Lecture 9

20th Century: Modern Literature and Thought

How to write Korean?

- By the end of the 19th century there were three possibilities for writing:
  - Literary Chinese hanmun (漢文 한문)
  - Mixed script Korean guk-hanmun (國漢文 국한문) mixing Chinese characters and hangul - similar to how Japanese is written.
  - Pure hangul guk-mun (國文 국문 pronounced 'gungmun').

- For the greater part of the 20th century, until the 1990s in South Korea (earlier in North Korea), nearly everyone wrote in the mixed script because it was most practical.

Writer Yi Gwangsu (see below) on the matter in 1910:

“If I could have my way, I would very much want to write in pure gungmun, and moreover believe that if I did, it would work. But I also know that it would be extremely difficult, and therefore cannot advocate this position... Today Korea is hopelessly busy importing new knowledge: to write in difficult-to-understand pure gungmun at this time would be to impede the importation of the new knowledge, and therefore I believe we should defer this opinion for some time, and wait until a later day to give it full play. The style that I am now advocating is thus guk-hanmun... I propose that we continue to write in Korean characters only those words that cannot be written with the Korean script, and write everything else in Korean... That is not very palatable, but after all, mustn’t we eat to live?”

Kim Eok (金億 김억 1896-?)

- Early pioneer of modern poetry.
- Born in Pyeongan-do province of modern North Korea: around 1913 studied in Japan at the English department of Keio University before returning to Korea where he worked first as a teacher and from 1924 at the Dong’a-ilbo newspaper.
- In 1918 his first translations of Western poets (Verlaine, Gourmont and Fyodor Sologub) were published in the journal "The Western Literary Weekly".
- In March 1921 his first volume of translated Western and Japanese poetry, Onoe-ui Mudo (懊惱의舞蹈 오외의무도 "Dance of Anguish") was published with translations from English, French, Japanese and Esperanto.
- In June 1923 he published the first volume of "new poetry" by an individual Korean poet, Haepari-ui Norae (해파리의 노래 "Songs of the Jellyfish").
- From the mid 1920s he became increasingly interested in Korean hansi poem and folk songs: during the late 1930s he wrote lyrics for popular songs under the pseudonym Kim Po-mong (金浦夢 김포몽).
- From 1943 onwards he wrote a handful of pro-Japanese imperialist poems for which he has since been condemned as a collaborator.
- Following the division of the peninsula he went to North Korea, and subsequently all mention of him (along with other prominent figures who chose the North) was banned until 1988.

Ju Yohan (朱耀翰 주요한 1900-1979)

- Writer of "folk-song style poems".
- From the late 1930s became a Japanese collaborator.

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"In his postface to [his 1924 poetry collection] Beautiful Dawn (아름다운 새벽), Chu Yohan declares that he shunned decadence and tried to bring his poetry close to the people. Chu’s notion of poetry for the people included the following guidelines: express the emotion and thought of the Korean people; project the beauty and power of the [Korean] language; be faithful to your individuality as a Korean; and produce literature that must first be Korean before becoming world literature. The movement for folk-songs-style poetry came from the realization that poetic forms inspired by the West cannot express the Korean sensibility. Modern Korean poetry cannot be cut off from the past, and imitating Western models will not "modernize" Korean poetry."^2

Han Yong-un (韓龍雲 'Korea dragon cloud' 1879–1944)

