

At the Gates of Babel: the Globalization of Korean Literature as World Literature

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Korean literature is an overdetermined signifier that incorporates multiple states, languages, and communal experiences based on the assumption of a shared ethnicity. As a national literature, its singularity is disrupted by the historically contingent discursive practices of literary formation, an inherently comparative process that is exacerbated in the Korean case by a multilingual past and the existence of two states known to the world as “Korea.” This essay argues that the current conception of Korean literature is a specifically South Korean construction as a component of the national globalization drive (*seggyehwa*) that began as a predominantly economic project in the 1990s, but took hold as a cultural project in the 2000s. I examine a series of literary events from 2000–2012 organized by the Korean Literature Translation Institute (KLTI), a government agency, and the Daesan Foundation, a private cultural institution that brought local and foreign authors, scholars, and representatives from the publishing industry and local governments with the goal of globalizing Korean literature. These conversations reveal the mechanisms that prioritized literature as a desirable marker of cultural capital and its stakes for South Korea’s claim on Korean culture on the world stage. I show how South Korea’s targeted approach to the contested category of world literature through its own newly developed cultural institutions exposed the fundamental hierarchy of cultural capital

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based on developmental status that determines inclusion/exclusion in world literature.

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“The national perception that we have embraced globalization by promoting art and literature is woefully insufficient. What would it mean for our literature to be globalized? Globalizing our literature, and by extension, Korean culture by writing for all the people of the world, and making the whole world the prize for the competition—it would mean that our culture has advanced in the world. It would mean that we are putting our roots down in humanity and the world.”

—*KLTI government accreditation application, August 2, 2004*

The impassioned advocacy for the Korean Literature Translation Institute (KLTI, now LTI Korea) above came a decade after South Korean President Kim Young-Sam’s 1994 announcement of his *seggyehwa* (globalization) policy which was meant to transform Korea into a “first-rate nation.”¹ In the intervening decade, the country invested heavily in the promotion and development of culture and the arts as symbols of its newly developed democratic status. Although *seggyehwa*’s economic globalization in the form of trade liberalization remained unpopular and was viewed as having led to the 1997 IMF financial crisis, the rhetoric of *seggyehwa*, deliberately used in Korean to indicate a “globalization with Korean characteristics”, fully took root in the cultural sphere as an indication of societal advancement.

When the KLTI became a government agency in 2005, Korean pop music, television dramas, and films were already desirable commodities across East and Southeast Asia. The initial state investment in “the export of Korean popular culture... was not driven by the government’s drive to promote a certain image of Korea, but rather grew out of the necessity to explore new export markets in the wake of the Asian financial crisis after 1997.”² As the government supported the creative industries through favorable tax breaks and grants that enabled competitive pricing against Japanese media across Asia, the key concern for policy makers in the late 1990s and early 2000s was, “to transform the Korean Wave into a sustainable source of income” that came to be seen as “a way to engage with younger overseas audiences.”³

By contrast, Korean literature’s trajectory as a globally recognized cultural product was the inverse of the Korean Wave: it was promoted to gain cultural capital with distinction in

¹ Kim Young Sam, “‘Outlining the Blueprint for Globalization,’ Remarks at a Meeting with Members of the Committee for Globalization Policy, January 25, 1995,” in *Korea’s Quest for Reform & Globalization: Selected Speeches of President Kim Young Sam*. Korea: Presidential Secretariat, the Republic of Korea, 1995, 270.

² Joanna Elfving-Hwang, “South Korean Cultural Diplomacy and Brokering ‘K-Culture’ Outside Asia,” *Korean Histories* 4, no. 1 (2013): 15.

³ *Ibid.*, 16–19.

Bourdieu's sense, but did not have the same success. Korean literature sought to engage with overseas audiences as a representative "center" literature commensurate with the country's economic status, and initially maintained the distinction of literature as a medium above crass commercialization. The national literary canon was carefully constructed as a source of continuity for a shared ethnonational heritage, but it was the success of the new "culture industries" (*munhwa sanŏp*) including K-pop and Korean film that inspired national pride in a populace wary after the sudden economic downturn in 1997. The culture industries were, however, also the subject of government policies that redefined culture as content, or *munhwa k'ont'ench'ū*, a neologism that makes explicit the shift towards understanding culture (*munhwa*) as a commodity (content/*k'ont'ench'ū*).

Munhwa k'ont'ench'ū is an openly trade-oriented conception of culture that was adopted after South Korea's inclusion in the Uruguay Round Trade talks (1986-1994) in 1993, where France led the charge for economic protections over the cultural industries using a UNESCO definition of intangible cultural qualities from a specific nation.⁴ South Korea's newly developed status placed it in the position of promoting a national culture that was no longer based primarily on a retrospective effort to preserve cultural heritage from the corrupting influence of modern Western popular culture,⁵ but as one that was poised to engage with the "big producers of cultural goods" in the international market. By the early 2000s, South Korea had completed the checklist for industrial and national development, but recognition of its "high culture" on the world stage lagged behind the ubiquity of its commercial exports. *Segyehwa* thus expresses the ambivalence of a local culture's desire for external recognition and its continued anxiety over social and cultural development. The move to globalize Korean culture in policy, corporate strategies, and through cultural production effectively reaffirmed the hierarchy of world cultures by seeking to attain world culture status, but also plainly aired the shift towards national culture as commodity.

After the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis, the Korean government and technology giants diversified in the direction of the fast-growing and semi-protected industries of cultural goods and services that, under the terms of the Uruguay Rounds and the WTO, "convey and construct cultural values, produce and reproduce cultural identity and contribute to social cohesion; ... [and] constitute a key free factor of production in the new knowledge economy."⁶ Korea thus moved into the global knowledge economy in alignment with other "center" cultures like France seeking to protect their cultural industries against the perceived onslaught of a global monoculture of American hegemony in the name of "cultural diversity."⁷ But this move was based on a contradictory understanding of culture as both malleable commodified content and a protected space of neoliberal exception.⁸ I argue that these contradictory

⁴ Tania Voon, "Unesco and the WTO: A Clash of Cultures," *The International and Comparative Law Quarterly* 55, no. 3 (2006): 635–651.

⁵ Milagros del Corral and UNESCO, eds. *Culture, Trade and Globalization: Questions and Answers* (Paris: UNESCO Pub., 2000), 36–39.

⁶ del Corral and UNESCO, 9.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁸ Aihwa Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty* (Durham: Duke University Press,

impulses towards the collective identification implied by “culture” coming from a society in the midst of a radical transformation in its ethnic, cultural, and political identity had a profound effect on one of its most respected forms: literary fiction.

Targeted translation and international forums hosted in Korea aimed to make “local” Korean literature a recognizable world literature, and the enthusiastic participation of local and international thinkers and trade representatives alike reflects a common desire to critically engage with the idea of world literature and cultural representation in the age of globalization. Despite the mutual interest, however, what emerged from a decade of conversation were conflicting expectations for the role of local literatures and cultures that remained dependent on a developmental model of national culture, much like the one established by UNESCO’s recommendations. Critiques of world literature and global culture focus either on the circulation of texts and cultural capital, or on the discursive approaches to narrative fiction, world literature’s dominant form, but I uncover the productive tensions between the two approaches through an examination of the workshops hosted by the KLTI and the literary forums hosted by the Daesan Foundation in Korea from 2000-2012. The discussions between Korean and international participants reveal the tautological contradiction underlying the notion of a global culture that preserves local particularity. I uncover the deeply enmeshed web of state, capital, and culture through representative proxies at these events as they grapple with the changing role of literature as a cultural product that was assumed to have representative status for increasingly fluid collective identities.

