. It is the story of a group of friends awaiting the return of a friend from overseas. During the 70s Korea often provided labor for other states, particularly in the Middle East, looking for workers to do the three D jobs that they no longer wanted their own citizens to do. Short, sharp, and featuring a surprising and shocking ending it demonstrates a kind of sharply plotted story-telling that is sometimes missing in Korean fiction. In a very few pages Shin outlines the unfortunate labor system in Korea, one so troublesome that leaving sometimes seemed a better option than staying, and then reveals that none of the options were really good. Shin was a remarkably brave writer, and it is worth noting that he was often detained by Korean police for his political stances.

Hwang Sok-yong's **The Road to Sampo** is a reflection on the losses to Korean culture caused by the successful modernization of the economy, particularly the loss of "hometown." The story begins with two laborers meeting on the road close to the jobs that they have just lost. Yong-dal has been caught in a dalliance with his landlady, and he and Chong (who goes by last name only) have just been let go of their construction jobs for the winter. With little else to do, Yong-dal decides to accompany Chong to Chong's hometown of Sampo, an island town just off the coast of Korea. At first, Chong and Yong-dal are somewhat diffident companions, but they quickly settle into a rhythm of talking, walking, and stopping in little towns along the way. In one of these towns they stop at a bar-restaurant that is in some confusion as the attractive young barmaid has run away. The proprietor tells the two men that there is a reward of 50,000 won if they catch and return the barmaid, and this is in their mind as they head out of town. Soon, of course, they do catch up with the barmaid, but instead of returning her to the bar, they all decide to continue their trek to a train station. The woman, whose pseudonym is Paek-Hwa, like Chong, has decided to journey home. The three form a loose alliance, with a slightly romantic sub-plot thrown in, and become something like a team as they walk through the snow. Personal histories are revealed, and Hwang is a master at describing the scenery of rural Korea. Finally, the trio arrives at the train station and, has to separate. Here Paek-Hwa reveals one last bit of information about herself that completes the bonding that the trip has begun, and she departs on a train of her own. Chong and Yong-dal, then, wait for the train to Sampo.

Which sounds fine and good, but of course nothing is so simple, and at the end, in a casual conversation, it is revealed to Chong that the goal towards which he is traveling does not really exist. The ideal rustic town of Sampo, like all of Korea, has been turned into a construction zone (amusingly, Yong-dal is thrilled by this turn of events, because he sees employment in it) and Chong's dream does not exist. The Road to Sampo is a vignette of the economic cost of development, with all three characters rootless and exploited. Even more, it reveals the psychic cost of development to Korea. The notion of a destroyed hometown is a devastating one in

Korea, where one's hometown is an important place in a way that is not common in the west. Where one is born is a very common and important question in Korea, and westerners soon grow to recognize that word, as it is only of the first pieces of information that Koreans attempt to get after an introduction (after things like age, marital status, family members, and sometimes University – The Korean introductory script is actually quite rigid). To have a hometown destroyed is to suffer a psychological trauma of high order.

As the story ends, with a train pulling out of the station, the reader is left unclear as to what Chong has decided – the question of whether he is on the train to his 'hometown' is left intentionally open, and the reader is free to make his or her own decision. That Hwang meant this to be a general indictment is clear by his use of the name Sampo for the ideal island-hometown. Although Sampo is a port-town in Korea, there is no island of that name, and as in Park Wan-suh's **Who Ate Up All the Singa** (in which Singa is not an actual plant or food) Sampo is intended to be something like a Platonic ideal.