- Nationalist independence activist, Buddhist reformer and writer (novels, poems and essays).
- Han Yong-un was his Buddhist name; he was originally called Han Yucheon (韓裕天 한유천).
- Han was born into a "fallen yangban" family meaning he was poor but educated: married aged about 14.
- In 1894, aged 15, he participated in the Donghak movement (東學 'Eastern Learning'); his father was a local official involved with subjugating the rebellion.
- Thereafter he turned to Buddhism and practised as a monk.
- In 1896 he briefly visited Vladivostok but returned the following year having almost been killed (no details).
- In 1905 his father was killed by uibyeong 'righteous army' rebels; he then more officially ordained as a monk.
- In 1909 he was part of a Buddhist delegation which toured temples for 6 months in Japan.
  - Based on his experience in early 1910 he wrote the influential essay, "On Revitalizing Joseon Buddhism" (朝鮮佛教維新論 조선불교유신론), which was later published in 1913.
    - It emphasized the need to educate monks including in wider general education and encouraged travelling abroad (both to study Buddhism in India and China, and Western countries "to learn the history and current conditions of their religions and many other things. Would it not be wise if we could learn the best features of Western civilization and thereby make up our own deficiencies."^3
    - It proposed further reforms including allowing monks to marry.
- He also petitioned both the Korean government and Japanese authorities, and lobbied the Buddhist order to allow monks to marry.
  - The prohibition against marriage was only removed in 1926 by the Japanese and led to a divide in the Korea Buddhist order between those who supported marriage and those against it (the Jogye Order). Because married monks became associated with Japanese colonial policy, in 1961 the Jogye Order was ultimately granted control of nearly all Buddhist temples and married monks were expelled.

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^2 Lee, Peter H. 2003. A History of Korean Literature pp347–8 – After this section Lee goes on to criticise the failure of the "folk-songs-style" poetic movement.

Following the August 1910 Japanese annexation of Korea, Han Yong-un travelled to Manchuria to show support and encourage the uibyeong independence fighters: he travelled in Manchuria, Mongolia and Siberia before returning to Korea.

He subsequently became a prominent activist for Korean Buddhism, opposing its merger with the Japanese Buddhist order and denouncing those who collaborated with the Japanese.

In 1914 he established the Joseon Buddhist Youth Alliance (朝鮮佛敎靑年同盟 조선불교청년동맹) seeking to help popularize Korean Buddhism with the general public.

- Taking up the traditional Seon ('meditative self-cultivation') and gyo ('doctrine') dialectic, where Korean Buddhism, he felt, had become dominated by Seon monastic practice, he emphasized the equal import of the gyo aspect but reinterpreted it to refer to wider education and modernization.

Both as a nationalist and Buddhist reformer he championed the translation of Buddhist texts into hangul script.

In 1918 he began publishing a Buddhist journal Yusim (惟心 유심).

He helped draft the March 1st 1919 Declaration of Independence with Choe Namseon (though Choe wrote most of it).

- Unlike Choe he was one of the 33 signatories and was subsequently arrested and imprisoned for 3 years.

While at Seodaemun prison in Seoul, he composed the Book of Korean Independence (朝鮮獨立의書 조선독립의서) which he managed to have smuggled out and taken to Shanghai to the Korean Provisional Government based there, who published it in their newspaper in November 1919.

Following his release, he continued as a reformer and independence activist, writing and giving lectures.

In 1926 he published the poetry collection Nim ui Chimmuk (님의沈黙 님의침묵 "Lover's Silence")

- Modern style poetry; used colloquial expressions from his native Chungcheong-do province dialect.

Love is gone. Ah, my love is gone.
Sundering the mountain's green color, severing our ties, love is gone down a path leading to a maple grove.
The old vows, firm and glowing like a gold blossom, have turned to cold dust and flown away in the breeze of a sigh.
The memory of a keen first kiss reversed the compass needle of my fate, then retreated and vanished.
I am deafened by love's fragrant words and blinded by love's blossoming face.

Love, too, is a man's affair. We feared parting at meeting, warned against it, but parting came unawares and the startled heart bursts with new sorrow.

Yet I know that to make parting the source of vain tears is to sunder myself my love, so I transformed the unruly power of sorrow and poured it over the vertex of new hope.

As we fear parting when we meet, so we believe we will meet again when we part.

Ah, love is gone, but I have not sent my love away.