This moment in the drive towards globalizing Korean literature encapsulates the tensions involved in (re-) defining culture from within and without under the overlapping shadows of national division, post-coloniality, the Cold War world order, emerging sub-imperial relations with new economic partners, and contentious domestic politics. In short, Korea’s self-conscious concern with defining the terms of its cultural globalization was not only a forward-looking projection of its cultural, political, and economic identity, but also a very deliberate reconfiguration of its past and present for itself and its newfound international audience. The strategic cooperation between the state, corporate-funded cultural institutes, and the literary sphere to globalize Korean literature ultimately incorporated literature into the category of cultural content. As my analysis of the discussions at the KLTI and Daesan literary events show, the continuing process of gaining recognition for Korean literature could not succeed solely on self-advocacy modeled on the commercial success of Korean popular culture. While the global promotion of Korean literature exposed the continuing structural exclusivity of world literature on the one hand, it was based on a fundamental faith in the value of literature on the part of host and guests alike as a medium that had become content, but that still retained humanistic value. In this sense, the globalization of Korean literature reaffirms the humanist potential of world literature even as it suggests that its universalist impulse should not be confined to one medium.

From Korean Literature to K-Literature

The explicit association of cultural production with technology and globalization implied by *munbwa k'ontench'ü* entailed the commodification and export of a medium—literature—that was one of the most influential oppositional forces in Korean society in the 20th century. This was manifested in the desire to append literary production to the advances of digital and popular media in the early 2000s. Literary fiction's importance in Korea should not be underestimated in a discussion of 21st century cultural production, however. The use of the Korean language and the native script *hangül* were polarizing issues on the path to sketching out modern Korean nationalism for both North and South Korea. From the transition to modern western and Japanese-influenced literature from writing using Chinese characters, to anti-colonial nationalism under Japanese rule, and to the competing legitimacies in North and South Korea following national division, the Korean language has been idealized, and its highest practitioners have wielded more political, cultural, and social influence than artists in other media.

Three main organizations have been closely involved in the effort to globalize Korean literature: the state-funded Korean Literature Translation Institute (KLTI, est. 2001), the privately funded Daesan Foundation (est. 1993), and the privately funded International Communication Foundation (ICF, est. 1982). Since 1982, these organizations have provided financial support for translators, authors, and publishers through grants and prizes; developed educational and training programs; and hosted a wide variety of programs aimed at fostering literary exchange between the Korean literary sphere and its targeted object of world literature. The largest of these, the Daesan Foundation's Seoul International Forum for Literature, brought an impressive assemblage of authors, scholars, publishing professionals, and government representatives to Seoul with an ambitious agenda to discuss “conflicts of planetary purview in the contradictions of poverty and affluence, nation-state and transnationality, local autonomies and global hegemony, industrial civilization and nature, and many other products and counter-products of the globalizing world civilization.”⁹ Shortly after the first Seoul Forum in 2000, the newly established KLTI inaugurated its program of collaborative events and workshops that focused more closely on the mechanics of getting more Korean literature in translation published abroad.

At the same time, the Korean literary world was debating the “crisis of literature,” seen as the loss of political grounding in the post-democratization period.¹⁰ The literary establishment was nevertheless called to the globalization cause through these organizations, where their familiarity with international participants who confessed to knowing little about

⁹ Kim U-chang, *Writing across Boundaries: Literature in the Multicultural World*, ed. Kim U-chang (Elizabeth, NJ: Holm, 2002), 11.

¹⁰ Jong-yon Hwang, “After the Apocalypse of Literature: A Critique of Karatani Kojin's Thesis of the End of Modern Literature,” *Korea Journal* 47, no. 1 (2007): 102; Hwang, Jong-yon. *Piruban köt ü k'anibal: Hwang Jongyön P'yongnonjip* (Carnival of abjection: literary criticism by Hwang Jongyön) (Seoul: Munhak Tongne, 2001), 13–37; Kim Pyöng-ik, *Käraedo munhak i issoya bal iyu: Kim Pyöng-ik pip'yöngjip* (But we still need literature: literary criticism by Kim Pyöng-ik) (Seoul: Munhak kwa chisöngsa, 2005), 6–172.

Korea was quite apparent. In this sense, Korean literature was at a point of unrequited globalization, where foreign novels in translation occupied the majority of bestseller lists and local literature knowingly engaged foreign writers, but there was little reciprocation from the outside. Former opposition figures like the novelist Hwang Sök-yöng and the poets Ko Ŭn and Kim Chi-ha were called into the service of the new liberal governments as symbols of political legitimacy and overcoming the country's authoritarian past, which, as a newly developed democratic country, had become a badge of pride. Incorporating the history of protest culture into the contemporary national narrative as an admirable cultural characteristic symbolically periodized South Korea's developmental period as *past*. Recent scholarship on the state's valorization of contentious history points out that the canonization of the "martyrs" of the democratic struggle consumes the significance of their dissent by appropriating and reifying their struggle in the service of maintaining the very state they opposed.¹¹ Additionally, given the ties between politics and literature in the literati culture of the Chosŏn period and earlier,¹² moving Korean literature further into the realm of culture and facilitating the move into neoliberal governance and commercialization was a cause for real concern.

In the practice of literature, this would have profound effects on the domestic publishing industry through corporate and state intervention in the attempt to export Korean literature as a desirable product rich in cultural capital.¹³ The authors and works translated into languages with the most powerful readership (English, French, German) were to become representatives of a global Korean "high culture." The resulting (extra-) national literary canon is thus a collaboration between the state and corporate interests, and the literary establishment that once strongly opposed them. How have these agents tried to define Korean culture through translated literary texts, and what does this tell us about how Korea perceives its own position in the world? What is the significance of this collusion for Korean intellectual history and for how the literature of a post-developmental nation can challenge the teleological assumptions of a structurally exclusive world literature?

From the KLIT's bureaucratic approach to world literature in their series of workshops, instrumentalized literature became an extension of the nation state while simultaneously questioning the linkage between the nation and state by relying on foreign practitioners, experts, and co-ethnic foreign nationals to turn Korean literature into a product for global recognition. By contrast, the evolving conversation about *segŭehwa* and globalization in relation to world literature at the Daesan Forums critiqued canonization, cultural difference, intermediality, and ideology. I maintain *segŭehwa* and globalization as discrete terms here in order to highlight the insistence on the particularity of Korean globalization (*segŭehwa*) expressed by many of

¹¹ Youngju Ryu, "Truth or Reconciliation? The Guest and the Massacre That Never Ends," *positions* 23, no. 4 (2015): 633–63; Namhee Lee, *The Making of Minjung: Democracy and the Politics of Representation in South Korea* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 294–303.

¹² JaHyun Kim Haboush and Martina Deuchler, eds. *Culture and the State in Late Chosŏn Korea* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 1999), 1–14.

¹³ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984), 1–93.

the local participants at the forums in contrast to the foreign participants' conceptions of globalization as the standardizing force of transnational markets. The distinction between *segyeŭma* and globalization show the interaction of two mutually ill-defined entities—global Korean literature and world literature—as a failure of globalization to meaningfully explain the contemporary interactivity of world literature despite the palpable desire among the participants for a common universal ideal and purpose for literature and cultural production.

