

BOOK REVIEWS

My Korea: 40 Years Without a Horsehair Hat. By Kevin O'Rourke. Folkestone, Kent, England: Renaissance Books, 2013. 314 pp. (ISBN: 9781898823094)

For anyone who may wonder what South Korea was like before “the birth of Korean cool” (a review by this writer of Euny Hong’s book so titled appears in the previous issue of *Acta Koreana*), *My Korea* is an excellent resource. If you’ve ever read traditional Korean literature in English translation, you’ll know Kevin O’Rourke as our finest all-around translator—prose and poetry, past and present—as well as a gifted poet in his own right.

The subtitle refers to the gauzelike headgear that no Korean gentleman in olden times would be caught without. And O’Rourke is being modest—he’s actually logged fifty years in the Land of the Morning Calm, albeit spending summers on the southeast shore of his native Ireland. That O’Rourke lacked the horsehair hat may suggest at first glance that he felt like a stranger in a strange land. In fact he “discovered very early that Korea gets in the blood.” And the lifeblood of this literary memoir is poetry—poems by O’Rourke himself and numerous translations he’s done over the decades, of vernacular lyrics as well as poetry in Chinese written by Koreans (*hansŭ*) spanning 1500 years—by my count well over 200 works, more than enough to justify the inclusion of *My Korea* among assigned texts for any university course involving Korean literature, culture, or civilization. The book contains story translations as well—that of Pak Chiwŏn’s eighteenth-century “Hŏ saeng chŏn” is especially lively—along with anecdotes ranging back to 1964, the year young O’Rourke arrived in Korea as a Columban father.

In 1982 O’Rourke became the first foreigner to earn a Ph.D. in Korean literature from a Korean university. He subsequently taught at Kyunghee University in Seoul. But the book is less about his professional life and more about his life of engagement with the heart and soul of Korea. Ironically, then, the

longest chapter in the book, stretching out to eighty-seven pages, concerns “The Confucian Monolith,” by which O’Rourke means the half-millennium Chosŏn period, in which neo-Confucianism was the orthodox ideology. Ironic because neo-Confucian orthodoxy “inculcated a way of life that eschewed passion. Reason was the supreme faculty; imagination (also feeling and sensation) was suspect. The emergence of a rigid moralism was inevitable. It affected every aspect of life, and continues to do so to the present day.”

Fortunately there was a remedy in place—*hŭng*, which O’Rourke defines as “excitement generated by the apprehension of beauty.” It is this excitement that flows through *My Korea* from the first chapter (about life in Korea in the 1960s) to the last (about O’Rourke’s engagement with the Korean language). And fortunately there were writers, ranging from Yi Kyubo in the Koryŏ period (918–1392) to Sŏ Chŏngju in the twentieth century, who refused to be bound by neo-Confucian constraints. The frequent banishments to which Korean literati were subjected by kings swayed by factional competition for favor liberated the imaginations of men like Yun Sŏndo, author of the *sijo* cycle *The Fisherman’s Calendar*—one of O’Rourke’s finest achievements as a translator. The professional entertaining women known as *kisaeng* left us with poignant *sijo* that sing of lives that offered emotional freedom but not necessarily security. And earlier, before the Chosŏn period, we have songs from the Koryŏ period (918–1392), such as “Spring Pervades the Pavilion,” that are as passionate as anything from modern Korea. These poems and songs fill the pages of *My Korea*.

Of special interest is the chapter on “Korea’s Greatest Asset”—its women, who are “beautiful, fearless, and intensely loyal.” Until very recently women’s voices were virtually absent from the patriarchal tradition of Korean recorded literature (as opposed to Korea’s oral tradition, which remains viable primarily because of women’s voices). Today it is women who dominate Korean fiction and a woman, Kim Hye-sun, who is by far the most imaginative poet in Korea. And it is in large part female idol groups who are driving the international success of K-Pop music, a new-millennium manifestation of the venerable performance tradition that is the essence of Korean oral literature.

Lest prospective readers think they are in for a sentimental journey through an idealized landscape, O’Rourke is quick to point out, in the introduction to the volume, that “the Korea I know and love has mixed liberal doses of the ugly with the beautiful.” In this context he cites the late Pak Wansŏ, one of the most beloved of modern Korean writers, who in her works painted an unvarnished portrait of her society as well as the alter ego protagonist of her autobiographical fiction. The choice is apt in that testimony rings as true in *My Korea* as it does in the stories of this most testimonial of contemporary Korean fiction writers.

Especially sobering is the paragraph in chapter 2 on the “martyrs”—the Columbans who lost their lives during the Korean War, including three victims of the 1950 massacres in Taejŏn whose remains have yet to be recovered.

We have to go back to 1964, and the publication of *Korean Works and Days* by Richard Rutt, an Episcopalian clergymen and also a translator of note, to find a memoir of similar scope and significance by a Western resident in Korea. If you like what you read and hear in *My Korea*, you’re in luck: help yourself next to one of the dozens of book-length publications of O’Rourke’s translations—his most recent, *The Book of Korean Poetry: Chosŏn Dynasty* (2014), earned him the 2017 Daesan Foundation Translation Award—and feel for yourself the metaphorical tug on the string of your fishing pole.

BRUCE FULTON
University of British Columbia

The Colors of Dawn: Twentieth-Century Korean Poetry. Edited by Frank Stewart, Brother Anthony of Taizé, and Chung Eun-Gwi. Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2015. 192 pp. (ISBN: 9780824866228)

Upon its publication, *The Colors of Dawn: Twentieth Century Korean Poetry* immediately takes its place as the indispensable introductory volume of Korean modern poetry. The collection originated as an edition of the bi-annual journal *Manoa*, published by the University of Hawai‘i. It was first printed in 2015, and is now reprinted, with corrections, as a book. It is edited by Frank Stewart, Brother Anthony of Taizé, and Chung Eun-Gwi. Chung and Brother Anthony are also the primary translators for the book. Other translators include Susan Hwang, YoungShil Ji and Daniel T. Parker, Kim Jong-gil, Myung-Mi Kim, Lee Hyung-Jin, Lee Sang-Wha, Jinna Park, and Yoo Hui-sok. *The Colors of Dawn* offers a comprehensive but not overwhelming survey of 20th century Korean poetry. Beautifully adorned with botanical watercolors by Hye Woo Shin, *The Colors of Dawn* also includes an essential introduction by Brother Anthony.

The book is arranged in three sections arranged in reverse chronological order: Poetry of Today, Survivors of War, and Founding Voices. *The Colors of Dawn* contains the works of forty-four poets, twenty-one from today, six survivors, and seventeen founders. The uniting principle behind these works and Korean poets in general is the “conviction that poetry was a means to keep ... humanity in a world that [is] absurdly cruel and unjust.” (p. 18)

It is often difficult to describe to a non-Korean reader exactly how political and tied to history Korean literature, including poetry, is. A 1987 statement by Shin Kyeong-nim, represented by nine poems in *The Colors of Dawn*, sums it up, “Expressing sentiment is important ... (but)... the most important problems in Korea are democracy and reunification of North and South Korea. Without dealing with these problems, you cannot call yourself a poet.” Ko Un, one of Korea’s best-known poets, and also represented in *The Colors of Dawn*, echoes this sentiment. “The role of a poet in Korea is not just to write about sentiment, but also to write about movements in history. Poetry is the song of history.” By beginning in the here and now, it is far simpler for a novice reader to recognize the meaning of the poetry. By working backwards, *The Colors of Dawn* allows a reader to pick up the themes of Korean modern poetry in more recent branches of poetry, then explore back towards the roots of the Korean poetry tree.