My song of love beyond song shrouds the silence of love.¹

"Han Yongun.. forged a distinctive voice through the use of the past and the creation of the new. Drawing on the epistemology ['study of knowledge'] of Buddhism, the religion most firmly rooted in the people, he enriched his works with the common store of Buddhist references. Unlike past Buddhist meditations on the merits and virtues of buddhas and bodhisattvas, Han's poetry, couched in the language of love, is a spiritual exploration of the relationship between self and others, the one and the many... According to Han, the self cannot exist apart from society. A man cannot be rootless; nor can he deny the claims of the flesh. Han's rhythmic language, specific and sensuous in its abundant detail, belongs to the convictions, hopes, and anxieties of all Koreans. **Han Yongun is the first great poet of modern Korea to expound the actuality of colonial rule and sing of the reality to come.**" (Lee 2003:359-60).

- In 1927 he participated in the establishment of the leftwing oriented Sin'ganhoe (新幹會 'new trunk society') which went on to claim some 35,000 members across the country and supported the 1929 Gwangju Incident uprising before being disbanded by the Japanese in 1931.
- During the 1930s he wrote several long novels and further poetry; in 1937 he was briefly imprisoned again for involvement with an anti-Japanese Buddhist organization.
- Until his death in 1944, he refused to submit to the Japanese and actively opposed both the 1940 law for Koreans to take Japanese names, and the 1943 campaign encouraging young students to enlist in the army.

Choe Namseon (崔南善 쳐남선 1890–1957)

- Poet, essayist and historia.
  - Author of the first "modern style poem".
  - The very man who had been at the forefront of the independence movement and modernization drive became a collaborator!!

- At the age of 14 he went to study in Japan but came back after just three months. Two years later in 1906 he went back and studied in the geography department of Waseda University. While there he edited the bulletin magazine for Koreans studying in Japan, Daehanheung-hakhoebo (大韓興學會報 대한흥학회보 "Bulletin of the Academic Society for Great Korea's Flourishing"). The following year he was expelled for involvement in a mock parliament.
- Back in Seoul, from 1908 he began publishing the journal Sonyeon (少年 측년 "Boy") in which some of his own poetry appeared including in the first edition the poem From the Sea to Boys considered to be the first Korean "new style" (i.e. modern) poem. In 1910 he established the Joseon-gwang-munhoe (朝鮮光文...
In 1919 he drafted the Declaration of Independence which was read out on March 1st igniting the nationwide demonstrations, though he didn’t sign it himself.
- Despite this he was arrested with the other 32 leaders and sentenced to two years and six months in jail but gained parole the following year.

After his release, he continued various literary activities but devoted time to studying and writing Korean history. However, in 1927 he became a committee member of the "Korean History Editing Society" (朝鮮史編修委員會 조선사편수위원회) which had been established under the colonial Government-General (總督府 총독부 Chongdok-bu) to find historical evidence of Japanese superiority in the past.
- In 1938 he became a member of the central advisory commission (中央院 중추원) for the Government-General and acted as advisor for the Manmong-ilbo newspaper (滿蒙日報 만몽일보 "Manchuria-Mongolia daily"), which was a Japanese controlled Korean language newspaper published in Manchukuo (1932-45) for the Korean population there.
- The following year he became a professor at the newly established Kenkoku-daigaku (建國大學) university of Manchukuo.
- In 1943 he went to Tokyo where he gave speeches encouraging Korean students to become "student soldiers" (學兵 학병) for the Japanese war effort.

Following 1945 liberation he concentrated on history but in 1949 was imprisoned in the South for his former collaborationist activity with Japan though shortly after was released on bail due to ill health.
- He resumed various activities concentrating on history, serving on the Navy History Committee and Seoul History Committee until he passed away in 1957.