Promoting South Korean Literature: State Support

Translations of Korean literature prior to 1980 were mostly published domestically for use by scholars of foreign literature and visiting exchange students in Korea, rather than for commercial or academic use abroad.¹⁴ The majority of these were published as part of the UNESCO Catalogue of Representative Works, a direct subsidy program for works “significant from the literary and cultural point of view, in spite of being little known beyond national boundaries or beyond the frame of their linguistic origin.”¹⁵ In this respect, the Park Chung-hee regime’s (1961-1979) policy to erase the colonial period from cultural and collective memory coincided with the mission of the UNESCO Catalogue of Representative Works.¹⁶ But the lack of administrative control over the determination of the nation’s externally represented canon of works in translation shows the contingent nature of even a tightly controlled national culture when it exceeds national boundaries, as well as the external dependencies on the political, economic, and cultural realms even during this period of extreme closure and inward focus. The list of “texts significant from the literary and cultural point of view”¹⁷ until 1990 heavily favored anthologies of classical poetry, epic poetry, or folk tales that could be easily compared to similar texts in the Western European and the growing Japanese and Chinese classical literary canons in translation. Based on this “representative” collection of pre-modern literature, it would seem that South Korea did not produce any worthwhile modern literature, but as the post-democratization national literary canon shows, the oppositional stance of the literary sphere barred its inclusion in the state’s conception of national literature.

The Chun Doo-hwan regime eased restrictions on the publication of foreign translations in 1980, enabling a wider variety of literature to enter the country, but the most productive

¹⁴ Korean Literature Translation Institute (KLTI), *Han’guk Munhak Poryŏgwon 10-yŏnsa: Segye na hamŭke hanŭn Han’guk munhak* (10 years of Korean Literature Translation Institute, Korean literature in the world) (Seoul: Han’guk Munhak Pŏnyŏkwŏn, 2011), 25–30.

¹⁵ Historical Collection: UNESCO Culture Sector, www.unesco.org/culture/lit/rep/index.php?lng=en_GB&work_titre=&work_type%5B%5D=0&work_auteur=&work_langue%5B%5D=223&work_zone%5B%5D=0&trans_titre=&trans_langue%5B%5D=0&trans_traducteur=&trans_coordination=&trans_editeur=&trans_annee=&trans_annee_apres=&trans_annee_avant=&send=Search.

¹⁶ Sang Mi Park, “The Paradox of Postcolonial Korean Nationalism: State-Sponsored Cultural Policy in South Korea, 1965–Present.” *Journal of Korean Studies* 15, no. 1 (2010): 82.

¹⁷ Historical Collection: UNESCO Culture Sector.

period of outbound Korean literature in translation began in the 1990s.¹⁸ Many of these translations were completed with support from the UNESCO Korean Commission and the newly established Korea Foundation (1991) that, “aim[ed] to enhance the image of Korea in the world and also to promote academic and cultural exchange programs,”¹⁹ signaling an important shift in the relationship between the state and literary sphere in the post-democratization period. The Korea Foundation provided a great deal of support for Korean Studies programs overseas, especially in the USA, and the attention to producing more literary texts in translation must also be understood in the context of the growth of Korean studies, where instructors needed primary texts in English in order to teach courses on Korean culture and history. To this effect, most of the Korean literature in translation published between 1980-2000 was published by academic and specialty presses with support from UNESCO or the Korea Foundation, rather than with commercial publishing houses.

The shift in cultural policy in the 1990s has been described as a move from policy “very much focused on building confidence and supporting nationalism domestically,” to “considerations of ‘soft power’ and how South Korea increasingly posits itself as a developed, post-industrial middle power with an important role to play on the global stage both as an economic and a cultural power.”²⁰ Yim Hak-soon observed that the “reconstruction of cultural identity” was a significant driver for growing the cultural industries that, “demonstrates that the issue of cultural identity has been bound up with the economic rationales of government subsidy to the cultural sector in the evolution of cultural policy.”²¹ The Kim Young-sam and Kim Dae-jung administrations encouraged the development of domestic popular culture, but cultural policy maintained the high/low cultural distinction: “In general, the evolution of laws relating to the cultural sector expanded the scope of government subsidy for the arts from high culture to popular culture and from artistic excellence to the cultural life of the people...with a view to deregulation and encouragement, rather than control.”²² The place of contemporary literature in the cultural industries, then, is somewhat ambivalent as a medium that would belong to high culture and artistic excellence, but that was also included in the “cultural life of the people”. Film, television, and music production received financial and political support to develop local industries, including sponsorships for film festivals and international broadcast subsidies to help export Korean media products. Literature was included in these plans, and under the Kim Young-sam administration’s planned ten-year celebration of Korean arts and goals for the development of cultural industries as

¹⁸ There were 71 international publications of Korean literature in English in the 1990s. Cited in Report by the European Cultural Information Center College (Yuröp munhwa chöngbo sent’ö taehakkyo), 2004.

¹⁹ “Mission Statement,” Korea Foundation website, <http://en.kf.or.kr/?menu=518>, accessed March 2014 (English site amended July 2014 to read: “The mission of the Korea Foundation is to promote better understanding of Korea within the international community and to increase friendship and goodwill between Korea and the rest of the world through various exchange programs,” from Article 1 of the Korea Foundation Act, 1991.12.14.

²⁰ Elfving-Hwang, 15.

²¹ Haksoon Yim, “Cultural Identity and Cultural Policy in South Korea.” *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 8, no. 1 (2002): 45–46.

²² *Ibid.*, 31.

“representative industries for the 21st century,” 100 trillion won (approx. 10 million USD) was earmarked for the Korean Literature Translation Fund in 1996, the designated, “Year of Literature.”²³ The Fund officially became the KLTI in 2001, with the mission to, “Under the banner of globalizing Korean literature, [...] canonize Korean literature with the goal of inclusion in mainstream world literature.”²⁴

This direct statement of the intention to create an outward flow of Korean literature tells us three things from the outset: 1) that the parameters of national literature were understood as fluid enough to be shaped to fit into mainstream world literature; 2) that the government deemed Korean literature to be outside “mainstream world literature,” and 3) that policy related to literature accepted the idea of a definitive “world literature” to which it hoped to gain acceptance. The first point directly instrumentalizes literature and acknowledges the constructed nature of a representative national literary canon. “...[I]nclusion in mainstream world literature,” the stated goal of canonized Korean literature begs the obvious question: what is world literature and how was it conceived as a determinative category of cultural legitimacy in Korea? In the next sections, I examine the question through the KLTI International Workshops and Deasan Seoul Forums, and follow with a consideration of recent scholarly approaches to the question of world literature after post-colonialism and how that discourse reflects the bifurcated idea of globalized Korean culture within *segye*hwa.

Cultural Currency: the KLTI International Workshops

The introduction to the KLTI’s self-published institutional history states that, “the contemporary world has begun to operate according to the mechanism of multiculturalism. The translation institute came into being in accordance with the demands of this period during which the desire to make mutual communication and understanding of true meaning possible through the independent introduction of our culture to others.”²⁵ Simply put, the aim of the translation institute as it was perceived after ten years of operation was to maintain control over the articulation of the “true meaning” of “our culture” to “others” through the translation of Korean literature. At the same time, “it’s because the authors who create literary and artistic works no longer make only domestic people their target audiences, but take ‘people of the whole world’ as their target audience. Their creations may have come to satisfy the demands of cosmopolitan people/world citizens naturally, but through the promotion of this kind of creative art we contribute to the creation of a Culture State (*munhwa kukka*).”²⁶

At the beginning of the Korea/Japan World Cup in 2002, the KLTI held its 1st International Workshop. Park Huan-Dok, the president of the KLTI told participants that: “For sports, [...] the obstacle of language is not a huge roadblock. However, meeting through literature, the linguistic art that is the essence of culture, is not that simple. Unfortunately, up

²³ Other culture years included the “Year of Fine Arts,” “Year of Film,” “Year of Dance,” and so forth.