And reading reveals that the roots and the tree are tightly bound together. To set the tone, *The Colors of Dawn* begins in the present with Kim Sunwoo’s “Playing Dead” calling upon up the ghost of Palestinian poet, and notable writer on dispossession and exile Mahmoud Darwish:

Mahmoud Darwish died. That was in August.
I turned the page of my diary and wrote:
“One journey has ended and another journey has begun.” (p. 4)

Of course dispossession and exile are also strongly Korean themes and as *The Colors of Dawn* wends back in time these notions are visited again and again, culminating in the last (first?) poem of the book Sim Hun’s canonical, “And When That Day Comes”:

If that day comes, when that day comes,
Mount Samgak will rise and dance joyfully.
....
And if my skull shatters to pieces,
why should I have any regrets, since I will have died for joy? (p. 167)

There is a clear consistency throughout this book, and it is the consistency of art formed under pressure. In “Founders” the pressure is from Japanese colonialists which, as the introduction notes, “was dangerous: the slightest expression of defiance against Japanese rule could result in torture, prison, and even death.” But a similar pressure exists in each era. For Korea the application of pressure would move from colonial rulers, to native rulers, and then to economic determinism and Korean poetry would follow at each step.

“Poetry of Today” focuses on the current human condition in a partially post-modern Korea. Jin Eun-Young’s “Extinction” alludes to the “tilt”ed condition of the modern world (p. 10). Song Kyung-Dong’s “Lyrics, Too, Have Class Structures” laments the move away from the ‘real’ world of “Carpenters, painters, laborers, / low life, lower life,” to a world of “books, science, and reason” (p. 30). Song Kyung-Dong’s “Beyond the Border,” contemplates the role of the individual in a globalized world, “It is morally wrong for me/being such a borderless thing, to be obsessed with a single idea” (p. 31). This last lyric demonstrates both the international scope of these poems and their essential Korean nature as well. Being ‘beyond’ borders has a very specific meaning for a nation currently split at the 38th parallel, but is also applicable to the entire, shrinking globe. These poems serve as bridges between poetics, internationally relevant issues, and Korean politics.

One of the key works in this collection is Kim Chi-ha’s (Survivors of War) epic “Five Bandits”. “Five Bandits”, a satirical take on post-war Korea, was initially scorned by critics. Over time, it began to gain a foothold as one of Korea’s best-known poems. In the poem, which is written in the form of a pansori, a traditional Korean Kim identifies five predatory bandits who live parasitically on the Korean people: ConglomerApe, AssemblyMutt, TopCivilSerpent, General-in-Chimp, and HighMinisCur, all described as “ferocious under Heaven.” This poem, it is interesting to note, has achieved a kind of cultural rebirth in light of current events in Korea, including the recent Sewol tragedy.

Another classic poet and moral touchstone is found in Survivors of War, in the form of Ko Un. Ko has been a brave and relentless chronicler of Korean modern history in poetry. Ko’s poems untitled poems not only consider pain and persistence, two important aspects to Korea’s survival as a nation, but also the role of the poet in that world. In Untitled Poem 148, Kim writes:

I will live as a walking song.
I will walk along as that song,
Wanting nothing more
for the remaining days
if there are days remaining. (117)

Lines that neatly catch Ko’s mix of Buddhist resignation and burning desire for creation. Other poets sound similar themes, as in Ra Heeduk’s “Banksias”

When forest fires erupt
some trees begin to propagate

Banksias' ovaries are hard until seared by flames
Then they spew seeds

Though being immolated
banksias drop their eggs on the wasteland

Loaded with bullets, yet
their ovaries won't activate until ringed with flame

After everything is charred
they germinate a tender shoot through black ash (41)

These examples only begin to touch the surface of the varied works here. Choi Jeongrye responds to Shakespeare in "Shall Time's Best Jewel From Time's Chest Lie Hid"? Kim Seung-Hee takes on the myth of Sisyphus in a formal way, and Ko Un expresses the problem differently:

The sun is rising.

Today, too, I will fight.
Today, too, I will lose the fight (121)

And, of course, the Korean poetic appreciation of nature is expressed in multiple works including Bak Du-Jin's "Sun".

The poems here work well when translated into English, and are also well translated. As an example it is worth revisiting the satirical grace and on-the-nose nature of those translated names given to chaebol owners, vice ministers, ranking officials, military generals, and cabinet ministers in Kim Chi-ha's "Five Bandits". Clever, descriptive portmanteaus aptly represent their original counterparts in Korean. This is clever translation, but more than just that it is apropos. Modern poetry, particularly, must have been difficult to translate, but all the works here will withstand scrutiny, whether judged as translations or not.

No volume of this sort can be comprehensive, and each reader might find some small thing lacking. One might note the absence of the relentlessly modern early poet Yi Sang, whose experimentation was often astounding, ranging from experiments in form (Poem Number 4), experiments in repetition (13ChildrenRushdownaStreet), and torrents of stream of consciousness (Crow's-eye view: Poem number eleven). Another notable absence is foundational modern feminist poet Kim Hyesoon (Sorrowtoothpaste Mirrorcream). In the case of these authors, however, ample translations already exist, and perhaps these exclusions

were conscious decisions on that basis. And there is enough good poetry in *The Colors of Dawn* to keep any reader satisfied, and certainly interested in reading more.

These poems shine not only as artifacts of Korean engagement with occupation, colonialization, brief freedom, a civil war, military dictatorship, forced modernization, industrialization, extreme capitalism, and now post-modernity (that list alone should demonstrate the daunting task facing Korean poets in the course of only one century), but also as works of literature when presented in the English language. This is a worthwhile collection for scholar and poetry aficionado alike.

CHARLES MONTGOMERY
Dongguk University

The Analects of Dasan Volume 1: A Korean Syncretic Reading. Translated with Commentary by Hongkyung Kim. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. 260 pp. (ISBN: 97801906254996)

Dasan (Tasan 茶山) is the pen name of Jeong Yak-yong (Chŏng Yagyong, 丁若鏞, 1762–1836) who became arguably the most celebrated cultural hero in recent Korea and the most prolific writer during the late Chosŏn Dynasty. However, until recently, Dasan was known primarily for his two well-known works, *Heumbeum sinseo* (*Hŭmbŭm sinsŏ*, 欽欽新書, New book of judicial prudence) and *Mongmin simseo* (*Mongmin simsŏ*, 牧民心書, Treasured book of nurturing the people), because of his socio-political concerns in dealing with practical matters. For this reason, Dasan was known as a scholar of “practical learning” (*silhak*, 實學) in Korea. Hongkyung Kim’s *The Analects of Dasan Volume 1: A Korean Syncretic Reading* clearly puts the status of Dasan beyond the general perception of “practical learning.” This does not mean that the author rejects or denounces the idea of “practical learning.” Rather, what Hongkyung Kim does in this book is to expound the deeper and authentic meaning of “practical learning” by going back to Confucius’ *Analects*.