Yi Gwangsu (李光洙 이광수 1892–1950)
- Author of the first successful modern novel.
- Began his career as a nationalist modernizer and independence activist.
  - Strongly denounced traditional Confucian values for which he blamed Korea’s backwardness.
  - Promoted ideals of Western education, feminism ("New Women" 新女性 신여성) and free love.
  - Gave voice to ideas of Korean ethnic nationalism (民族主義 민족주의 minjok-ju'ui), including defining itself as both unrelated to, and contemptuous of, Japan.

Later radically changed his views and became an apparently strongly pro-Japanese collaborator!
- While his name has been tarnished, his early ideas were incredibly influential on modern Korean ethnic identity throughout the 20th century, and in large part still today.

Was imprisoned by all of three of the regimes that ruled Korea during his lifetime: the Japanese, South Korea and North Korea!
• Yi was born in North Pyeong’ an province, modern North Korea; his family — now very poor — traced its lineage back to the great—great—grandfather of Yi Seonggye (founder of the Joseon dynasty).
• He lost both his parents who were tenant farmers, aged 10. Despite receiving education from his grandfather, he had to sell tobacco and do manual labour to survive.
• Subsequently he was raised by local Donghak ("Eastern Learning" Cheondogyo) members who, recognizing his ability paid for him to study in Japan.
  o In 1904 he moved to Seoul and the following year went to study in Japan entering a middle school (briefly having to return due to lack of funds).
  o Early on staying at a Japanese Christian priest’s home, he witnessed the priest praying each day for the benefit of the Japanese Empire, which led to a general suspicion of religion and Christianity.
• In 1907 he entered the Christian Meiji Gakuin university where he met with Korean independence activist An Changho (안창호 1878–1938) who was returning from America.
  o At Meiji college he organised a youth society (소년회) and magazine, Sonyeon (소년선 "Boy/youth") to which he contributed poems and criticism.
  ▪ He became a native speaker in Japanese and his first writings were in Japanese rather than Korean.
  ▪ In 1909 he published his first short story Sarang-in’ga (사랑인가 "Could it be love?")
  o In 1910 he returned to Korea and became a teacher at Osan-hakgyo school (오산학교), established by nationalist educator Yi Seung-hun (이승훈 1864–1930) but taken over by a Christian missionary after Seung-hun was imprisoned.
  o During this time he wrote several short stories in vernacular Korean, written in pure hangul (without Chinese characters).
  o The same year he married but there was no love in the relationship.
• In 1911 he formed a small secret independence group, the Korea Society (조선학회), with whom he swore a blood oath.
• As a writer he began contributing to Choe Namseon’s Sonyeon "Youth" journal.
• In 1913 he was forced to leave his post at Osan-hakgyo due to teaching about Tolstoy, Darwin, Hegel and Nietzsche! (among others).
• He then travelled in northeast Asia visiting Manchuria, Vladivostok, and Shanhai, before returning to Korea and being reinstated at Osan-hakgyo school where he continued writing. From Vladivostok he had planned to visit the US, but owing to the outbreak of WWI, he changed his mind (or was unable to travel).
• The following year, in 1915 he returned to Japan to study at Waseda University.
  o In Tokyo he became ill with tuberculosis and was nursed by Heo Yeongsuk (허영숙), Korea’s soon-to-be first female doctor: he consequently began an affair with Heo Yeongsuk which became something of a celebrity scandal.
  o At the same time, he allegedly also had an affair with writer/painter Na Hyeseok (see below) and wanted to marry her, but Hyeseok’s older brother (another independence activist and friend of Yi Gwangsu) strongly opposed this, so he continued instead with Heo Yeongsuk!
• Aside from other writings, from the beginning of 1917 the first installment of his serialized novel Mujeong (무정 'Heartless') — regarded as the first successful modern novel — was published in the Maeil Shinbo newspaper (the official newspaper of the Japanese Government–General).
  The novel:
  ▪ Advocated liberalism, Western enlightenment and ideals of free love within marriage.
• It was the first novel to be written in (mostly?) pure Korean, utilizing vernacular Korean language.
• Became extremely popular with Korean (educated) youth making Yi Gwangsu a celebrity and heartthrob.
• It was heavily criticized by conservative Confucians who denounced the work and Yi Gwangsu as someone who had grown up in the countryside without his parents.
  ▪ The debate enabled Yi Gwangsu to emerge as the leading voice for modernism and advocate for equality between the women and men.