²⁴ KLTI, *10 Years of the KLTI*.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 24.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 25.

until now, the one-sided encounters we have had cannot really be called ‘encounters.’ A true encounter must go both ways.”²⁷ As Park points out, the translingual encounter is an unequal power relation that minority languages have been trying to level through capital investment. What remains striking about this approach is how frankly it embraced the mechanism of corporatization that had permeated all aspects of Korean society and culture in the 90s and 2000s, hearkening back to the top-down controlled approach to economic development that proved successful during the country’s industrial development. The succession of KLTI presidents tasked with globalizing Korean literature proceeded similarly, as can be seen in the later workshops.

The International Workshops for the Translation and Publication of Korean Literature brought together representatives from similar organizations promoting literature, foreign publishing houses, translators, authors, and academics to discuss concrete strategies to stimulate interest in Korean literature abroad. Naturally, the most constant theme was how to make Korean literature known to the world, but this was approached from multiple directions. The first workshop included translators into English, French, German, Spanish, and “Asian languages.” This division identified the “center languages” with the largest readerships and historical domination over the designation of “world literature” as the most desirable target languages, with a separate undefined grouping of Asian languages, which suggests a continued civilizational divide in the institute’s perception of world literature that was echoed at the Daesan forums. The themes in the first five years of the KLTI workshop focused on gathering information about issues of production and dissemination and were not open to the public: “Publishing Korean Literature Abroad and Copyrights” (2003), “What is a faithful translation in literary translation?” (2004), “Assessment in Translation and Interpretation” (2005)—this workshop was hosted jointly with the Graduate School of Translation and Interpretation at Ewha University, signaling the institutionalization of translation and interpretation as a service profession in Korea during this time—and “Assessing Translation from the Perspective of Publishers” (2006). In 2007, the focus shifted towards an overview of different areas of Korea-related publishing: the state of the Korean publishing industry, translations in academic publishing, publishing the Korean Classics, and included, for the first time, a newly established Korean literary agency.

2008 moved on to a more theoretical issue: “Difference & Equivalence: Culture in Translation,” which divided the discussion into sessions dealing with “The West” and “The East,” followed by language-specific sessions for the target languages of English, French, German, Japanese, Chinese, and Vietnamese. The strategies seem to diverge here as the “cultural difference” defined in the previous year became an organizing principle for the workshop with simultaneous (and therefore exclusive) sessions for “Western languages” and “Eastern languages.” In 2009 and 2010, the target shifted towards genre, focusing on children’s literature and theatre, respectively, the first in preparation for the Bologna International Children’s Book Fair, and the latter in response to the growth of joint international theatre

²⁷ KLTI Proceedings from the 1st International workshop: Translation & Publication of Korean Literature, June 8, 2002 (author’s translation).

productions in Korea. The following year's workshop, reacting quickly to the widespread adoption of smartphones and tablets, took on "Translation and Publication of Korean Literature in the Digital Era." Finally, and somewhat presciently, came the theme "K-culture and Korean Literature in the Globalizing World" in 2012, just one month before the rapper Psy's "Gangnam Style" went viral and "K-" designation of K-pop became an internationally recognizable designation that was then applied to everything from literature (K-lit) to produce (K-pears).

The evolution of themes in this area of the KLIT's extensive programming shows a fairly nimble institution responding to changes in the global publishing industry in what has been widely recognized as a time of crisis for literature and publishing worldwide. While I only discuss events held locally in Seoul, these workshops should also be understood as part of a diverse set of programs including participation in international publishing industry events and training for new translators. Yet, a presentation at the 2012 workshop titled "How Should Korean Literature Connect?" suggests that a question from a discussant at the 2003 workshop nearly ten years earlier, "Is Korean Literature Being Properly Introduced to the World?" remained, but with a telling change in tone. Where the lack of a targeted referential object to "connect to" in 2003 can be an example of the conflicted ambivalence of globalization, the prescriptive, and outwardly unidirectional critique implied by "Is Korean Literature Being Properly Introduced to the World?" demonstrates the objectification of the world performed by *segyebwa*.

Civilizational/Cultural Difference at the Daesan Seoul International Forums for Literature

The KLIT's mission to globalize national literature was preceded by two non-profit cultural foundations: the Daesan Foundation, established in 1992 by Shin Yong-ho, the founder of Kyobo Life Insurance and Kyobo Books, and the International Communication Foundation (ICF), established in 1982 by Young-bin Min, the chairman of YBM Education. Given that the former organization is connected to one of the largest bookstore chains in Korea and the latter with one of the biggest English-language training academies in the country, I cannot say that they are completely disinterested parties, but both foundations' missions to globalize Korean literature express faith in the value of literary exchange for cultural development.

The Daesan Foundation's Seoul International Forum for Literature (SIFL) was held in 2000, 2005, and 2011. The 2000 event was originally scheduled for 1999, but was postponed due to the uncertainty following the IMF crisis. Each forum was held over three days in Seoul and was composed of themed panels pairing Korean authors and scholars with foreign presenters. The participants included six winners of the Nobel Prize in Literature (four of whom were invited prior to winning the prize) along with celebrated authors and scholars from around the world. The themes of the forums began with "Writing Across Boundaries" in 2000, "Writing for Peace," in 2005, and "The Globalizing World and the Human Community" in 2011. These forums comprise over 130 presentations and roundtable

discussions. In the following section, I will touch on the most salient issues that reappeared over the decade of events, paying special attention to speakers who were involved in more than one of the forums.

Like the KLTI Workshops, the 2000 forum, “Writing Across Boundaries,” was concerned with identifying and overcoming the boundaries between cultures, media, and historical periods. The general consensus towards neoliberal globalization, the bogeyman term at the turn of the millennium, was solidly pessimistic, as expressed by Pierre Bourdieu in his presentation at the forum, “Culture is in danger”:

The prophets of the new neo-liberal gospel profess in the field of culture, as elsewhere, that the logic of the market can only be beneficial. ...they argue, for example, that technological developments and economic innovations that exploit them cannot increase the quantity and quality of the cultural goods offered... the new communication groups, books, movies, game shows, are globally and indistinctly subsumed under the name information and taken as any other commodity, that is to say, it is treated as any other product and is thus subject to the law of profit.²⁸

Bourdieu’s concern over the reduction of culture to information was echoed by Korean poet Hwang Jie-Woo, who expressed his distrust of the nationalist rhetoric used by the Korean government that, he said, made popular culture “...a mechanism of cultural economy in the master plan of the people’s government replacing the military regime—a plan for a knowledge-based society. It is frightening.”²⁹

Another recurring theme at the forum was the conflation of globalization with “world literature” as a critique of civilizational difference. Pascale Casanova, author of *The World Republic of Letters*, offered her critique of “young” nations seeking literary consecration through the Nobel Prize as “a clear paradox, that to try to win the Nobel Prize to assert one’s literary universality is a strange and unexpected way to validate literary nationalism.”³⁰ Casanova’s observation points to the hypocrisy of world literature, which the Korean literary critic and main organizer of the event Kim U-ch’ang also discussed as something that “...often means Western literature or a literary field that can be ordered into a perspective from the Western point of view, and even those in the non-Western part of the world must aspire to appropriate this shaping force to shape their work.”³¹ Nigerian Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka called it “a canon of exclusion, directed not at innovation, not at ideological armatures and stylistic developments, but—at other cultures.”³² Soyinka argued for the universality of literature, which Kim Seong-kon (Vice Chair of the Forums and KLTI president from 2012-2018) took further, asking: “Does Korean literature have to be expurgated and sanitized, giving up its

²⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, “La culture est en danger,” in *Writing Across Boundaries*, 178.