This book is the first of the six-volume series of Hongkyung Kim’s translation and commentary of Dasan’s *Noneo gogŭm ju* (*Nonŏ kogŭm chu*, 論語古今註, Old and new commentaries on the *Analects*) which Dasan completed in 1813. The author’s introduction to this volume elucidates Dasan’s *Noneo gogŭm ju* by providing the chronology of Dasan’s life, his government service, his association with

Catholicism, and the subsequent eighteen years of life in exile in Gangjin (Kangjin). The author also tries to contextualize the study of Dasan in modern Korea by focusing on “practicality” (*sil*, 實): “While all these scholars adopted the notion of *sil*, 實 (practicality) in defining Dasan’s scholarly achievements, Choe Nam-seon (1890–1957) used the existing term, *silhak* (實學, practical learning), to describe the socio-political work of a larger group of scholars, including Dasan, who are now referred to as scholars of Practical Learning (*Silhak*)” (p. 9). Recently there has been an enormous number of monographs and articles about Dasan, whose summarizing would be a difficult task. The author, however, highlights three distinguishable changes in the study of Dasan: “First, the conventional conception of Dasan’s philosophy as exemplary of Practical Learning has faced counter arguments from relatively young scholars. They tend to emphasize continuity and mutual influence among various philosophies in the late Joseon period. It now seems crude to locate Dasan exclusively in the orbit of anti-neo-Confucianism or intellectual defiance of neo-Confucian orthodoxy. Second, a growing number of scholars have found that his classical studies yield more insights about his philosophical inspiration than they originally anticipated.....Third, today’s researchers on Dasan have specialized in narrowly defined topics rather than drawing grand conclusions” (p. 10).

As the author claims, this book has been shaped by the new Korean scholarship trying to demonstrate how Dasan’s works attempted to synthesize all past Confucian commentaries and the philosophical ideas in Dasan’s interpretation of the *Analects* (p. 10). The title conveys the scope of Dasan’s reference. It also describes Dasan’s unique methodology; a synthesis of all transmitted Confucian ideas to achieve a new Confucian philosophy. Dasan was an ambitious syncretist who claimed that he understood the original meaning of the *Analects* (p. 14). In expounding the “original” meaning, Dasan seems to be combining three elements in his interpretation of the *Analects*: the old commentaries, which means the commentaries before Zhu Xi, the commentaries after Zhu Xi, called new commentaries by Dasan and his own commentaries which synthesized both.

Dasan’s *Noneo gogeuim ju* consists of two parts: *grounds* for his interpretation and *arguments* against various influential theories that he believed incorrect in their understanding of the *Analects*. Although Dasan’s original text does not provide a clear demarcation between *grounds* and *arguments*, Hongyung Kim’s translation makes a clear distinction between these two by assigning them to the respective categories of “Grounds” and “Arguments.” Dasan, in his commentary, arranged all of the classical texts in a hierarchy: the *Analects*, the Five Classics of Confucianism, pre-Qin texts, Han texts, and post Han texts. As the author

indicated, one of the reasons for Dasan to write this extensive commentary on the *Analects* was probably that he was eager to “prove” that he was genuinely committed to the study of Confucianism as a distinguished Confucian scholar and trying to dissociate himself from his alleged involvement in “Western Learning” or Catholicism.

The author describes a unique Korean movement in Confucian studies from the seventeenth century onward. Unlike China and Japan, the Korean movement did not sever its relationship to neo-Confucianism. For example, Korean neo-Confucianism and Practical Learning were not entirely antagonistic to each other. On the contrary, the Practical Learning movement in Korea originated in neo-Confucianism. The author also affirms that Dasan’s *Noneo goguem ju* shows his respect for Zhu Xi’s scholarship, and he never went too far in his criticisms of neo-Confucianism (p. 19). Dasan thought any radical attempt to uproot the foundation of neo-Confucian moral philosophy was wrong and ill-conceived. In this respect, Dasan attempted to integrate the neo-Confucian component into his understanding of the traditional Confucian framework. Since Dasan extensively used the neo-Confucian concept *li* (理 “principle” or “reason”), which does not appear in Confucius’ *Analects*, the author concluded that *li* (principle) became one of the essential notions in Dasan’s interpretation of the *Analects*. In this respect, the author suggests that Dasan’s philosophy be conceptualized as the “Learning of Practical Principle [實理學]” instead of *Silbak* (Practical Learning):

“Pre-Qin Confucian scholars emphasized practicality [實], and neo-Confucian scholars developed Confucian metaphysical theory by adopting universality such as the principle [理]. What Dasan wished to achieve in his commentary on the *Analects* was to synthesize these Confucian legacies to create a new theoretical paradigm. Terming his scholarship Learning of Practical Principle credits him with attempting to integrate all transmitted Confucian philosophies into a syncretic or synthetic system” (p. 22).

In this respect, Dasan’s philosophy demonstrates a synthesis of the old and new commentaries on the *Analects* and tries to synthesize the old Confucian teachings on practical issues and the neo-Confucian learning of principle to establish his foundation for the learning of practical principle. Furthermore, he tried to synthesize the moral principle and the principle of human relationships and things to form a foundation for the philosophy of principle.

Finally, I wholeheartedly applaud Hongkyung Kim’s indispensable contribution to this volume. In the main text, Hongkyung Kim, after his translation of each chapter, has placed his own explanations of the meaning of Dasan’s discussions. These explanations are crucial in understanding the nature of Dasan’s commentary and his philosophy in general, the creativity of his interpretations,

and the exegetical implication of his reading. This book is indispensable for understanding not only Dasan's commentary on the *Analects* but also Dasan's philosophical ideas and spiritual orientation. I certainly look forward to reading the remaining five volumes due for publication in the next few years.

YOUNG-CHAN RO
George Mason University

For Nirvana: 108 Zen Sijo Poems. By Cho Oh-Hyun. Columbia University Press, 2016. 144 pp. (ISBN: 9780231179911)

In the introduction to *For Nirvana*, Professor Kwon Youngmin recounts his first meeting with poet Cho Oh-hyun. An elderly monk, he says, hands pressed together, approached him in the grounds of Baekdamsa Temple and asked who he was. He said he was a professor of literature and a literary critic. The monk laughed loudly and said, "So, you're one of those people with an attachment to a useless discipline." The professor was dumbstruck. He had spent his life writing books of literary criticism and was now being told it was a useless trawl. I smiled at the professor's trauma. In Paddy Kavanagh's Dublin, where the relationship between poet and critic had more of a sandpaper edge, the conversation would have been an occasion for hilarity. I can imagine the scene in The Waterloo in Baggot Street and the radically different scene in Baekdamsa. Poets in Ireland tend to look at critics with jaundiced distrust: they see them as literary entrepreneurs who steal the poet's thunder for their own advantage, usually monetary. This is patently unfair, but in a society that loves to champion the underdog, neutral observers invariably rally to the underdog standard. In Korea, where poet and critic enjoy a cozy relationship, to the detriment, I believe, of both disciplines, the professor was crestfallen. Master Cho perhaps was having a bit of fun, and Professor Kwon may have taken him too seriously. Thomas Merton has a Chuang Tzu poem which sees uselessness as a very productive Zen value. When Chuang Tzu is told that all his teaching is centered on what has no use, he says, "If you have no appreciation for what has no use, you cannot begin to talk about what can be used," and he goes on to show "the absolute necessity of what has no use." Elsewhere Chuang Tzu says, "the purpose of words is to convey meaning. When the ideas are grasped, the words are forgotten."