• Owing to deteriorating health (suffering tuberculosis), he returned to Korea the same year and was nursed by Heo Yeongsuk - after divorcing his first wife - he further wrote essays condemning the traditional patriarchal family structure and arranged marriages, and advocating the equality of women and free love altogether causing huge controversy.

• Consequently he eloped with Heo Yeongsuk spending three months in Beijing.
• Following Woodrow Wilson's speech on the self-determination of nations, he returned to Japan via Seoul and joined the Joseon Youth Independence Group (朝鮮靑年獨立團 조선靑年독립단).
  o He travelled to Shanghai, the base of Korean independence activities (and home of the soon to be Korean provisional government).
  o In early 1919 he returned again to Tokyo where he drafted a declaration of independence which was read out there on 8 February leading to mass arrests of Koreans.
  o Meanwhile Yi Gwangsu secretly returned to Shanghai where he published articles in English to publicize the Tokyo independence event: he briefly travelled back to Japan before returning to Shanghai and continued participating for two years with the Provisional Government (임시정부) acting as editor for their independence newspaper (獨立新聞 독립신문 Dongnip-sinmun).
  o He simultaneously published the Independence (獨立 독립) journal of the Provisional government (which published 189 editions until 1925), and supported several other journals including the short-lived New Woman (新女子 신여자) and anti-Japanese Ruins (廢墟 폐허).

• Disillusioned with the failure of the independence movement and Provision Government, he returned to Korea in April 1921 and officially married Heo Yeongsuk (who had travelled from Japan to meet him in Shanghai, causing suspicion that she was influencing Yi Gwangsu to become pro-Japanese).
  o Struggling financially, he continued writing both novels and articles.
  o Visiting the Geumgang-san (金剛山 'Diamond Mountains') to recuperate his health, he began to take an interest in Buddhism and learnt traditional hansi poetry and calligraphy from a monk.
  o In 1922 he taught English at a school while contributing articles to the Joseon-ilbo and Dong’a-ilbo newspapers: in 1923 he became an editor at the Dong’a-ilbo.

• In 1922, he authored an essay “On Rebuilding the [Korean] People/Race” (民族改造論 민족개조론 minjok-gaejo-ron) published in the Cheondo-gyo magazine Gaebyeok (開闢 개벽 "beginning of the world")
  o He criticized Koreans for being backward, lazy, deceitful and cowardly.
  o He suggested that there would need to be a 30 year "maturation period" for Korea before thinking of independence.
  o This was not well received by the public or other independence activists: youths threw knives at his house, the office of Gaebyeok and anyone associated with him was threatened, and so until 1925 he had to write under pseudonyms.
• There was further public dismay when he started suggesting that Koreans should focus on politics, industry and education within the confines of Japanese law.

• In 1933 joined the Joseon Ilbo newspaper as deputy chairman: in 1934 he became Buddhist. During this period he produced many of his works.

• In 1937 he was arrested for involvement with the Suyang-dong'uhoe (修養同友會 수양동우회 "Cultivating Fellow Friends Society") a bourgeois enlightenment independence organization which he had helped to establish the Seoul branch of in 1922.
  o He was imprisoned for only half a year before being released on bail for ill health from which time he commenced more blatant collaborationist activities while becoming more Buddhist.
  o In October 1939 he became head of the newly formed Korean Literary Men's Association (朝鮮文人協會 조선문인협회) which supported the Naisen Ittai (內鮮一體 "Japan–Korea one body") policy of assimilation and he became one of the first to adopt a Japanese name, Kayama Mitsurō (香山光郞 かやま・みつろう).