²⁹ Jie-Woo Hwang, “A Leaf in the Rapids’: Modernity, Society of Popular Culture, and Poetry,” in *Writing Across Boundaries*, 386.

³⁰ Casanova, Pascale. “Le prix Nobel: une consécration littéraire mondiale,” in *Writing Across Boundaries*, 233.

³¹ Kim U-ch’ang, “The Global Market and Literature in the Non-Western World,” in *Writing Across Boundaries*, 207.

³² Wole Soyinka, “Canons to the West, Canons to the East,” in *Writing Across Boundaries*, 17.

integrity as a Korean literary work in order to become a commodity in the Western market? ... There must also be equal and mutual recognition between the East and the West.”³³ Kim bemoaned the persistence of this civilizational divide, suggesting a mutual recognition of difference as a way of subverting the negative aspects of economic globalization as well as *seggyehwa* instead.

Novelist Yi Mun-yŏl remarked in 2000 that “the future of Korea’s narrative fiction may appear old-fashioned to more advanced nations, but it seems destined to remain firmly attached to realism,”³⁴ expressing his ambivalence about Korea’s position vis-à-vis other literatures as well as the perception of Korea as “old-fashioned” in compared to “more advanced nations,” a clear expression of the uncertainty of the inclusive and defensive posture of *seggyehwa* logic. Yi spoke again at the 2011 forum (“The Globalizing World and the Human Community”) but this time, his reflections had turned toward the personal, explaining his engagements with ideology through the loss of and search for his father, who had left South Korea for the North during the Korean War, indelibly marking the family he left behind as possible traitors to the South Korean state. “Under a barrage of historical nihilism,” he says, “I finally found the path of anti-ideology. ... For me, literature was a value system that attached fundamental significance to my existence, as [a] system of analysis that enabled me to objectively observe reality....”³⁵ Here, he stops short of bringing up the discussion of literary realism, the dominant mode of the national literary canon, referring only to “my own ideology” that had, in the ten years since his last discussion at the forum, “wrestled with the leviathan... [that had] joined forces with ... unlikable ideologies.” Yi’s presentations moved from the specificity of the Korean literary sphere in 2000 to reflections on an individuated experience with competing totalities in 2011.

This move was characteristic of most of the participants at the 2011 forum. Many of the Korean authors expressed fatigue with the demands of global Korean literature like Lee Seung-u, who said, “When we claim that writers should create works intended for international readers, we objectify both the world in which we ourselves are included and those international readers. In this way, we alienate ourselves from the world.”³⁶ Although his remarks are critical, his insistence on breaking away from the *seggyehwa* idea of the world as object is key. While South Korea’s inclusion in the world of fragmented societies was succeeding, the shadow of excluded other Korea(s) had come, by this time, to contaminate the image of Korea in the world. Kim Seong-kon refers to this in his 2011 presentation, “Images of Koreans in the Western Media,” which portrays Koreans as terrorists, spies, ruthless killers, or unstable immigrant shopkeepers; in essence, North Koreans or Korean-Americans. He points out this conflation of a variegated ethnic identity from different nations and suggests invoking the worldwide Korean community to repair this broken image. I would instead, however, return

³³ Kim Seong-kon, “Writing in the Multicultural Age: Towards a Reconciliation of the East and the West,” in *Writing Across Boundaries*, 517.

³⁴ Yi Mun-yŏl, “From Realism to Mimesis: Writing in a Time of Transition,” in *Writing Across Boundaries*, 411.

³⁵ Yi Mun-yŏl, “Literature as Ideology: My Literature and Ideologies,” in *The Globalizing World and the Human Community*, ed. Kim U-ch’ang (Elizabeth, NJ: Hollym, 2012), 241–244.

³⁶ Seung-u Lee, “Must We Always Aim for A Worldwide Audience?” in *The Globalizing World*, 211.

to Masao Miyoshi's remarks in 2000: "We must keep reminding ourselves that the "global" economy is not global at all, but an exclusionist economy. We must recover the sense of true totality that includes everyone in the world."³⁷ Miyoshi returned in 2005 ("Writing for Peace") and named this totality with a particular force born of his frustration with the Iraq War and the widening gap between the rich and poor, which was echoed by many of the participants at the 2005 forum. He called it environmental totality, an inclusive totality consisting of a multitude of difference.³⁸

Many of the participants in 2011 expressed dismay at what they saw as resigned acceptance to the class polarization and commodification of culture endemic to neoliberal globalization, but felt themselves besieged by the demands of the publishing market that had progressed in the economically exclusionary way predicted by the most pessimistic commenters in 2000 and 2005. The organizing committee's choice of theme in 2011, "The Globalizing World and the Human Community" does, however, point up a possible intervention that had been called for through the dire predictions against globalization in 2000, and the post-9/11 indignation and opposition to the Iraq War in 2005: that is, the return to the physical world and individual communication, whether virtually through a variety of media, through a re-engagement with local environments, or through an optimistic reappraisal of inclusivity that recognizes difference not as particularity, but as a universal condition.

One Korean Literature for Multiple Koreas

The great irony of the efforts to make Korean literature a "world literature" is that the works of realist fiction that were initially chosen for translation as the extra-national canon in the 1980s and 1990s are now the subject of greater interest, when at the time, their self-seriousness and difficult translations left the majority of them out of print and unread. I call this the "extra-national canon" because the authors and works chosen to be "representative" may or may not coincide with those works that make up the domestic canon of literature that is taught to Korean students at the primary and secondary levels. In part due to the involvement of foreign scholars and interactions with the domestic literary sphere, the extra-national cultural canon is capable of transcending domestic politics over educational texts and self-identification. On the other hand, it is that much more susceptible to choices by a small group of people to determine what is or is not representative of a national culture.

It took the contrast of contemporary, "depoliticized" Korea's visibility as "K-" to make Korean realist fiction interesting to the "global"/Euro-American audience. Perhaps this is because it provides a point from which to critique the standardizing and detrimental effects of neoliberal global capital on the culture of a rapidly developed nation. Division compounds the tendency for comparative associations of South Korean culture, where the

³⁷ Kim Seong-kon, "Images of Koreans in the Western Media," in *The Globalizing World*, 113–114.

³⁸ Masao Miyoshi, "A Turn to the Planet: Literature, Diversity, and Totality," in *Writing Across Boundaries*, 536.

perceived inscrutability of the North Korean regime and the international media's obsessive interest in it has also made South Korean cultural production a convenient proxy for understanding both states. This sort of comparative reduction essentializes Korean culture as a unified whole, which, as studies of diaspora culture have shown, has been a productive, if not misleading assumption.³⁹ At the same time, however, both the DPRK and the ROK make competing claims to reified Korean cultural authenticity in attempts to claim their (a-) historical legitimacy.

