The Writing Community of Guinhoe: *Time of the Eternal Recurrence*

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Abstract

This paper examines the literary thinking of the Nietzschean-influenced community Guinhoe and its central concern, Poetry and Novel *(1936), a magazine published by a coterie of writers. Guinhoe was a unique community that chose to be considered as non-group, a paradoxical self-definition that reflected the concepts of the group and its members. This particular writing community presented itself through ideas, writings and literary concepts based upon Nietzsche's concept of "Eternal Recurrence." The deconstruction and denial of themselves as a group through their writing allows the Guinhoe community to continue to exist. There is no objective shape, only activity and process, and in this sense the community considers the action of writing itself as literature. In other words, the community is writing itself endlessly by repeating the action of writing.*

Keywords: Guinhoe, *Poetry and Novel*, writing, community, eternal recurrence

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"Life as an Artist" and Guinhoe's Modernism

Guinhoe (or Circle of Nine, a literary group of nine writers) was founded on August 15, 1933, and emerged in 1930s colonial Korea. Guinhoe materialized at a time in Korea when there was a temporary vacuum in the creation of writing due to the dissolution of the Korea Artista Proleta Federatio (KAPF) and a decline in the production of proletarian literature. Modernist literature in 1930's colonial Korea cannot be discussed without mentioning Guinhoe and its writers. The group was founded on the suggestions of both the novelist Lee Jongmyeong and film director Kim Yuyeong. Though its members constantly changed, the group continuously maintained nine literary artists, its final members being Lee Sang, Park Tae Won, Kim Girim, Jeong Jiyong, Lee Tae Jun, Kim Youjeong, Kim Hwantae, Kim Sangyong, and Park Palyang.

Writer Lee Sang in particular played a very active role in Guinhoe as the chief editor of their magazine *Poetry and Novel*. The general impression of Guinhoe was not created by group actions, but rather through its literary and artistic ensemble. This ensemble encompassed colleagues that shared Lee's literary thinking as well as his life as an artist, including: Kim Girim, Park Tae Won (Lee's soul mates), Jeong Jiyong (who introduced Lee Sang for the first time to the literary community in Korea), and Kim Youjeong (loved by Lee Sang). Guinhoe was not a union organized to achieve one certain goal. Similar people gathered and shared their tastes and artistic thinking throughout their everyday life without a strict structure or belief system. Guinhoe was a community-like group that grew and changed through the process of existing, reflecting life.

The founding concept of Guinhoe, as directed by Lee Jongmyeong and Kim Yuyeong, reveals that Guinhoe did not pursue any formal structure from its beginning. Jo Yongman, one of the group's original members, stated that the founders searched for journalists in charge of literature and art in newspaper companies to become part of Guinhoe. By securing pages for Guinhoe members in the newspapers it appeared that the founders of Guinhoe were interested in shifting literary power from the KAPF to Guinhoe (Kim 1987). The concept and approach offered by the foundation of

Guinhoe provides insight as to why KAPF writers reacted rather sensitively to Guinhoe. A number of remarks on Guinhoe's identity made by KAPF writers placed Guinhoe in opposition to the KAPF, therefore the existing literature on Guinhoe has emphasized the confrontational nature of the relationship between the two groups.

Research recounting the identity of Guinhoe places the KAPF as the antipode of Guinhoe, which then established its ideological orientation through aesthetic modernity. Based on this perspective, Korean literature researchers decided that KAPF's schematism pursues realism and Guinhoe schematism pursues modernism. In fact, there were a few events that took place in the name of Guinhoe, for example some monthly reviews on the works of members and two lectures,[1] as well as gatherings that focused upon the literary works themselves. In addition Lee Tae Jun, Jeong Jiyong, Kim Girim, Lee Sang, and Park Tae Won were all very sensitive about language itself as a medium. For those reasons early research on Guinhoe defined it as a "community of sensibility" (Kang 1995, 35) A community where urban generation writers experienced a new artistic trend in the modern city, sharing the cultural sensibility of modern urbanism. This was an artistic group that extended the boundary of Korean modernist literature in 1930s, raising the artistic quality, basing it upon the realization of "literature as art" (Seo 1991; Kang 1995, 35–36). The pursuit of artistic quality by Guinhoe's members has led some critics to define the group as originating from the purist tradition of literature in Korea (Cho 1969).