• After liberation, in 1946 he divorced his wife to save their property as he was viewed as a former collaborator with the Japanese.
  o In 1949 he was arrested by South Korean authorities but released shortly after on grounds of ill health.
  o Following the outbreak of the war he was captured by the North during their occupation and retreat from Seoul and consequently disappeared.
  o Until around the 1970s many believed that he was living in the North, but rumour of his early death was passed on by Koreans who had left the north; in 1991 Yi Gwangsu's son visited the North and confirmed that he had died of ill health 25 October 1950 at Man'po (far northeastern North Korea).

‘Yi saw tradition (and Neo–Confucianism) as an obstacle to progress, ’championed Western liberalism and free will,’ and seemed 'more cosmopolitan than nationalist in outlook.'[46–47] This can also be seen in his embrace of western ideas of personal freedom and individuality (such as the argument against arranged marriage that was presented in Mujeong).

In "Basic Morality of Old Koreans", published four months later [1932], he lashed out at individualism and liberalism calling for we–ism (uri juui), groupism (danche juui), and totalitarianism (jeonche juui). Clearly departing from his earlier view that championed western individualism and free will, he now charged these with destroying Korea’s tradition of we–ism and group–ism,' and said 'that the import of Anglo–Saxonian individualism and liberalism weakened Korea's traditional "spirit of sacrifice and service," and he called for restoring collectivism based on the "communal spirit of villages of old Joseon."

'In his Theory of the Korean Nation, published in 1933, he compared the idea of nation to the notion of "fate," claiming that "Koreans cannot but be Koreans...even when they use the language of a foreign nation, wear its clothes and follow its customs in order to become non-Korean." In his view, nation cannot change because of hyeol tong (血統 bloodline), seonggyeok (personality), and munhwa (culture) constitute a nation. Here, he defined nation in ethnic and racial terms, departing from his earlier view. [...] Yi concluded, "Koreans have been without a doubt a unitary ethnic nation (danil han minjok) in blood and culture for thousands of years," [p. 48–49] As Michael Shin notes, in 1933 he wrote that "language is the soul of the nation." He also argued that "anyone who insults the nation must be denounced as a sinner against the nation." [p. 56] Yi probably came to regret that particular statement.'

5 These citations are from the Gusts of Popular Feeling blog, which only very rarely has good articles. http://populargusts.blogspot.fi/2010/05/yi-kwangsu-and-korean-nationalism.html
'Worth noting is that Yi, while reacting to Japanese colonial policy, was at the same time influenced by Japanese ultra-nationalism, facism, and campaigns in Japan for 'Japanization' rather than 'westernization.' And much as we saw an anti-foreign streak in his lashing out at Korea's Confucianists becoming "slaves to Chinese thought," we see that in his view of history, "He blamed Silla for breaking Korea's national unity by inviting foreign forces into the boundaries of the nation and praised Koryo for recovering those boundaries." This sounds rather similar to North Korea's justification for the last (and perhaps a future) Korean War.'

Early modern "New Women" writers: Na Hyeseok, Kim Myeongsun and Kim Wonju

- All three of the following writers attended elite girls' high schools in Korea and traveled to Japan to receive higher education.

Na Hyeseok (羅蕙錫 나혜석 1896–1948)⁶

- As well as writing, she was the first Western style female oil painter.
- Wrote 5 short stories and various essays.
- Went to same high school as Kim Myeongsun (see below).
- Attended Tokyo Arts College.
- Returning to Seoul she helped to found several literary journals.
- Married a diplomat enabling her to travel in Europe and America.
- Was outspoken on free love and her own love affairs became well known.
- Her husband divorced her and she was disowned by her family.
- Died destitute in a charity ward.

"Despite all the privileges accorded her, Na Hyeseok was unable to withstand the condemnation of a society that might admire the New Woman in the abstract but was unable to tolerate a woman's provocative rejection of traditional morality."⁷

From Na Hyeseok's "A confession about my divorce" (1934)

"I feel great pity for men of the educated class in Korea. The aren't allowed to enter the political arena, which should be their primary arena... With no outlet for their intellect or energies, they can only go to restaurants, get drunk, and indulge with shameless gisaeng...