My reading of Korean poetry, classical and contemporary, begins with a Chinese poet, Yang Wanli of Sung, and his poem "What is Poetry", (the

translation is by Jonathan Chaves, Weatherhill 1975). I begin with Yang Wanli because I believe the Chinese tradition of T'ang and Sung and the Korean tradition of Silla and Koryo share common ground. Poetry East and West has always shifted adherence between romantic and classical values, where romantic stands for reliance on imagination as a vehicle to truth and classical extols the role of reason in the mission to attain truth. Romantic denotes a subjective approach where the poet concentrates on his own experience; classical indicates an objective approach where the poet takes his personal experience out of the equation and looks to society and the real world for inspiration. In English poetry, Ezra Pound's "In a station of the Metro" and Robert Bridge's "London Snow" are typical examples of the two approaches. Romanticism and classicism traditionally enjoy periods of dominance, followed invariably by a reaction against whichever tendency is dominant at the moment and a move to the other side.

Now, what is poetry?
 If you say it is simply a matter of words,
 I will say a good poet gets rid of words.
 If you say it is simply a matter of meaning,
 I will say a good poet gets rid of meaning.
 But, you ask, without words and without meaning,
 Where is the poetry?
 To this I reply: Get rid of words and get rid of meaning,
 And there is still poetry.

This is a description of symbolist poetry a thousand years before the French thought of the notion. Symbolism is the bedrock of twentieth- and twenty-first-century poetry, and while English poetry's debt to the Chinese tradition is enormous, it is still only partially acknowledged. Korea's debt to the Chinese tradition is even greater, but today no one really cares.

Yang Wanli's approach stands in sharp contrast to the traditional *ki*, *sŭng*, *chŏn*, *kyŏl* analysis which has dominated Korean poetry discourse through the ages. Since neo-Confucian thought assumed a dominant role in Chosŏn, words and meaning and the Confucian morality they represent have been central. For more than a thousand years poets and critics have argued about the nature of poetry discourse. Is it about words and ideas or is it about something else? The symbolists say it is about something else, an unresolved complex of emotions in the poet's heart which is distinct from the poem in words. The poet seeks a vantage point for his poem that is pre-sensation and pre-thought.

You cannot take Yang Wanli at face value. He writes a poem extolling the symbolic nature of poetry in a format that is all words and meaning and lacks any

symbol. Obviously, Yang Wanli is being ironic; paradox is a major player. As Aquinas noted all those years ago, you shouldn't push any argument too far. There is cogency on both sides of the 'What is poetry' debate; accommodation, harmonization is necessary. While some of the greatest poets in history wrote extempore, others were carvers and trimmers. Six lines was a big day's work for Yeats. He polished and trimmed obsessively, sometimes composing completely different versions of the poem. Ko Un and many other modern Korean poets of my acquaintance are capable of writing several hundred lines a day. Form for Frost was central; without form, he says, writing poetry is like playing tennis without a net. In "Reading T'ao Yuan-ming's poems," Yi Kyubo says:

Sublime rhythm is of its nature soundless;
there's no need to strum the lyre.
Sublime language is of its nature wordless;
it's not necessary to carve and trim.

R. S. Thomas says you make poetry out of words, ideas, the environment. The urge to poetry comes from a passion for language. He says further, you make the poem for yourself, with no awareness of having a public. Auden's claim that poetry makes nothing happen must be seen in the context of the strength of the political left in the 1930's art world. Heaney says the poem begins with a rhythm. In my view this is not at all the Korean experience. A Korean poem, I believe, begins with an image or an idea.

Sō Chōngju's "Poetics" is an important poem though it seems to have escaped the attention of Korean critics who concentrate on the *ki, sŭng, chōn, kyōl* Confucian process:

Deep down in the sea	Cheju <i>haenyō</i> girls	dive for abalone,
leaving the best shells	to pick on the day	their lovers come home,
fastened as they were	to the rocks beneath.	Abalone poems
are best left there, too,	for once all picked	how empty the quest,
best left in the sea,	the sea I long for.	That's why I'm a poet.

Sō Chōngju while recognizing the importance of form, illustrates the impossibility of the poet's task. The poet, he says, is always striving for impossible abalone poems.

So, is language and decoration central to the poet's task? Or does the heart of the poem lie elsewhere? Hyeshim's Small Lotus Pond presents the symbolist position:

No wind, no swell;
 a world so various opens before my eyes.
 No need for a lot of words;
 to look is to see.

Hyeshim decries the importance of words. Obviously, symbolism is pivotal.

The argument about the nature of poetry continues today without resolution. Is poetry a matter of words and meaning or does the poem reside outside words and meaning in a complex of feelings enshrined separately in the poet's heart? In Korea the dispute between pure art and committed art is ongoing. Our best poets tend to advocate pure art; our best critics tend to favor the committed approach. The argument has not been resolved since Chōng Tojōn established Neo-Confucian thought at the center of all art thinking at the beginning of Chosōn. T'oegye and Yulgok thought children shouldn't be exposed to the decadence of Koryō *kaayo*. Debates about language and sensitivity are often less concerned with individual freedoms than with enforcing a particular set of opinions. Chosōn Korea was definitively pro reason and anti imagination. And yet Korea's best poets always managed to endorse the role of imagination in our cultural values system. Kim Sisup concurs with Hyeshim's sentiments:

A vagabond for ten years, I've traveled east and west.
 I'm like mugwort on a hill.
 My way and the world's way offer bumpy alternatives.
 Sniff a flower, say nothing: that's the ultimate choice. (In Chamshil)

Note the wonderful mugwort image, a perfect description of the badly groomed poet writing poorly groomed poems. And note the admonition to say nothing as the poet's ultimate choice. What does this say about the role of words in poetry?

For Nirvana is a delightful book of poems, the best I have read in a long time. It is significant that these English versions were for many of us a first introduction to the work of Master Cho. It is doubly significant that the poems are in the *sjjo* form, which is hardly at the forefront of poetry discussion in Korea today. This may account for Master Cho's relative lack of exposure to Korea's dwindling poetry reading public. Reading the poems brings back the spirit of Silla, Koryō and the best Zen poems of Chosōn. Many of the poems resonate as *hansi* though perhaps if read in Korean, the impression would be different. Reading through the volume, I have no doubt that Cho Oh-hyun stands at the symbolic end of the argument on the nature of poetry discourse. It is evident in the subtitle of the

book, *108 Zen sijo*, with its reference to the 108 torments of Buddhist experience and the almost tautological use of the word Zen. Incidentally, for a Korean the operative word is *son* not Zen. The poems are trying to express a symbolic world that cannot be expressed, a world where meaning is secondary. It's not that the words are unimportant, but that they are inadequate. In his afterword, Heinz Insu Fenkl says, "the teachings of the Buddha...are like the boat that one rides to the other shore. Once across, one does not need to—or want to—carry the boat around any longer." Perhaps the same can be said for the words of a poem, and perhaps that is the reason Professor Fenkl makes a point of not memorizing either the Korean or the English versions of Master Cho's poems, a gambit, he says, that "allows for new discoveries in new contexts".