Rather than based on its literary features, the concept of modernism itself in the history of Korean literature is in contrast to the KAPF. Compared with the KAPF's realist literature, modernist literature was dismissed as an immoral art form. Modernism was devoted solely to formal techniques for its satisfaction, settling for the small domain named art and lacking social criticism. Research on Guinhoe has not been free from this type of criticism. Thus, previous studies defined Guinhoe as a modernist group existing in a framework that only comprehends other groups in relations to the KAPF

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1. Presentation at the "Night of Poetry and Novels," June 30, 1934; "Lecture for New Chosun Literature," February 18–22, 1935.

at its center. In other words, Guinhoe was positioned as only one of several other groups that existed in contrast to the KAPF. Prior existing academic literature cannot properly explain the new movement and new thinking created by Guinhoe.

However, since the mid 1990s studies on Korean literature have continuously criticized this way of understanding realism and modernism, describing them solely as opposing stances. Critical studies have instead pointed out that realism and modernism show different ways of thinking and understanding reality; they are oppositional approaches. Research on Guinhoe was likewise carried out. This new research tried to actively explore the meaning of modernity presented by Guinhoe, pointing out the limits of earlier research. However, later research generalized its individuality in terms of modernist art, only mentioning that the members carried out their literary activities as a modernist group from the perspective of writer theories.

Defining Guinhoe as a modernist group is also the result of a retroactive application based upon each member and writer's artistic characteristics. Guinhoe's identity stems from the group characteristics of each member, never possessing a clear collective identity like that of the KAPF. Guinhoe demonstrated its singularity by not setting any specific agenda, ideology or direction. Not only did it not state any overarching goal or describe a prescribed ideology, it also did not elect a leader and its members had no unified literary styles. In this sense, Guinhoe is a unique group that cannot be identified—except through its name, which is meaningless.

In this sense, Guinhoe was a singular group unable to be identified—except through its name, a ghost-like group without real shape, one unable to be grasped because there was no content. A study on Guinhoe described the difficulties of researching Guinhoe, stating that "some researchers who set Guinhoe as the subject of their theses find themselves fallen in the misty sea soon after starting their research" (Park 1996, 14). Perhaps the reason that past research had to rely upon the KAPF was because it depended on the climate of the existing literary circle. When literary history gave meaning to Guinhoe it was because Guinhoe was special, expressing its distinctiveness through negation as a way of refusing to define its identity. Guinhoe's unique way of being, one that refused to make its identity clear through language,

made it difficult for researchers to approach its literary and artistic reasoning.

However, if we examine the works of some of the writers in the first and last literary coterie magazine of Guinhoe, *Poetry and Novel*, we notice that more literary experiments occurred as compared to the ongoing works created by each individual artist, and through their combined literary experiments a common theme then formed. It was very coincidental that works of a similar theme arose as no common subject had been given to the writers in advance. This outcome suggests that there was an unintentional, intangible force that made its presence felt not through the capacities of the individual artists, but rather through the writers together as a group.

In fact not only the KAPF but also other existing literary alliances such as Changjo (creation 創造), Pyeheo (ruins 廢墟), and Baekjo (swan 白鳥), which existed in colonial Korea in the 1920s, sought to clarify their identity by clearly revealing certain leanings that expressed the points of view of their leaders. On the other hand, Guinhoe's way of existing was very unique, and this led to a pattern amongst general literature collectives such as Dancheung (fault 斷層) and Siinburak (poets' village 詩人部落) that were created in the late 1930s (Park 1996, 17). This suggests that Guinhoe created and inspired a particular trend of newly formed colonial Korean literature. Therefore, it has been pointed out several times in previous studies that it is necessary to study Guinhoe's unique way of existing, which is very difficult to define.