Cho Se-hui's **The Dwarf**, was written between 1975 and 1978 as a series of semi-connected short stories (a *yōnjak sosōl* or linked novel) which were published in several Korean literary magazines. It is a powerful work of social criticism which focuses on the human costs associated with the forced redevelopment of Seoul in the 1970s. Cho's writing is kaleidoscopic, often fantastic, and occasionally difficult to follow. The work features interlocking narrative arcs and narratorial shifts that are ultimately quite rewarding to follow. Cho Sehui was an author suited to write about such a topic. Born in 1942, he was a member of the "hangul generation," the first post-war generation who were taught and wrote in Hangul, not Japanese. Cho's work was overtly and directly political which was a departure for Korean literature in which most political commentary had largely been in the background or historical in nature, but rarely commented on directly by characters or in text. Cho's generation was to be the one that broke this wall of silence: History was also poised for Choi's work as well as that of the other "labor" novelists. On November 13th of 1970, Chon T'ae-il publicly immolated himself in protest against labor exploitation in the rayon garment industry and this act helped define a new era of workers activism. At the same time increasing demographic and economic pressure on Seoul resulted in waves of 'illegitimate' housing developments being razed in un-remunerated and semi-remunerated evictions of the poor, who could often not afford the replacement housing that was only sporadically provided for them.

The dwarf is a handyman living in the Felicity District of the Eden Province. The area is slated for forced redevelopment and the dwarf and his family are evicted from the only place they can call a happy home, notwithstanding the "sewer-creek" which runs next door to it. Economic forces destroy the dwarf's home and as the story works towards its unhappy conclusion the

dwarf eventually commits suicide in a factory smokestack while his family is sundered. With his diminutive height of 3 feet 10 inches in “real life,” the dwarf is also symbolic of the individually crippling and diminishing immensity of the economic apparatus of the modern.

This diminished state is represented physically and symbolically throughout the work. The book is partially framed by two stories featuring the crippled Squatlegs and Humpback who are forced from their homes and into a literal freak-show. Healthy characters grow disabilities throughout the work. The dwarf’s health fades. The union organizer, Chi-Sop is slowly whittled down throughout the book. Near the conclusion of the book he is missing two fingers and his face has nearly been destroyed, “his nose was squashed down and disfigured and below his eyes there were scars.” Even the rich and apparently successful son of the Chaebol leader is rendered psychologically broken (*The Spinyfish Entering My Net*) and spiritually empty. This scarring and diminution is not merely physical, it is social and economic as well. The dwarf dies, his son becomes a murderer, and the dwarf’s daughter is reduced to concubinage to steal back her families’ right to a home. This last theft is largely unrewarded as when the daughter returns to her home, “there was no sign that the dwarf, the dwarf’s two sons, and the dwarf’s daughter had ever dwelt there.” Instead, the engines of omnipotent capital have destroyed all signs of previous human habitation and sundered all previous human relationships. The confusion, disorder, and randomness of the world Cho describes is partially paralleled in his structure of loosely linked yet intersecting stories, narratives out of time and space, and short, disconnected sentence structure. Cho’s narrative structure, is analogous to the era about which he writes and it gives a sense of the disorder in which the characters live. In this time neighborhoods, families, and social structures were destroyed in seeming instants by the implacable onslaught of government mandated economic progress. From inside that historical process, events must have seemed without meaning, or conscious intent, a series of random forces converging to destroy.

In **The Dwarf** traditional social structures, communal and Confucian, are eliminated in a moment and replaced by the relationships of capital. Nelson notes that the eviction/building process “represented a rupture with the nations’ Korea history” and Choi articulates this dislocation clearly. Similarly, outcomes are random and often without meaning. One of the key plot turns is the dwarf’s eldest son’s murder of the head of the Ungang Group, which has spearheaded the mass eviction that catches up the dwarf and his family. The son, however, mistakenly kills the boss’s brother, who is similar in appearance. Even rough justice is, apparently, random. Cho leaves his final question unanswered, except by symbolic implication. The Dwarf starkly delineates the emptiness of promises of “modernization.” But who is responsible and what is the future?

The Dwarf blames capitalism as an historical force and goes on to suggest that the dystopia it creates might be endless. Two of Choi's signature symbols in the work, the Möbius Strip and the Klein Bottle, focus on the interlocked and/or infinite. These scientific creations are both limited and local while at the same time looped and without boundary. They go on 'forever and ever' without delineation or distinction, without beginning or end. This circle of life and endless, but flat and repetitive, work is also suggested by the framed nature of **The Dwarf**. There is no explicit responsibility, the evil "they" are unnamed and unnamable. The 'internal' frame is the story of the handicapped and murderous duo of Squatlegs and Humpback who, after even the 'success' of an initial murder and robbery of a property speculator, are betrayed and left alone. Their promise of savior, their "master," turns out to be nothing but another one of the "them." In **The Dwarf** there is no way out but the choice the dwarf himself takes – a futile attempt to scale the heights and a fall back to death.