Other "Korean" Literatures

At the first Daesan Foundation Seoul International Forum for Literature in 2000, Asian-American Studies scholar Elaine Kim related an encounter with South Korean *minjung* artists at a Korean and Korean American art show at the Queens Museum of Art in 1993 who were dismissive of what they called Korean American artists' tendency to focus on race and racialization as "belly-button gazing" that ignored "'important global questions' such as labor exploitation under neocolonialism" in favor of individualistic identity issues, presumably in contrast to their own political work.⁴⁰ As in Arif Dirlik's assertion of ethnic complicity in cultural reification,⁴¹ however, "Historically, Asian Americans have been seen as metonyms for Asia and forcibly distanced from U.S. national culture, which defines the citizenry — that is, who can be American — as well as which histories and experienced [sic] can be remembered and which are to be forgotten,"⁴² For Elaine Kim, cultural reification is forced upon Asian American writers regardless of their agency or compliance, but as we see in her anecdote, this representation was rejected by cosmopolitan Korean artists at the time. Kim Seong-kon agreed with this assessment that while they may be called Korean-American writers, they are technically American writers:

These authors who write in English are not Korean writers, and therefore, you could say that they have nothing to do with Korean literature. However, if we were to include their literature in a broad definition of Korean literature, I think that it would not only expand the area and scope of Korean literature, it would also be a great help to the globalization (*seggyehwa*) of Korean literature. This is because they consistently make Korea the subject of their writing, and America insists on calling them Korean American writers.⁴³

³⁹ David Palumbo-Liu, *The Deliverance of Others: Reading Literature in a Global Age*. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012), 1–6.

⁴⁰ Elaine Kim, "Blackness and American Identity in Korean American Literature," in *Writing Across Boundaries*, 291.

⁴¹ Arif Dirlik, "Literature/identity: Transnationalism, Narrative and Representation," in *Globalization, Cultural Identities, and Media Representations*, eds. Natascha Gentz and Stefan Kramer (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 209–234.

⁴² Elaine Kim, 299.

⁴³ Kim Sŏng-gon (Kim Seong-kon), *Killobŏl sidae ūi munhak, Segye sok ūi hanguk munhak: Kim Sŏng-gon Pyŏngnonjip* (Literature in the global age, Korean literature in the world: literary criticism by Kim Sŏng-gon) (Seoul: Minŭmsa, 2006), 186.

Kim Seong-kon suggests here that South Korea take advantage of this forced metonymic representation to advance the cause of “authentic” Korean literature in the same passage that he cites the Korean American authors’ resistance to the instrumentalization of their writing: “For example, writers like Cathy Song and Walter Lew who participated at the Daegu World Authors Forum in 2002 responded to a reporter’s question about whether they thought that the fact that they were Korean helped their writing by saying that, ‘Actually, we work to transcend the categorization of Korean descent [in our writing].’”⁴⁴ Kim continues:

They [Korean American writers] want to escape the limitation of Korean descent and be recognized as American writers, but Koreans only emphasize their roots as Koreans, and Americans keep classifying them as Korean writers. The fact is, writers of European descent are just called American writers, and Americans only assign the appellation of Arab-, Asian-, or Korean- writers when they are non-white minorities.⁴⁵

In this way, with the coming of age of the second generation Korean-Americans from the first large-scale wave of Korean emigration to the US in the 1960s and 70s, and the craze in Korea for foreign education starting in the early 2000s, the presence of Korean bodies in other countries and their participation in local cultural production creates a condition of familiarity that paves the way for the introduction of the literature of “origin” in translation. South Korea’s tactic for globalizing its literature performs a double inversion of the metonymic impulse of “ethnic” literature through which they reify an ahistorical Korean past that knowingly borrows the forced inclusion of Korean American narratives as representative of Korea. But they only nominally accept Korean American writers in order to re-assert South Korean national literature as a literature that is distinct from, but conveniently related to a majority language’s minority literature. This activates a racializing ethnographic gaze through which South Koreans view the Korean American experience as a common past for their own purposes. While this is easily accomplished in the compressed space of Book Fairs, Literary Forums, and industry expositions, South Korean literature and films depict very different affective interactions with the (ultimately) disparate groups of the Korean diaspora that is reflected in the variety of legal and nominal classifications of Koreans when they physically occupy the space of the South Korean state.⁴⁶

It is telling that Korea is still referred to and introduced as a “land of contrasts” in the international media, a place of hypermodern daily life in computerized apartments, the highest-speed internet in the world, and constant streams of information being delivered to people everywhere on their ubiquitous smartphones as well as a nation with a “deeply engrained *traditional* culture [my emphasis].”⁴⁷ Korean industrial giants like Samsung and

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 187.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Jung-Sun Park and Paul Y Chang, “Contention in the Construction of a Global Korean Community: The Case of the Overseas Korean Act,” *Journal of Korean Studies* 10, no. 1 (2005): 1–27.

⁴⁷ Katherine In-Young Lee, “Dynamic Korea: Amplifying Sonic Registers in a Nation-Branding Campaign,” *The Journal of Korean Studies* 20, no. 1 (2015): 113–48.

Hyundai have certainly had an effect on this shift, but the countermovement to “preserve” national identity through research into Korean food history, arts, and fashion in order to create a coherent narrative of Korean culture also happens to coincide with commercial and political interests. This is not only for literature, but also for fashion, cosmetics, food, and architecture, for example.

The demands on Korean literature in the arena of world literature are several, and often contradictory. Because access to North Korea is limited, South Korean literature is expected to speak for both countries; it should allude to pre-modern “traditional” culture, while also marveling at the technological advances achieved in the last 40 years; it should show women struggling against and attempting to overcome an oppressive patriarchy (which is inevitably included as criteria for any “foreign” or non-Western literature); and it should also be easily relatable to its closest neighbor countries (Japan, China, and more recently, Vietnam) while simultaneously explaining how it is different.

In 2014, Korea was selected as the “market focus” country at the London Book Fair, and the British press was characteristically blunt when admitting their lack of knowledge about Korea and their greater interest in North Korea. *The Guardian*’s advance write-up of the event spells out the terms of Korea’s involvement:

After two years of political hot potatoes—first China and then Turkey—this year’s “market focus” country presents a different challenge to the London Book Fair, which runs this week: who wants to read books from Korea? The choice of name could be dismissed as opportunistically misleading: Korea is two countries, but the 10 writers who will be at the book fair are all from the south [sic].

We’re desperate to hear the inside story of North Korea because it is the stuff of nightmares, locked in unending cold war, complete with nuclear bombs aimed at unknown targets. We have no access to the first-hand stories of its citizens, so we rely on western writers, whether of novels,... or of journalism.

While the north [sic] appears to be tale [sic] of economic and social catastrophe, South Korea is one of the great success stories of the second half of the 20th century—yet its literature remains tantalisingly remote. It is home to the poet Ko Un, tipped as a frontrunner for the Nobel prize, but nearly all its high-profile authors are based in the west.⁴⁸

Of the KLTP’s task to bring Korean literature to the world, the author adds that, “it has a big job on its hands—one that involves not merely promoting and translating books but mediating one culture to another in such a way that the narratives we want to read are not simply journalistic horror stories, but the nuanced, culturally specific fictions that can illuminate the soul of a fascinating, complex, geopolitically critical, country.”