In my reading of *For Nirvana*, I am aware of a constant battle being waged between poems and words, and I believe this is the heart of symbolist poetry. "Distant Holy Man" is a good example. This is a poem that succeeds almost in spite of the English. The 'this one day' repetitions, the expression 'the whole of the sun,' even the phrase 'this single day' all sound discordant in English, and yet the poem overall has immense power. The final line, despite the inversion of the subject, says it all./He may live a thousand years,/but the holy man/is but a distant cloud of gnats.

Again "The Seagulls and the East Sea" is very powerful. Presumably, one of the poems categorized as story *sijo*, though the distinction between story *sijo* and *sasöl sijo* is not referenced. An old man sits on a rock all day looking at the waves on the East Sea.

I asked him, "Where are you from, old man?"
 He said, "I'm sure I saw two sea gulls flying over the horizon this morning
 but they don't seem to be coming back....
 The next day he was at the same spot again, sitting in the same pose, so I
 asked him, "Did the two sea gulls return?"
 He said, "the sea was crying yesterday, but today it's not."

This kind of irony is not to the fore in Korean poetry today. What isn't said is more important than what is said, surely the way of symbolist poetry. I am reminded of Tasan's "White Clouds," which points to the need to get beyond thought and meaning.

Autumn breezes blow away the clouds;
 no shadow weave mars the blue of the sky.
 Suddenly I long for lightness within,
 for thought to gently leave this world.

Lightness within is pivotal. I think of Chong Chak's mid-Chosŏn poem "Figure in the Distance", where the landscape is a symbol of what Yeats would have called unity of being and Tasan calls thought leaving the world.

At first, I wondered if the figure
on the distant sands were
a white heron, but to the sound
of piping on the wind
the vast expanse of sky and river
faded into evening.

It is in the absence of thought that we get beneath the surface of the Zen moment. You don't ask what the poem means; you just go with the flow.

"The Green Frog" describes the fright of a frog when a monk dumps out the basin of water he has just washed in. The frog leaped to the top of the well and lay there panting. The poem continues:

But when I tried to compose a sijo poem with that green frog as the subject, I struggled day after day only to fail in the end. I came to a minor realization: whatever words I could come up with—for however many kalpas—to describe that frog would never do him justice.

There are two lessons here, the poet's failure to write the poem and his realization of the inadequacy of words to express his experience.

"Wild Ducks & Shadow," a delightful symbolic landscape, is one of my favorite poems in the volume:

When I ask him—Master Haejang,
hero of the hangover drink—
for tidings of the mountain temple,
he says, Yesterday the wild ducks
that played in the West Star lotus pond
went away, and now, today, only
the shadow of the dogwood remains.

I'm not sure of the resonance of the dogwood image—it is such a Christian image in the West—but the flowers of the dogwood, white or pink, make an indelible impression. Hyeshim's "to see is to know" is given new affirmation.

"Days Living on the Mountain" deals with the trauma of growing old.

Reached the age when I'm sick of it all.
My thoughts, too, knotty like the bones of my bent back,
Today I grabbed a stump about to fall over.

Day before yesterday, I went to see Master Hancheon at his temple
And asked him what made him want to go on living.
He couldn't explain in words, so he told me to strike the cloud gong.

Now really, the days living on the mountain—
One day crying like a bug in the grass,
One day laughing like a flower in the field,
Only to see it—the flow that ends the flow.

The 'Now really' phrase encumbers the line, but the rest is wonderful. To see the flow that ends the flow is what life is about. Master Hancheon knew it, but he couldn't put it into words; the dilemma invariably of the poet, beautifully realized here. "My Lifelines" summarizes the poet's quest. It is a remarkable poem:

what I've been seeking all my life
are the mainlines, the veins
of Zen
& poetry

the conclusion I reached today—
Poetry is woodgrain, knotted,
& Zen is wood's grain, straight

Note how he equates Zen and poetry. The conclusion is quite perfect.

Master Cho directs the last poem in the volume, "Embers" (Afterword), to his readers. It's rather rare for a poet to admit talking drivel. For me, the poem recalls Anne Sexton's "Admonitions to a Special Person" though I feel sure Cho Oh-hyun intended no such connection:

These words I've spewed 'til now—they're all drivels.
Mouth ajar at last, as not to tread on earth or stone,
This body, infused with brass, in a molten fire.

For my money, any poet smart enough to recognize that his words are drivels has reached the kernel of truth and the heart of poetry.

Kevin O'Rourke
Kyung Hee University

Igniting the Internet: Youth and Activism in Post-authoritarian South Korea. By Jiyeon Kang. University of Hawai'i Press, 2016. 248 pp. (ISBN: 9780824856564)

For the past fifteen years or so, the candlelight vigil has represented the most widely used form of mass protest in South Korea. The recent candlelight protests that propelled the impeachment of former President Park Geun-hye in the winter of 2016 was but one example that demonstrated how the candlelight vigil has become a hallmark of a peaceful, yet powerful, form of direct action. In *Igniting the Internet: Youth and Activism in Postauthoritarian South Korea* (hereafter, *Igniting the Internet*), Jiyeon Kang sets out to reveal the nature of the candlelight vigil and the young participants behind the rise of this protest form. In broad strokes, the book examines the rise of a new generation of political actors and how, by traversing the online and offline spaces, this new generation created the candlelight vigil as the vehicle for their "Internet-born, youth-driven activism" (p. 4).

The book is organized into two parts. The first part examines the candlelight vigils of 2002 in the aftermath of the killings of two school children by an American military vehicle and the second focuses on the 2008 candlelight protests against the government's decision to free American beef import. If the events in 2002 represent the emergence of the candlelight vigil as a protest form, the author uses the events in 2008 to show how the candlelight vigil became established as a modular form of protest. The protagonist in this book's narrative is the new generation of young South Koreans born between the mid-1980s and mid-1990s. In Chapter 1, Kang lays out their key traits through the examination of the political, socio-cultural, and economic contexts out of which they were formed. They were the first generation of "digital natives" who grew up with the Internet and "the first generation to *live* democracy rather than to fight for it" (p. 23). In contrast to the previous generation of activists who grew up under authoritarian rule and whose identities were defined heavily by political ideology, the youths in

the new millennium represented a post-ideological generation relatively free from the weight of political commitment and equipped with new sensibilities and attitudes that combined “frivolous play and political criticism” (p. 38).

Many works have been published on the subject of candlelight protests or Internet activism, and the origin story of the candlelight vigil has become well known. It was an Internet user named Angma who first issued a call for a candlelight vigil online in late November 2002 to commemorate the two schoolgirls killed by a U.S. armored vehicle earlier in June. Despite a short notice, the wide circulation of Angma’s call for action resulted in tens of thousands lighting the Kwanghwamun Square with candles a few days later. How the candlelight vigil gained traction among the youths has remained less clear, and this is where *Igniting the Internet* offers one of the most detailed and powerful accounts. Kang first investigates the online dynamics to showcase how the “cultural ignition process” was at work. The unintelligible acquittal of the American GIs who ran over the schoolgirls captivated Internet users as they exchanged “emotional images and personal messages” (p. 56) in online communities and developed a “shared sense of commemoration and guilt” (p. 55), thereby providing the necessary motivation for political action. Kang then draws on the concept of corporeal memory to look into how the youths’ memory of past experiences hit a chord with the proposed candlelight vigil. The youths carried with them the experience of solemn candlelight ceremonies from middle-school training camps and the vivid memory of mass gatherings in city squares during the World Cup to cheer the South Korean team. These corporeal memories made political participation easier for the youths as gathering in public space with candlelight in their hands turned out a familiar and less intimidating feat.