The Dwarf ends, without hope, instead with the promise (and curse) of endless repetition. In the 1980s, as the democratization movement strengthened in Korea, more aggressive considerations of social problems emerged.

Among the writers to emerge at this time as the elegant Yang Kwi-ja who sometimes covered the same territory as Cho. **A Distant and Beautiful Place** (1985-87) is a stunning and well-translated collection of short stories from Yang Kwija. Like Cho Se-hui's **The Dwarf** (and similar on more than just this one ground) **A Strange and Beautiful Place** is a yŏnjak sosŏl, or an intentionally connected series of short stories gathered together in a collection. These works were originally published in literary journals from 1985 to 1987 when they were published in Korean under the rather less interesting name **People of Wonmi-dong**.

Situated south of Seoul, in Bucheon, Wonmi-dong is in the shadows of Wonmi Mountain, and here Koreans who can't quite make it in Seoul struggle, mostly without notable success, to create lives for themselves and their family: An innocent poet is violated while his neighbors look on, jobs are lost, and small division exploited. The work is full of clever descriptions, well-marked social observations, perhaps a surfeit of imagery, and a way of crystallizing larger social issues in miniature scenes and stories. There is also great detail and verisimilitude in the shifting gossip and allegiances of the "villagers" and even a reader unfamiliar with Korea will easily absorb a great deal of information about modern Korean culture while reading this novel/collection.

Yang Gui-ja (as she prefers it) has also had the novel **Contradictions** translated into English as well as a volume in the KLTI/Jimoondang Portable Library of Korean Fiction collection, titled **Rust**.

In 1987 the June Revolution overthrew Korea's military rule, while the economy continued to grow at a rapid rate. In one sense, this was confusing, as Korean literature had extensively

focused on the dictatorial nature of the Korean government. Just as the elimination of dictatorial political power had earlier robbed literature of a low-lying target, the relative success of industrialization blunted some of the force of the “labor” literature and other works that dealt with the displaced and dispossessed. These problems and literatures did not disappear, but the focus on them faded. As a result, literature’s role as a mass political and educational tool began to decrease. In response, many authors chose to turn away from the outer world of society and politics in general to focus on internal explorations of characters somewhat adrift in the new social relationships and new work relationships dictated by the needs of industrial capitalism. Some of the themes which emerged included personal alienation, sexual roles, internal psychological landscapes, and the impact of information technology.

This shift led to a reaction against “objective” literature, while expanding permissible subjects and themes. Pak Wan-so was one of the representative female writers of the era. Her writing was split between reminiscences of the war and post-war era and short often horrific vignettes of modern success for Korean women, as in her *Identical Apartments*, in which a housewife slowly drives herself mad while living in an apartment complex in which apartments are less differentiated than hexagons in a bee-hive, and the desire for bourgeois success slowly sucks all the joy out of life.

Ch’oe Yun was another important writer, who burst on the literary scene in 1988 with the novella *There a Petal Silently Falls*, a multi-faceted and stunning evocation of the Gwangju Massacre. *Petal* was one of the first works to directly address the Gwangju Massacre and was indicative of Ch’oe’s no-holds-barred attitude towards society. This attitude was extended in *The Gray Snowman* (1992), which won the Dongmin Literary and explored the cost of the ‘successful’ political revolution from the perspective of a woman who has been used and cast aside from it. Ch’oe’s *The Petal with Thirteen Fragrances* was a different type of triumph. Once again Ch’oe frontally attacked Korean modern society, but the attack was in the form of a delicate love story, a fairy story, and even in its grimmest details carried off with humor and élan. The stories’ central image, the heroine uselessly copying a German translation of an Italian historian has been interpreted in multiple conflicting ways, but give a hint of the delicacy which Ch’oe can write with. All three of these stories can be found in one book, titled **There a Petal Silently Falls**