I cite this article at length because it reflects the general tone of coverage of Korea’s

⁴⁸ Claire Armistead, “Ten Korean Writers on a Country Sawn in Half.” *The Guardian*, Books. (accessed 16 October 2014). <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/apr/07/inside-story-korea-london-book-fair>.

participation at the London Book Fair and distills the contradictory expectations of Korean literature as a potential world literature: Korean literature, as presented by South Korean writers, must satisfy the “desperat[ion to read the] inside story of North Korea,” which must be the “stuff of nightmares”; it must explain its own nationally-specific economic success in a relatable way that overcomes the “rituals that... separate them from the rest of us”; and present “a tradition of family duty deemed so alien to western readers that it is said to have been substantially adapted in translation.” At the same time, South Korean literature must prove itself a better representative of Korean culture than the “western” writers who write about North Korea and the “high-profile” “South Korean authors who are based in the West.” The South Korean authors to which the article refers are three English language authors who were born in South Korea but write and publish in the US: economist Ha-Joon Chang; and novelists Chang-rae Lee and Krys Lee. Thus, the South Korean delegation at the London International Book Fair was expected to represent a Korean literature that incorporates multiple national, historical, and cultural identities, but the identifying marker “Korean” ultimately denies the historical specificity and cultural particularities of each group.

For the most part, however, the South Korean delegation to the London Book Fair was willing to wear these multiple hats. Yi Mun-yŏl, for example, said in an interview that, “There was almost zero literary output coming from North Korea, and that in the case of the few non-fiction books that make their way to South Korea, even though the language is the same, we can’t identify with them. The forms and mechanisms are completely unfamiliar. We feel like we’re reading South Korean books from 50 years ago.”⁴⁹ Here, Yi places himself at a temporal distance from his North Korean “compatriots,” situating South Korea in a more advanced temporal location, echoing the ethnic hierarchalization of imperial subjects and reflecting a developmental understanding of culture. Yi’s personal attempt to include North Korean writers in exile in the South Korean literary community, he said, was not met with much enthusiasm from the South Korean reading public, due, he said, to “an ideological malaise. I believe it comes down to ideological differences. If there is a film that is critical about North Korean society people don’t watch it, ironically if there is a blockbuster film about North Korea being a bad guy and the good guy is American, then people will go watch it.”⁵⁰ Yi’s frustration with the lack of interest in “real” North Korea is compounded by what Dirlik called the “ethnic complicity in cultural reification.” Here, however, we have a South Korean writer working to give voice to North Korean authors in an act of ethnic complicity that attempts to reject one reification of Korean culture (the imaginary unified Korea) while validating a vision of South Korean culture as a “center” country.

There were a few notable exceptions to this willingness to represent all Koreans: upon returning from the London Book Fair, KLTI President Kim Seong-kon, expressed his pleasure at the comments of South Korean writers who, he thought, were now “free from

⁴⁹ Olivia Snaije, “Yi Mun-yol on Allegory and Naked North Korean Writing,” *Publishing Perspectives* (accessed 10 April 2014), <http://publishingperspectives.com/2014/04/yi-mun-yol-on-allegory-and-naked-north-korean-writing>

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

political ideologies at last.”⁵¹ He notes that novelist Kim Young-ha, “pointed out that [his] book [*Your Republic is Calling You*] is not so much a spy novel as a story of relocation and living in a diaspora. That is, it is an account of a man who came to South Korea involuntarily from the North due to the tragic division of the country. Kim said, “This novel is, in fact, about the protagonist’s spiritual exile.”⁵² Kim Young-ha gestures toward the plight of displaced Koreans from North Korea who become part of the history of Korean out-migration, but in the same move, articulates the existence of a Korean diaspora within Korea and a sense of national identity that conflates ethnicity and race with exclusion from the communities in the “new” space. Theodore Hughes has discussed the de-linking of bodies and space in *Your Republic is Calling You*, Hwang Sök-kyöng’s novels *The Guest* and *Princess Bari*, and the film *Double Agent* as a phenomenon in which “the rearticulation of the *minjung* subject must take place outside of South Korea’s borders. As in a number of “labor novels” of the 1980s, the intellectual overcomes alienation/bourgeois positionality by becoming worker, but now, in the early 2000s, the move is projected outward, to the space of a transnational working-class culture.”⁵³

This extra-territorial formulation of the *minjung* subject, however, may also be read dialectically as anxiety over the threat to the involuntary transformation and refraction of the *minjung* subject within Korea due to transnational migration into the territorial space of South Korea in the same period. This is because an inward projection of the *minjung* subject would not reflect the agency of a South Korean *minjung* subject reconciling with, and displaying, its ability to add itself to a transnational working-class. Rather, it would have to accept a fundamental change to the ethno-national formulation of the *minjung* subject that incorporates and thereby alters its holistic constitution with the inclusion of a plurality of possible subjectivities.

In other interviews, Kim Young-ha discussed how he talked to North Korean defectors, watched films about the country, and read books and articles. But he deliberately skipped one important step despite having the opportunity—a real visit. He was invited to visit North Korea as a member of a writers’ delegation in 2005, but he dropped out at the last minute, thinking a real experience might distort his creative reconstruction. Kim Young-ha’s remarks confirm Hughes’s hypothesis of the desire for the virtual space of North Korea as a means of recuperating South Korea’s own past, but when read in conjunction with his comment about the novel as a “story of relocation and living in a diaspora,” he also alludes to something very telling about South Korean ethnic identity and belonging that maintains the link to a territorial origin in the form of exclusion. Therefore, while imaginary Koreans can be representative of *minjung* subjectivity and be incorporated into a transnational working class or cosmopolitan subjectivity outside of Korea, the reverse move cannot be accomplished in these texts.

Unlike many writers from the *hangül* generation (writers active in the 1970s and 1980s),

⁵¹ Kim, Seong-kon, “Returning from the London Book Fair,” April 15, 2014. *The Korea Herald*.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Theodore Hughes, “North Koreans’ and Other Virtual Subjects: Kim Yeong-ha, Hwang Seok-yeong, and National Division in the Age of Post-humanism,” *The Review of Korean Studies* 11, no. 1 (March, 2000): 99–117.

Kim Young-ha and his cohort of authors who debuted in the 1990s and early 2000s take a less nationalistic and more pragmatic view on national literature, ethnicity, and representation. In Kim's opinion, the South and North evolved along different paths, especially after the 1997 financial crisis that steered South Korea further toward a US-style market economy while poverty and isolation deepened in the North. South Korea now "may be closer to France or Singapore" than its northern neighbor, as the protagonist of *Your Republic is Calling You* reflects in the novel: "Sixty years after the division, there's a great difference between here and there," Kim said. "They passed the time with their own system, so did we. The view that the two are one nation, I think, only causes misunderstandings."⁵⁴ Like Yi Mun-yŏl, Kim Young-ha suggests that the difference between the passages of time in North and South Korea culminated in tangible cultural difference. By contrast, however, Kim and his cohort are much more willing to accept Korean-American authors as part of a coterminous global literary and cultural sphere, which, as we have seen, was not the case only a decade previously.

As Korean literature had a more limited coterie of Western academics dedicated to the translation of its "classics" (as Japanese literature had with Arthur Whaley, Donald Keene, and Edward Seidenstecker, for example), Korean literature would seem to have no history in the arena of world literature. The new cultural organizations had, therefore, a nearly *carte blanche* mandate to create the English canon of classical literature with the world market in mind. This came from within, rather than through the intervention of a "consecrating" authority from one of the literary "center" cultures as private foundations and the state, with the aid of the literary sphere, invented its own path to consecration by bringing those international literary authorities as well as representatives from the world market of literature to Korea in order to push Korean literature into world literature. After fifteen years of intense effort, it seems that they may have achieved their purpose.