The points of strength in this book derive from the interviews the author conducted with sixty youths. It was through these interviews that the author was able to present corporeal memory as a critical mechanism that aided the rise of the candlelight vigil (Chapter 4). And it was also through the interviews that the author was able to shed light on the diverse motives, different paths to participation, and the varying impacts participating in candlelight vigils had on the lives of young participants as evidence of a new generation that was more independent, individualized, and post-ideological (Chapters 4 and 6). Because of these heterogeneities, the author is reluctant to group the youths into a single category or to define the nature of the 2002 or 2008 candlelight protests as “anti-American,” as they were often portrayed in the mainstream media (p. 105). To the extent these youths represented a new political subject, the author contends, they were “inadvertent political actors” (p. 16).

Overall, *Igniting the Internet* is successful in offering a convincing analysis concerning the rise of the candlelight vigil as a new protest repertoire and the meaning-making process of the youths who discovered the candlelight vigil as their way of “doing politics” (p. 132). But the book also leaves unanswered questions. For example, is the Internet really “an anti-elitist and vibrant social space” (p. 7) that allows communication free from “established political discourse of any stripe” (p.4)?” How do we account for the online communities formed around powerful individuals or institutions—for example, the conservative Cho Gabje or *Chosun Ilbo*? And were the opponents of the candlelight vigils inactive online? Because the description of online dynamics was based on the study of a single online community for 2002 and 2008, respectively, the reader is left with the improbable impression that only users sympathetic to the candlelight vigils populated the Internet. Another question evolves around the relationship between youths and/or Internet users. The interviews make it clear that youths, teenagers during the early 2000s, form the main subject in this study. However, when it comes to the analysis of online activities, Internet users appear to replace the youths as the main subject. The problem is that not all Internet users were teenagers (Angma was a thirty-year-old man) and that members of conventional, ideological social movement organizations were likely also active in online communities during the 2002 and 2008 candlelight protests. If this were true, the difference between youth activism and conventional social movements may not be as acute as the book lays it out to be.

These questions notwithstanding, there is no question *Igniting the Internet* will draw significant attention from a diverse crowd in Korean Studies and beyond. This book offers one of the best analyses of the changing nature of popular contention and youth culture mediated by the Internet in South Korea. Anyone interested in the candlelight protests, youths, or Internet dynamics will find the book most helpful. To students of South Korean social movements, the rare focus on repertoire change and collective identity will render this book indispensable.

SUN-CHUL KIM
Emory University

Doctrine and Practice in Medieval Korean Buddhism: The Collected Works of Ŭich'ŏn. Translated, annotated, and with an introduction by Richard D. McBride II. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2017. 212 pp. (ISBN: 9780824867430)

As Richard McBride points out in his introduction to this translation, the *Collected Works of Ŭich'ŏn* is a unique work. Following the collected works of Ch'oe Ch'iwŏn (857–after 908), it is the second oldest such collection in Korean history (p. 10). Moreover, it is very rare for such works to be compiled for a monk. Mostly, the genre of *munjip* or “collected works” was the domain of eminent scholar-officials. These works were typically compiled by sons or disciples after the author’s death, and were meant to show his literary prowess. These works were “literary” not in the modern sense, but in the sense of persuasive writings that showed the author’s erudition and mastery of tradition, which were put to use for political ends. Thus they typically include letters, petitions, memorials, official speeches, as well as a number of writings of a more private nature, such as poems dedicated to friends. It is perhaps because Ŭich'ŏn (1055–1101) was not just a monk but also a royal prince that this rare privilege could be granted to him. In any case, it means that a lot of official documents concerning Buddhism have been preserved, offering glimpses of the religion’s public character as a state-sponsored religion.

This translation is therefore a very welcome addition to the steadily growing body of translated primary sources of Korean tradition. It contains a useful introduction that discusses the life and legacy of Ŭich'ŏn, and also the characteristics of the work and the strategy for translating it. Regarding the *Collected Works*, it is necessary to point out first of all that the original work has not been transmitted in its entirety, and second, that the translator has opted to translate only part of the remaining work. As for the first point, though McBride (hereafter, “the author”) estimates that it survives “for the most part intact” (p. 10), that judgment appears to be overly generous. The only remaining edition, a woodblock edition of uncertain date from Haein-sa, has divided the work into 23 fascicles (*kwŏn*). Of these, only fascicle 19 is complete, while fascicle 20 is nearly complete. Of the remaining fascicles, 21 and 22 are completely missing, while the rest all have major portions missing. Helpfully, the Haein-sa edition indicates where folios are missing, and how many. On the basis of this, we can conclude that there are 134 remaining folios, and 153 missing ones.¹ In other words, more than half of the text has probably been lost. As McBride points out, the paltry

¹ Here I refer to the facsimile edition found in Sim Chaeyŏl tr., *Kugyŏk Taegak kuksa munjip* (Sŏngnam: Chŏngsin munhwa yŏn'guwon, 1989), 1–85 (reverse pagination)

remains of fasc. 23 can also be found in the *Addendum (oejip)* to the *Collected Works*, so that fascicles 21 to 23 may have been later additions not in the original edition of the *Collected Works*. No part of the *Addendum*, which contains letters addressed to Ŭich'ŏn and eulogies on him but not his own writings, has been translated here.

Despite the fact that large chunks of the *Collected Works* have disappeared, a substantial amount of text still remains, which, if translated completely, would amount to probably a few hundred pages in English. McBride has therefore opted to translate only a selection of texts. A guiding principle in his selection has been to “counter the conventional view that Ŭich'ŏn abandoned the Hwaŏm tradition to found a new Ch'ŏnt'ae tradition” (p. 14). Thus he has translated his correspondence with the Chinese Huayan (K. Hwaŏm) monk Jingyuan (1011–1088) *in toto*, together with other texts related to Hwaŏm Buddhism. Second, the author has incorporated many texts that shed light on Chinese Buddhism. During his visit to Song China in 1085–1086, Ŭich'ŏn interacted with many Chinese monks, and his records of these encounters and letters exchanged with Chinese monks paint a picture of Chinese Buddhism that would interest scholars of Chinese Buddhism. Third, given his importance for the Ch'ŏnt'ae tradition in Korea, the author has also translated all the pieces related to Ch'ŏnt'ae. Finally, given Ŭich'ŏn's seminal project of compiling a canon of East Asian commentarial literature, all relevant pieces regarding this work have also been translated. On the whole, this selection is sensible and gives a good and representative overview of the kinds of texts we can find in the collection. Yet it should also be pointed out that the translator published an earlier selection of translations of the *Collected Works* in 2012. Some of the texts translated there have been left out in this edition, while others have been added. An example of an interesting text that has not been reprised here is Ŭich'ŏn's famous essay arguing in favor of the adoption of currency.²