Perhaps one more writer of this era deserves a closer look, and that is Yi Mun-yol. Yi wrote across a wider range than most of his contemporaries, from historical novelists about beatnik poets (**The Poet**), across childhood allegories of fascism and freedom (**Our Twisted Hero**), and on to semi-hallucinatory odes to love (**Twofold Song**). Yi is also interesting politically; his father defected to North Korea and Yi was ever after under suspicion of being a spy. Thus it was, that even in relatively traditional tales of Korean poets of the past, Yi Mun-yol could find the

political meaning. The Poet, putatively about rebellion and betrayal, and an amusing story of a vagabond poet named Kim Sat-gat (pronounced Sakkat), was also a deeply felt meditation on sins of the fathers, personal betrayal, and isolation.

Our Twisted Hero, is the book for which Yi Mun-yol is best known in English. **Our Twisted Hero** is both the story of a new student dealing with a classroom bully and a political allegory with hints of Orwell's *Animal Farm*, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and even a bit of Golding's *Lord of the Flies*. The political allegory, of course, is intended to refer to Korea and its recent history. It is a very short novella, only 119 small pages, which, beneath its simple schoolroom setting, is actually a meditation on totalitarianism, and how intellectuals who might oppose it can eventually be brought to heel by it, either through a process of intimidation, or a process of assimilation and ease.

The book was published in 1987 in Korea and was Yi Mun-yol's first book published in North America. This was seven years after the Kwangju Massacre and, like Ch'oe Yun's more overt *There a Petal Silently Falls* is also a comment on the government of that era, which alternately oppressed voices for democracy and attempted to buy them off with economic and cultural goodies. The story is narrated by a middle-aged man reflecting on period of change in his young life.

In some ways it is a fish out of water story with a young protagonist (I say protagonist because he is not the "hero" of the title) moving from Seoul to the countryside and entering a new school there. The protagonist, Han Pyong-Tae is a clever fellow, and sees his new, somewhat bumpkin schoolmates as beneath him. Initially Pyong-Tae is certain that his big-city ways and knowledge will be acknowledged and he will naturally become the head of the class. Pyong-Tae is presented semi-unsympathetically, as something of an arrogant dandy, with little respect for anyone around him and a certainty of success.

This ascension is blocked, however, by Om Sokdae, a student of extreme power and charisma, little formal intellect and less education, but a rather devious understanding of power and coercion; the initial scene in which Om Sokdae easily persuades Pyong-Tae to make a snobbish fool of himself is brilliant. Om Sokdae is the recognized mini-dictator of the class, a status acquiesced to by even the teacher. Om Sokdae is feared by other students and indispensable to the teacher, whose classroom is a paragon of order under Sokdae's rule. When Pyong-Tae butts head with Sokdae he quickly transforms from mere newbie to object of constant and orchestrated abuse. Pyong-Tae fights the good fight for most of the term, but eventually capitulates to Om Sokdae's power. Just, however, when Om Sokdae seems as immutable as stone a new teacher is assigned to the class and Om Sokdae's power is swept away in a revolutionary maelstrom. Om Sokdae's power is replaced by a multi-faceted system with a

byzantine structure for such a small class (a ruling committee, a chairman, vice-chairman, section and subsection chiefs, monitor, vice-monitor, etc.). It is all too much and too inefficient and the order and certainty of Om Sokdae's reign is replaced by chaos.

Yi is a very sly writer in this piece never letting his suspicions about the flaws of all involved parties become too obvious, and the story can be read on a simple level, or a deeply historical/metaphorical one.

Yi's last story for discussion here is **Twofold Song**, but that story was written in 2004, and is so very different in tone, subject and style, that it seems to more properly fit in the next chapter, Post-Modern Literature.

POST MODERN FICTION

I Have The Right To Destroy Myself is the spiritual heir to Seoul: Winter, 1964

APPENDIX ONE - WORKS MENTIONED and AVAILABILITY

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