In this context, Kim Min-Jung raises a question on the tendency of most research studies on Guinhoe to focus on the individual artist's works. She applies the concept of "field" presented by Bourdieu in this study of Guinhoe in order to capture the literary meaning of Guinhoe. Kim (2000, 9) points out the fact that "when individuals form a small group and are in a close relationship, the collectivity that cannot be experienced on an individual level must be experienced from the emotional exchange of the collective." This study suggests a new perspective on Guinhoe that looks into the power of the group itself rather than analogizes the artistic competence of the group through the artistic competence of the individual artists. However, this study is also limited in that Guinhoe is contextualized once again through power relations and mainstream or nonmainstream frameworks in the 1930s

literary field. Guinhoe's individuality and uniqueness stems from the fact that it does not exist within a framework of literary power, as with many forms of mainstream culture, but rather that the lives and works of the individual writers are reflected and appreciated in the lives and works of their fellow writers.

For these writers, art was a means of reproducing life. Art was not a medium for conveying abstract political and moral ideas existing in reality, nor was it the noble art of artistic supremacists who sacrificed their lives for art. Art was life itself. Those who brought their art down from the arena of sublime ideology into their everyday life reasoned through their art, allowing time to flow through reason, this was done rather than expressing their thoughts in a bourgeois or pretentious way. Both the past and the future converged to arrive at the present moment of life. The meeting at Guinhoe was an authentic experience of the present time. If Guinhoe was oriented towards modernism it was not because its writers applied modern artistic forms to their artistic expression, but because they lived in the present moment of their life as art. Within existing studies, the recognition of the language and the expressive artistic views described as the modernism of Guinhoe is possible because the members of Guinhoe lived their lives as art. The reason it was difficult to define the identity of Guinhoe was because the present moment, the moment of life as art, is a thing that can only be experienced and not reproduced or captured. Thus, this way of existing is uniqueness of Guinhoe, and not easily objectified. It forms the core of Guinhoe, which best expresses its singularity.

Guinhoe's literary coteries lived life as art instead of transforming their lives into art, so this modernist concept of present time is not different from Nietzsche's idea of eternal return which does not recognize transcendence beyond the world. In this context, what must be noted is how recent studies have searched for a trace of Nietzschean reason from the literary reason of Guinhoe (Shin 2015; Cho 2017; Kim 2013; Kim 2015; Kim 2017). While discussions of the modernism of Guinhoe are mostly generalized by modernity and the universality unique to modernism, these studies capture a distinctive aspect of modernism that Guinhoe held through their acute view of Nietzsche.

If we look at the results and limitations of current and up-to-date studies on Guinhoe, one of the problems faced within this research is the attempt to find a way to substantiate Guinhoe, as it is not easy to understand the way of this particular writers' alliance. Although Guinhoe is certainly a group with a special relationship amongst its members, their singularity disappears as soon as it is identified or defined as a whole. There are several research perspectives that miss the most important point of Guinhoe: one is the view that considers the inclinations of the time period when Guinhoe was formed, observing their work as a quest to gain power in the literary world and focusing upon the group's confrontation with the KAPF as a way to substantiate Guinhoe; another interpretation is to view Guinhoe and its modernist approach as the origin of purist literature in Korea on the basis of the aforementioned perspective; and then there is the view of Guinhoe as a "field of literature," a place where the power of structured space is expressed criticizing the propensity of studies to focus upon the individual artist's work. The most significant point of Guinhoe is the collectivity it creates without substantiating or defining the group.

The writers of Guinhoe do not sacrifice their individuality to create one unity. The commonality shared by the writers of Guinhoe is that they are independent men (Einzelne) who cannot be replaced by anyone else. For them, art is life, and each person's life is something that cannot be replaced. The reason research on Guinhoe has focused on the individual writers is attributed to the non-substitutability of the writers. In this sense, Guinhoe's art again meets Nietzsche's reason. Unlike the words of Western philosophers before Nietzsche, Nietzsche's words cannot be replaced by anyone's words. The philosophers before Nietzsche, such as Descartes and Kant, constantly speak from the position of the meta-subject. Nietzsche believes this to be a false position, describing writing as something that dissolves and is deconstructed through life. Based on this concept Nietzsche pursues the dissolution of moral judgement value, and as an alternative presents ethical reasoning as the aesthetic philosophy of life. This new ethical reasoning refers to one's own subjectivism and self-action as the "Will to Power," through which, eventually one is led to become an ideal person or overman—the Übermensch. This paper sees the core of Guinhoe's art in their distinctive

existence and seeks to further consider the form of community created by writers who live their lives as art through Nietzschean reason.