Although Ŭich'ŏn's main claim to fame is his founding of the Korean Ch'ŏnt'ae (C. Tiantai) school, as mentioned, the author has chosen to look at Ŭich'ŏn as a Hwaŏm exegete who had a deep interest in other traditions. The author highlights especially his intellectual interest in Ch'ŏnt'ae: “...Ŭich'ŏn, as a master lecturer of the *Avatamsakasūtra*, an adherent of the Hwaŏm tradition, and a proponent of all Buddhist intellectual traditions, merely sought to restore the Ch'ŏnt'ae doctrinal tradition in Koryŏ.” (p. 10) Thus, when Ŭich'ŏn lectured on a

² “Commentary on Minting Coinage,” *Hwaŏm II: Selected Works*. Translated, annotated, and edited by Richard D. McBride II (Seoul: Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism, 2012), 374–402. (Collected Works of Korean Buddhism, vol. 5) It can be downloaded from : http://www.acmuller.net/kor-bud/collected_works.html#div-5

Tiantai text, the author argues, he did so simply “because there was no one to transmit the teachings—not because he was committed to the Ch’ōnt’ae tradition.” (27) Clearly, the author regards Ŭich’ōn as an open-minded scholar who, though belonging to Hwaōm, was somehow above factional strife. While the *Collected Works* indeed gives the impression of someone with a broad intellectual outlook, we should consider that this is perhaps exactly the image that those who compiled this work sought to convey.

Other scholars have pointed out his antipathy towards Chan/Sōn Buddhists, whom he accused of neglecting intellectual study, while his attitude towards Yogācāra Buddhism was also ambiguous.³ But even within his own Hwaōm school, he was not exactly tolerant of other views: for example, on Korean predecessors including Kyunyō (923–973), his verdict was that “Their language is uncultured and their meaning lacks versatility. They make a desolate waste of the Way of the patriarchs: for bedazzling and seducing future generations there are no writings worse than these.” (p. 77) A more thorough engagement with the achievements of Korean scholarship on Ŭich’ōn would have added greater nuance in this respect. It would also show that the author is certainly not the first to argue that “the conventional view of Ŭich’ōn as originally a Hwaōm monk who abandoned that school to found a new Ch’ōnt’ae tradition is untenable” (p. 27); indeed, this is already the default view among scholars.

Finally, I would also like to comment on the translation itself. Translating from Classical Chinese (Hanmun) is an arduous task, given the penchant of writers like Ŭich’ōn to argue through allusions; tracing the source of these allusions can be a painstaking task. Furthermore, the elliptic nature of the language and the lack of grammatical scaffolding necessitate heavy intervention on the part of the translator to come up with a readable text. While the author is meticulous in tracking down references and providing detailed annotations, his tendency to try and translate every character literally often has an adverse effect. Many passages are quite impenetrable and often misleading. To give but one example: Text no. 11 is a memorial in which Ŭich’ōn requests permission from the Chinese emperor to leave the capital of Northern Song China (Kaifeng) so as to fulfill his ambition of meeting with the Chinese Huayan master Jingyuan in Hangzhou. As a memorial

³ See for example how Ch’oe Pyōnghōn summarizes his findings in an English-language essay: “...on the one hand the establishment of the Ch’ōnt’ae school strengthened the position of the Hwaōm School by offsetting the existing balance of power between this tradition and the Pōpsang School [representing Yogācāra]. On the other hand, the independent Sōn denominations suffered a severe setback [as many were incorporated into Ch’ōnt’ae].” “The Founding of the Ch’ōnt’ae School and the Reformation of Buddhism in 12th Century Korea,” in *Religions in Traditional Korea*, ed. Henrik H. Sørensen (Copenhagen : The Seminar for Buddhist Studies, 1995), 62.

to the emperor, the implied addressee is the emperor; yet the translation is very ambiguous on who is addressed here. Consider for example the following passage:

Now, I have fortunately divined the wind, sailed into deep waters, crossed over the sea, come quickly, and would visit you by means of the ritual of coming to your courtyard; my barely being arranged for and the favor of His Majesty being most pitifully extended to me was unprecedented. Although the wisdom of the master is very profound, and the longings of a lowing child are very deep, and a crane's figure is lean and gaunt, the age of Zhi Dun is reasonably frightening. (p. 46)

今幸占風采劭 越海遄臻 來庭之禮謁纒陳 當宁之寵憐特異 雖螭首凝邃
子牟之戀良深 而鶴態清羸 支遁之年可懼

What makes the passage confusing is that the addressee behind “you” seems to be Jingyuan, yet he is then addressed in the third person as “the master.” In fact, what this passage aims to convey is Üich’ön’s reluctance to leave the emperor’s court, and at the same time his insistence that this needs to be done:

Now I had the good fortune of encountering a wind that slowly but steadily carried me across the sea; I forthwith came [to the capital] where I was granted the privilege of performing the rite to enter the imperial court; I was also favored by the rare privilege of being allowed to stay near the throne. But even though like Zimou I have deep attachment to the palace and would like to stay, the crane’s disposition is geared toward the broad expanse and loneliness, and moreover I dread the fate of Zhi Dun [who died barely a year after leaving the palace].

The author seems to have been led astray by Sim Chaeyöl’s translation, which misinterprets terms such as *isu* 螭首 (here designating the palace, not the “wisdom of the master”) and *chamo* 子牟 (name of a nobleman of Wei during the Warring States period, not a “lowing child”).⁴ However, much better Korean translations are now available, and for my own attempt I found Yi Sanghyön’s translation very helpful.⁵ This still does not clear up all problems: for example, I am not sure why Zhi Dun (314–366) is brought up here, but since he died merely a year after obtaining permission to leave court, I assume that he appears here as an example of what might happen if one stays too long at court. The author gives a long and detailed biographical note on Zhi Dun (n. 158, page 131), but without

⁴ Sim Chaeyöl tr., *Kugyök Taegak kuksa munjip*, 46–47.

⁵ Yi Sanghyön tr., *Taegak kuksa chip* (Seoul: Tongguk Tachakkyo Ch’ulp’anbu, 2012), 134.

revealing his relevance in the context of this text, the information is not very helpful. In such cases, I think that making an inference is better than leaving it to the reader to figure out what might be meant.

I hope that the reader (and the author) will forgive me this digression into the problems of translating a Hanmun text. These are issues that I struggle with myself in translations, and it is probably unfair to highlight just one passage that is somewhat infelicitous. Nevertheless, I think it is important to acknowledge that texts such as those we find in the *Collected Works* do not give up their secrets easily; even basic philological problems regarding the master text have still not been resolved, yet in Korean Studies as a field there seems to be scant interest in thorough source criticism. Debates on how to resolve issues in the text will hopefully continue to rage, but the important thing is that this translation allows us to expand the discussion from Korean language scholarship to the Anglophone academic community, which will hopefully lead to more research on Ŭich'ŏn as a key figure in medieval East Asian Buddhism.