Movements for Literary Translation Around the World

Korea is not the only country with a "peripheral" literature to invest in the promotion of its literature abroad. Literature institutes promoting outward-bound translation (from the local language into foreign languages) have flourished in recent years. Following projects for cultural exchange between European Union countries and new trade regulations concerning intellectual property and the "content industries," many Central East and Eastern European countries including Poland (est. 2003) and Switzerland (est. 2009) have developed literature institutes that focus on the promotion, translation, and distribution of national literatures in foreign reading markets. Other national literature and translation institutes have formed partnerships that seem to contest the dominance of literary centers in the USA, UK, and France such as the Russian Institute of Translation (est. 2011), the Chinese Nations Publishing House's Academy of Translation (est. 2014), the Kazakh National Translation

⁵⁴ Kim Hyun, "Kim Young-ha Writes of Elusive Freedom in Korean Urban Life," interview. May 31, 2010. *Yonhap News*.

Bureau (est. 2011), and the Egyptian National Center for Translation and Publishing (est 2007).⁵⁵ That these moves are happening as the publishing industry worldwide bemoans decreases in readership and book sales begs the question: why now? That is, why, as literary fiction becomes an increasingly rarefied and devalued commodity, are countries fighting to enter already crowded foreign literary markets?

By contrast, organizations in majority, or “center language” countries like the Arts Council England, provide support for inbound translation (foreign to local) in order to “... develop and invest in artistic and cultural experiences that enrich people’s lives in England.”⁵⁶ In England’s case, inbound translation is recognized as unmarketable enough to require sponsorship, and the support is given in the interest of providing the local population access to foreign literature. The problem of English language readers’ disinclination for literature in translation has been well documented, inspiring blogs like *threepercent.com*, named after the percentage of publications in English that have been translated from another language.

In Spain, the Spanish Centre for Literary Translations⁵⁷ provides space, funding, and events for “literary translators from any country that has as a starting or finishing languages: Spanish, Catalan, Basque and Galician,” through the support of the Spanish Ministry of Culture and Education, the Foreign Ministry and the European Commission, and the European Council. Recent publications have discussed the failure of French literature in the Anglophone market, citing the intellectual richness of French literary and philosophical history as a barrier to popular acceptance with UK and American readers. The concern over transnational literary exchange from both center languages and the so-called periphery express the continued importance of literature as a form of cultural capital that remains strongly national at the same time that it emphasizes the plurality of cultures within one state (i.e. Spanish multilingualism), and a renewed recognition of the cultural legacies of imperialism in the face of anglophone cultural domination (such as Francophone and Hispanophone literatures).

World Literature: Longing and Belonging

In “The Importance of Being Universal,” Pascale Casanova cites South Korea’s quest for the Nobel Prize in Literature as an example of the power of “literary consecration” or “*littérisation*” for non-center literature to “accumulate a national stock of literary capital.”⁵⁸ Casanova’s *World Republic of Letters* is situated in a body of recent scholarship that attempts to demystify the elite domain of world literature as a set of practices that exercise power

⁵⁵ Saltanat Boteu, “Kazakh Literature to be Translated Into United Nations Languages: the Astana Times.” *The Astana Times*, November 16, 2018; Aaltonen, Sirkkü, and Areeg Ibrahim, *Rewriting Narratives in Egyptian Theatre* (London: Routledge, 2016), 66.

⁵⁶ “Who We Are,” homepage of the Arts Council England (accessed 15 April 2014) <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/who-we-are/>

⁵⁷ Casa del Traductor (accessed 15 July 2014) http://www.grinzane.net/P_Tractor_ENG.html

⁵⁸ Casanova, 180.

through international literary prizes, translation, and canonization.⁵⁹ World literature thus maintains a space for the distinction between high and low culture, where high culture is read as universal and low culture as the local or specific. Other critiques of the hierarchical structure of national literatures based on a center-periphery model of world systems have pointed to Goethe's early formulation of *Weltliteratur* as analogous to *Weltmarkt* and a "universal world market of exchange". David Damrosch and Franco Moretti, while on opposite sides of a debate over close or distant reading, agree that the impact of literature depends on its spatial reach and circulation, whether by literary impact (the former) or by commercial success (the latter).⁶⁰ Emily Apter, Lydia Liu, and Gayatri Spivak have written against the Eurocentrism of world literature by focusing on the activating process of translation to destabilize, create, and flatten meaning and forms, respectively.⁶¹ Pheng Cheah has recently called for the return of the universal to world literature, an ideal he sees as having been lost in sociological readings of world literature that conflate "world" and "global".⁶² Spivak also pointed to the inadequacy of "world" and "global" as descriptions for a transnational and postcolonial space of literariness.⁶³ The debates over what world literature is, however, remain a product of the center-periphery model not the least insofar as the critiques themselves come from intellectuals in the elite centers.

In the age of global mass culture flows, literature has held fast to the distinctions between high and low cultures in a way that maintains ethnic particularities regardless of, or perhaps wholly determined by location and language of transmission. National governments take this up as a way of encouraging ethnonational identification even as it is contested by the producers themselves, as in the case of Korean-American authors who are praised for their "authentic" representations of Korean culture by the English-language literary establishment, but who have historically been denied authenticity of representation by the Korean literary world.⁶⁴ Regardless of its utility, there remains a fundamental desire to communicate through literary texts something specific about a particular area or community. It happens that in the case of contemporary literature, this is achieved through either translated national literatures or their diasporic proxies, as opposed a deconstructed former colonial gaze.

But this conception of world literature also ignores the productive intertextuality of global media products, as evidenced by the transnational meaning-making in the circulation

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ David Damrosch, *What is World Literature* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003), 281–303; Franco Moretti, "Conjectures on World Literature," in *Debating World Literature*, ed. Christopher Prendergast (London; New York: Verso, 2004), 148–62.

⁶¹ Emily S. Apter, *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability* (Brooklyn, NY: Verso Books, 2013), 247–340; Lydia He Liu, *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity-China, 1900-1937* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1995), 239–343; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Death of a Discipline* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 71–102.

⁶² Pheng Cheah, *What is a World?: On Postcolonial Literature as World Literature* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 28–45.

⁶³ Spivak, *Death of a Discipline*, 71–102.

⁶⁴ Elaine Kim, "Defining Asian American Realities through Literature," *Cultural Critique*, no. 6 (1987): 87–111.

of Korean television, film, and K-pop in recent years.⁶⁵ The discussions that took place in Korea between invited “center” experts and local (periphery) scholars thus reveal the desire for meaningful discussion with a literary periphery nation on the one hand, and a desire for literary consecration by the periphery that is couched in a mutual admiration that ultimately seem to fall short of actual dialogue: sympathy, but not empathy. While it is understandable that such a gap would occur, the forums and workshops depict spaces of direct engagement that, while trying to deny the existing power relations, only further support the otherness of literature as distinct from other cultural production, but the space of discussion itself at these state and corporate sponsored events targeting literary consecration for Korean literature are, in fact, products of the kind of intermedial strategies that made Korean popular culture successful.

⁶⁵ Michelle Cho, “Domestic Hallyu: K-Pop Metatexts and the Media’s Self-Reflexive Gesture,” *International Journal of Communication* (19328036) 11 (2017): 2308–2331.

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