Time of the Eternal Recurrence in *Poetry and Novel* and a Genealogical Exploration of Streets

Nietzsche is not new in colonial Korean literature. Nietzsche's ideas were introduced to Korea in the early '20s by the writers of the Korean magazine *Gaebyeok* (Beginning of the world 開闢) published by Cheondogyo. Nietzsche's notion of the Übermensch and his concept of the "Will to Power" were accepted ideologically at the national level, bringing enlightenment into the reality of colonial Korea. The discussion of 'Neo Humanism' in 1930s Korea is regarded as an important discourse in the history of thought. This discourse included Kim Hyeongjun, Baek Cheol, and Nietzsche's reason as a theoretical basis for discussion.[2] It can be said that Nietzsche's ideas were introduced and understood in the process of building an ideological foundation to overcome the reality of colonial rule in Korea. Nietzsche's characteristic modern nihilistic philosophy begins by denying the existence of a transcendent God and holds a deep appreciation for art. This is presented by Nietzsche as a new way of life in an age of nihilism, but this was not something that drew people's attention during an urgent situation facing a national crisis of Japanese colonial rule. Nietzsche was looked upon as a thinker with a strong will to power, one that was capable of building national strength that emphasized the heroic individual, the "overman." As Nietzsche's ideas were understood to be very similar to totalitarianism they sometimes became the subject of criticism for Korean intellectuals in the mid '30s, at a time when Japanese imperialism began to flourish. This criticism did not appreciate the true meaning of Nietzsche's artistic reasoning that is the

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2. Kim (2007, 2008, and 2014) has conducted detailed research from a historical perspective on the acceptance of Nietzsche's thinking into Korea from the 1920s to the 1940s. As Kim (2015) points out this research was conducted based upon references and regrettably does not include Guinhoe literature. Therefore Guinhoe literature, one that dissolves and expresses Nietzsche's ideas in its works, is not discussed in objective literature.

essence of his philosophy; when Nietzsche was first accepted in Korea he was thought of as a philosopher of power with a strong nationalistic orientation.

When he voiced his disbelief in the notion of God, stating "God is dead," and decrying Western metaphysics, Nietzsche (1978, 217;221) declared these truths as worn-out metaphors and by doing this he removed all transcendent beings. In the Nietzschean world view everything is repeated and there is no outside or transcendent being dominating the world. The recurring world is all that exists, but it is difficult to have an awareness of this repetition. Thus, every repeated moment is experienced as new and every moment experienced uniquely. Additionally, the fact that each moment is experienced as different in the world of eternal recurrence means that man is continuously transforming through every moment. In this world of eternal recurrence countless "differentness" are born at every moment. Each moment does not pass by from the past to the present and to the future, all time is condensed into one moment. Nietzsche's modernity emerges in this new time. A moment is eternity in the time of the eternal recurrence and living in the time of the eternal recurrence is recognizing the same thing as a new experience at every moment. In this way, when Nietzschean thinking is read as the philosophy of difference and becoming, the eternal recurrence of identity becomes a festival in which colorful otherness is celebrated. In that sense, Nietzsche's "overman" is not a subject holding fascist power that exists beyond the world; it is a transforming subject experiencing eternal recurrence, the movement of difference that constantly changes and creates, and the movement itself.[3] The overman of Nietzsche is not an omnipotent individual. Overman is, instead, the meaning and purpose of eternal recurrence and the subject of the "will to power" as endless creation continuously becoming (Klossowski [1969] 2009, 103).

However, in the world of the eternal recurrence there is no outside and no other world form—this is at the core of Nietzschean thinking. This is the world of creation and becoming where one is responsible for creating

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3. In this context, one can refer to the research (Jin 2011) on the literary community's view of Nietzsche's thinking. This research argues that sovereign individuality as an artistic existence in Nietzsche's thoughts is not the mere existence of anti-communism but the constant process and results of communistic activities.

their own reason for being. Thus, Nietzsche's nihilism is another aspect of eternal recurrence. Fragile human beings could not endure the weight of this tremendous nothingness, so they search for a reason, a being from the outside world, eventually arriving at the notion of God and other truths. Nietzsche's genealogy presents this notion as an illusion and the way of revealing the illusion is living in the world of the eternal recurrence or in other words being aware that there is no outside or transcendent space.