I also feel pity for the women of the educated class, that is, New Women. They still spend their childhoods and married lives within the feudal family system, so that their lives are incredibly complex and chaotic. Half-baked knowledge doesn't help them strike a fine balance between the old and the new...

The psychology of Korean men is absurd. They don't have any concept of chastity for themselves, but they demand chastity of their wives and other women." (Choi 2013:135)⁸

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⁶ http://blog.ohmynews.com/ckp920/140015
Na Hyeseok’s paintings http://blog.daum.net/soogiej5/7309550
⁷ Undated article by Helen Koh "Women and Korean Literature" – The Korea Society.
Kim Myeongsun (金明淳 김명순 1896–1951)
- The first female writer to be published.
- She was initially supported by Yi Kwangsu and Choe Namseon
- Her short story Suspicious Girl (의심의 소녀) won second prize in 1917 in a competition sponsored by Choe Namseon’s Cheongchun (靑春 청춘 "Youth") journal
  - The characters in the story were similar to her real life: her mother was a former gisaeng (妓生 기생) entertainer, turned concubine who died when she was young. She grew up unhappily in her father’s home but was sent to the elite Jinmyeong Girls’ School.
- She never married.

In 1942 Yi Kwangsu accused Kim Myeongsun of plagiarizing a Japanese work in her debut story: no evidence has been found to support this but it was enough to destroy her reputation.

"Although she initially benefited from Yi Kwangsu’s patronage, years later [1942] he accused Kim of plagiarizing a Japanese work in her first debut story. Other male writers who had initially praised her work also denounced Kim Myeongsun as a foolish and willful New Woman. Even though Yi’s charges were never proven, it was enough to ruin Kim’s reputation and she stopped publishing. Little is known of her later years when she moved to Japan and supported herself as an itinerant peddler, but she is reputed to have died destitute in a mental asylum. The rapid decline of Kim Myeongsun’s career shows how absolutely critical it was for women who were so few in number to maintain the endorsement of the male literary establishment.” (Helen Koh)

Kim Wonju (김원주 1896–1971)
- Politically active and ideologically feminist.
- Attended Ehwa Girls’ School.
- Was the daughter of a Protestant minister and enlightened mother who enabled her to study in Japan for a few years
- While still at school she participated in the 1919 March 1st Movement.
- She helped found several journals including Shin Yeoja (新女子 신여자 "New Woman").
- In 1926 she wrote the short story Awakening who’s protagonist starts as a traditional woman devoted to her husband but gradually becomes a “New Woman” and decides to divorce her unfaithful husband and pursue her own education to achieve independence.

"The idea of a woman initiating a divorce and especially renouncing motherhood shocked her audience at the time and even today remains a controversial act." (Helen Koh)

- In real life she divorced her husband and had affairs with prominent men.
In 1927 she became editor of a Buddhist journal.
In 1933 she became a Buddhist nun and entered a temple and only wrote on Buddhism.

From Kim Wonju "The self-awakening of women" (1920)

"I think that our Korean society is undergoing a transition. Our civilization lost its old ideals but failed to replace them with a new set of ideals, and now there is chaos. We women are in the middle of this chaos... If we are not fully awake at this time, the future of women in society will be annihilated forever... Our relationship to the Korean nation is significant. Therefore, women's self-awakening is important to enhance women's rights and also to reform Korean culture." (Choi 2013:31)

Yi Sang (李箱 이상, 1910–37)

- Is still very popular in South Korea today.
- His writing was highly avant-garde and exhibits strong traits of surrealism and Dadaism.