SEM VERMEERSCH
Seoul National University

The History Problem: The Politics of War Commemoration in East Asia. By Hiro Saito. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2017. 279 pp. (ISBN: 9780824856748)

In the past two decades or so, a growing number of scholars have paid attention to the developments, politics, and contents of collective memory and commemoration in East Asia and to the ways they play out in the relationships between the countries of the region. Within the body of literature that emerged, scholars have utilized their research findings to offer recommendations and suggestions on how to alleviate tensions and facilitate reconciliation. Prof. Hiro Saito's *The History Problem: The Politics of War Commemoration in East Asia* is a valuable contribution to this scholarship.

The book centers on "East Asia's history problem," which is understood as "a set of complexly entangled controversies over how to commemorate the Asia-Pacific War" (p. 3). Saito points out to the interactions between, and the collision of, the nationalist commemorations of Japan, China, and South Korea (pp. 3–7), yet he also maintains that "nationalism is no longer the only logic of commemoration available today" (p. 7). Accordingly, he discusses the concept of "cosmopolitan commemoration" that allows people to "engage in transformative dialogues with foreign others that critically reflect on the nationalist biases in their

version of history” (p. 7). He sets out to understand “how different groups organize and justify their own commemorations by drawing on nationalism and cosmopolitanism” (p. 9), and asks: can the history problem be resolved, and if so, how? (vii, p. 3, and p. 178). Saito’s research is meticulous, and thanks to the book’s well-organized structure and the clarity of the writing, the analysis is coherent and the arguments are well-articulated.

First, Saito periodizes the evolution of East Asia’s history problem by distinguishing four periods. In Chapter 1 he argues that between 1945 and 1964 the Japanese government successfully established an official nationalist commemoration. In Chapter 2, which is dedicated to the period between 1965 and 1988, Saito demonstrates how the problem emerged following Japan’s diplomatic normalization with South Korea and China in 1965 and 1972, respectively. He argues that, although some cosmopolitanism was injected into Japan’s official commemoration, nationalist commemoration remained dominant and was fostered in China and South Korea as well. The history problem, as Saito shows in Chapter 3, then fully developed during the aftermath of Emperor Hirohito’s death in 1989, into the post-Cold War era, and until 1996. In Chapter 4 he elaborates on how the problem became more complex in the years 1997 to 2015, beginning with vocal criticism within Japan against a “masochistic tendency” (p. 102) in the interpretation of the country’s history.

Following this historical investigation, Saito explores “The Legacy of the Tokyo Trial” in Chapter 5. He emphasizes that, “one of the most important findings” of his analysis is that proponents of nationalism and cosmopolitanism “both used the Tokyo Trial as a reference point to articulate their commemorative positions” (p. 129). Thus, he calls for a critical reassessment of the trial, which he sees as a key to resolving the history problem (p. 153). This should be done, Saito argues, through an examination that will, first, fairly distribute war responsibility between Japan and the Allied Powers; second, double Japan’s identity as perpetrator and victim; third, address the share of the Japanese citizens’ responsibility in the war; and, finally, be facilitated by greater and self-critical American involvement (pp. 136–154). In light of this discussion, Saito explores in Chapter 6 the potential role of historians—as “epistemically oriented rooted cosmopolitans” (pp. 156–161)—in the history problem. By demonstrating in what ways said potential is constrained, he prepares the ground for the Conclusion chapter, where he offers a “cautiously affirmative” (p. 178) answer to the main research question.

Saito claims that what is required is “mutual cosmopolitan commemoration” which “is already embodied by the joint historical research and education projects” (p. 179). He conceptualizes the idea of a Japanese “satisfactory apology” and argues that it is crucial to the process of mutual cosmopolitan commemo-

rations (pp. 180–186). He then adopts a “pragmatist position” (pp. 186–188) to maintain that the younger Japanese generations, himself included, bear “commemorative responsibility” “to fully acknowledge Japan’s past wrongdoings” and press Japan’s government “to offer a satisfactory apology” (p. 186). Finally, given both the centrality of the Tokyo Trial in the history problem and the potential that joint history and education projects have in resolving it, Saito recommends a number of changes to allow historians a more effective role in the process: first, the three governments should provide more support to joint projects, while they should also be ready to incorporate outcomes that contradict their official positions into their commemorations; second, American historians who are willing to critically explore their country’s nationalist commemoration should be involved in these projects too; third, historians should engage more actively with the public; and fourth, history education in the three countries has to be reformed. In this regard, he asserts that “cosmopolitan historical literacy,” which is based on both “cosmopolitan logic” and the development of cognitive critical skills, should be fostered (pp. 189–195). Finally, as promising as mutual cosmopolitan commemoration is in resolving the history problem, Saito correctly acknowledges that the question remains of “whether the governments and citizens in the three countries are willing to further it” (p. 195).

Thus, Saito presents a critical and informative account that draws on relevant theoretical literature and sheds light on how governments, politicians, NGOs, historians, educators, the media, and others have debated over, and affected the shape of, historical memory and commemoration. The book is very readable too—the Preface, Introduction, and Conclusion chapters are clearly written, the text flows smoothly, and Saito is punctilious in providing succinct and helpful summaries of key points and arguments throughout the narrative.

With regard to shortcomings, I found no major flaws in this thoroughly thought out study. Prospective readers should bear in mind, however, that despite what the book’s subtitle might imply—namely, the politics of war commemoration in East Asia—the main focus of *The History Problem*, which relies on Japanese and English language sources, is Japan. Indeed, Saito provides insightful observations regarding the politics of commemoration in China and South Korea, which are crucial to substantiate his analysis. Yet readers interested in fuller explorations of the complex dynamics and interests behind, and the changes in, the processes that have shaped collective memory and war commemoration in these two countries, should look elsewhere. To be sure, this does not detract from the force of the book’s arguments pertaining to commemoration politics in Japan and to how transnational interactions have

influenced them, nor to the role mutual cosmopolitan commemoration might play in resolving said problem.

A mild criticism of the book concerns other minor issues. Saito depicts Kim Hak Sun as “one of the former comfort women” (p. 81), yet this is an understatement. In fact, Kim played a crucial role in drawing attention to, and advancing, the “comfort women” issue by being the first woman to come forward and publically testify about her experience. Also, when Saito explores the tensions in the region during the year 2005 (pp. 110–112), he fails to refer to what the Japanese and South Korean governments designated as “Korea-Japan Friendship Year 2005” to mark the fortieth anniversary of the normalization treaty under the catchphrase: “Toward the Future, Together Into the World.” At the same time, a few pages into this chapter Saito does mention (p. 123) the fortieth anniversary of the 1972 normalization between Japan and China. Another minor issue concerns North Korea, which is hardly mentioned in the book. Saito states in the Conclusion that North Korea’s entry into the field of the history problem “will be a game changer” (p. 197), yet it would have been interesting to hear a little more about his thoughts on this intriguing possibility. Finally, many of the names mentioned in the body of the text were omitted from the Index, most likely—and if so, understandably—because of editorial considerations. I still believe, though, that more high profile figures germane to the discussion at hand—for example, Yasukuni Shrine chief priest Matsudaira Nagayoshi (mentioned on p. 61), Kim Hak Sun (p. 81), and Ōe Kenzaburo (p. 107)—should have been indexed too.

These small issues aside, Prof. Saito’s *The History Problem* is a well-researched, lucid, and engaging book, which is highly recommended for anyone interested in the craft of the historian and in the politics of historical memory and commemoration and their place in international relations.

GUY PODOLER
University of Haifa