For those who are faced with a world without an outside, the world is a place where they were not allowed to experience the joy of creation and generation, but rather one where they experience a fall into an empty realm without any alternative; this is a world of collapse. This world of collapse was the very reality that the writers of Guinhoe lived in. This anxiety was dispersed globally all over the intellectual art world, and felt in conjunction with the special historical situation of the colony. It was prevalent in the literature and criticism of 1930s colonial Korea, and was the result of anxiety experienced due to the cultural crisis and collapse. The critics of the day recognized the decadent trend of colonial Korean literature in the '30s as a very temporary phenomenon and a pathological state to be overcome. Unlike Nietzsche's understanding of experience of fall as a source of life, in the discourse of Korean literature the experience was perceived as a temporary and morbid social problem that must instead be overcome.[4] Even though they do not quote Nietzsche directly in the 1920s Guinhoe, Kim Hyeongjun and the writers of *Gaebyeok* systemically received his philosophy. Guinhoe's modernism reflects the ideas of Nietzsche more faithfully as it experiences the collapse and the eternal recurrence, the origin of life and artistic creation.

In the only magazine published by Guinhoe, *Poetry and Novel*, many poets talk about the "streets." Depicting street scenes from colonial Korea, the texts read like a Guinhoe-style answer to the Nietzschean question, "How should we live in the heavy time of the eternal recurrence?" As the contributors of *Poetry and Novel* were very sensitive to the modern lifestyle, the magazine included many texts using urban streets as their subjects.

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4. Shin (1998) criticizes how the intellectuals of the time understood Nietzsche, connecting the trend of decadence and Nietzscheism in the discourse of 1930s Korean colonial literature.

For example, "The Story of a Street Out of a Street" by Lee Sang describes the scene of the outskirts of a city using convoluted images; "Sadness from Streamlined Shape" by Jeong Jiyong shows an object whose identity is ambiguous running on the asphalt pavement in a city, disguising its sadness with rough and hilarious sounds; "New Year's Eve" by Kim Girim depicts a Gwanghwamun street where fashion, advertising fliers and newspapers are flittering around and ominous images of war hang in the air; and "The Owner of Café Bangranjang" by Park Tae Won records how a colonial intellectual fails to run a café business in Musashino on the outskirts of Tokyo. These four works describe scenes from a marginal space within the city, presenting the dissonant atmosphere of the downtown districts. The street scenes are presented through illusion and hidden meaning rather than through plain and straightforward depictions.

This sense is acutely presented in Lee Sang's "The Story of a Street Out of a Street," the title itself identifying the poem as a place on the boundary. Lee describes the scene of a street that is expelled from the modernized urban landscape. Even though the term "*jeon*" 傳 in the title referred originally to a comprehensive narrative of one's life, the story delivered by the poem is filled with fragmented images and presented through a deconstructed narrative structure.

> What is here is stifling garbage left after the vast room was swept. The vast room has lots of lighting, and a crow the same size as a suffocated pigeon flies into the room. Strong things are falling down like packhorses, and the room is now clean as if it will explode soon, but the garbage here has been recently left. Rushes. The passenger car with *Sun Tzu* onboard seems to avoid the room. On the table lies a shorthand record and a dish, and on the dish lies one boiled egg. From the armpit on the popped egg yolk by a fork, a bird that looks like a badge mark suddenly hatches. Squared paper is torn off by a flutter of wings, and scraps of paper get lost on coordinates and are all over the ice field. Cigarettes get bloodstained, and the whorehouse gets burned on the same night. Fake angels multiply and come and go in the sky. But these things here get warm and detached all over. The vast room festers inside, and the wallpaper itches. The garbage grows bigger. (Lee 1936)