Originally named Kim Haegyeong (金海卿), he was born in Seoul and graduated from the College of Engineering in 1929. He then got a job with the Japanese Government-General as a civil engineer supervising construction work in Seoul. In 1931 he had his first two poems published in the magazine Joseon-gwa Geonchuk (朝鮮과建築 조선과 건축 "Korea and Architecture").

He started using the pen name Yi Sang from 1932.

- In March 1933 he was coughing up blood and so had to give up work and went to stay at the Baekcheon-oncheon (白川溫泉 백천온천) spa resort in South Hwanghae province.
- Suffering from tuberculosis he began writing in earnest.
- At the spa he met a 21 year old girl called Geumhong; they started living together and tried to run a tearoom called Jebi (제비 "swallow-pääskynen") until September 1935 in central Seoul.
- Their relationship was tumultuous Geumhong bringing men home and both often running away for periods.
- In 1936, among several other pieces, he published the short story Nalgae (날개 "Wings") a work written as a single stream of consciousness.
- He died in Tokyo on 17 April.

His writing began to be recognized in South Korea from 1950s onwards, becoming particularly popular during the 1970s: in 1977 the Yi Sang Literary Award was established and remains one of Korea's most prestigious awards for literature.

Yi Sang's short story *Wings* summary:

26 year old protagonist lies about in bed; receives coins regularly from his wife who has male visitors; keeps the coins in a piggy bank; throws the piggy bank in the outside toilet; still receives coins; goes out for a walk one evening, changes the coins to paper notes; comes back before midnight and has to walk through his wife's room where she has a male visitor; wife is angry but nothing happens; wants to apologise but doesn’t; gives her five won and sleeps for the first time in her room; wakes up and she’s out; goes back to his own room where she has left him some breakfast; wakes and she is out again so goes back to his own room; wife wakes him and invites him to her room for dinner (he hasn't eaten for two days); wife gives him some more money and he goes out again in the evening; goes to a coffee shop near Seoul station; coffee shop closes at 11pm so he is forced to go out in the rain; soaking wet and cold he returns home early
and walks through his wife's room while she is with a man; he has caught a cold and in the morning he has a fever so his wife gives him medicine; spends about a month in bed taking medicine and feeling sleepy; goes to his wife's room while she is out to cut his hair and smell her cosmetics; next day he goes to her room again and discovers she has been feeding him Adalin sleeping pills instead of aspirin; taking the Adalin box he goes out and walks up a hill into nature; there he takes six Adalin pills and sleeps for a day and a night; wakes up feeling guilty that maybe his wife hadn't been feeding him sleeping pills; goes back around 8pm when his wife is with a man; wife gets angry this time and starts to attack him before the man brings her back to her room; slipping some money under her door he (the protagonist) runs out of the house; goes to Seoul station wanting to drink coffee but finds he has no money; ends up on the top floor of Mitsukoshi Department Store; looks at goldfish in a bowl; comes out on to the streets, not sure whether to go back home or not...

"Coming out, a thought flashed through my mind: where would my steps lead me?

We had a misunderstanding. Could my wife feed me Adalin in place of aspirin? I couldn't believe it. There was no reason for her to do so. Then, did I steal and whore around? Certainly not!

As a couple, we are destined to go lame. There is no need to see logic in my wife's behavior or my own. No need to defend ourselves either. Let facts be facts and let misunderstandings be misunderstandings. Limping through life endlessly, isn't that so?

However, whether or not I should return to my wife was a trifle difficult to decide. Should I go? Where should I go?

At that moment, the shrill noon whistle sounded. People were flapping their limbs like chickens; the moment when all sorts of glass, steel, marble, paper currency, and ink seemed to be boiling up, bubbling - noon with extreme splendor.

All of a sudden my armpits began to itch. Ah, these are the traces of where my man-made wings once grew, the wings I no longer possess. Torn shreds of hope and ambition shuffled like dictionary pages in my mind.

I halted, wanting to shout:

Wings, grow again!

Let me fly, fly, fly; let me fly once more.

Let me try them once again."

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