Interestingly, the poet says that "there is no street out of a street" even though the title implies that the work is a story of "a street out of a street." "The Story of a Street" Out of a Street consists of six verses, the first verse inserts a scene from "Crow's Eye View—The First Poem (Ogamdo Sijeilho 烏瞰圖 詩第一號, 1934)," stating, "in the direction I, rotting, teach every day, an alley was made by a miracle" (Lee 1934). In "Crow's Eye View—The First Poem," which was published earlier than "The Story of a Street Out of a Street" Lee depicts a geometric landscape of "a street without an outside" (Lee 1934). Describing the geographic setting of the dead end and the terrifying being chasing the thirteen children, the poem begins by implying that the terrifying being is the cause of the fear, but it soon becomes clear that the terrifying being is among the thirteen children, it is not an outside force and the reason for their fear is within them. At that moment the terrifying being becomes ambiguous, and on the street only fear prevails. The reason for their fear of the street is neither the dead end nor the being that is chasing them. The reason is that "scary children" and "scared children" are all mixed within the thirteen children, and thus cannot distinguish one from the other because the children do not have names only numbers.

The street scene of "The Story of a Street Out of a Street" is not much different from that of "Crow's Eye View—The First Poem." The only difference is that "Crow's Eye View—The First Poem" draws a frame, whereas "The Story of a Street Out of a Street" is a detailed landscape. The space in the above quotation from "The Story of a Street Out of a Street" refers to a space that is divided into two of "here" and "vast room." "The vast room is clean as if it would explode soon," but the space "here" is full of "garbage" (Lee 1936). All the "garbage" here is "stifling garbage left after the vast room was swept" (Lee 1936), and a crow flies into the "vast room." It is not difficult to connect this crow to the "crow" in "Crow's Eye View," a drawing that coldly looks down at the city's modern landscape. At the moment the crow appears the vast room becomes much tidier and that tidiness creates anxiety, while, here, garbage keeps growing driving the situation to extremes. At the very extreme end a bird that looks like a badge mark is born from an egg and then gets boiled and killed. After this surrealistic scene in which life and death are inverted, squared paper and

"coordinates, which determine the eternal world, are torn off." At the end fake angels that multiply block the sky and the vast room is about to explode after festering on the inside and suffering from fever. The amount of garbage in the vast, once very tidy room, grows bigger.

"The Story of a Street Out of a Street" depicts the recurrence of an outside street from outside to inside and this recurrence's destructive power. This means that the two different streets, the "very tidy street" (i.e., the original street) and "a street, full of filthy garbage, out of a street" (Lee 1936) (i.e., the street rendered outside the original), share the same space from the beginning. Like Nietzsche's time of the eternal recurrence, where identical things recur and there is no outside world, this poem by Lee Sang implies that the colonial city's street is a world where everything recurs and there is no other world. In this regard, the text describes to us how the city's colonial street is maintained. This suggests that "a street out of a street" is not a specific place but one that was pushed out from a street in a city. The outside street is the colonial city itself and by extension the structure and the origin of the modern world. Though Nietzsche's genealogy is an exploration of the process in which the perspectival inverse and optical illusions take place between cause and effect, "The Story of a Street Out of a Street" is Lee's genealogical exploration of the modern world, symbolized by the tidy vast room.

If the place where one lives is a world full of meaningless things like garbage and there is no exit to this world, one's life is not so different from garbage. While colonial-era Korean Marxists kept dreaming of a future to escape the unsatisfying present time, Guinhoe members were aware that this dream was based on illusion. The pessimistic voice in Kim Girim's "New Year's Eve" and Jeong Jiyong's "Sadness from Streamlined Shape" indicates an awareness that the flashy colonial city, full of splendid fashion and fliers, is built on top of a garbage dump. The voice also experiences and describes a recurrence of the Guinhoe writers on a railroad train where the same scenery passes by the windows on both sides very quickly "flying scenery side by side" ("Sadness from Streamlined Shape"). Even after stepping aside from the tragic world and then trying to run away from it, one's destination is as fixed as the railroad.

The pessimistic voice in the two poems is also heard in "The Owner of Café Bangranjang" by Park Tae Won. Café Bangranjang seems to have been inspired by Café Swallow (Jebi), run by Lee Sang and intended from the beginning as a space "to share with our club members rather than for doing business with the artists that live nearby" (Park 1936). Bangranjang was built for reasons other than meeting the demands of market capitalism. Because the place was not established to pursue surplus profit it could not survive in the urban space dominated by moving capital. Bangranjang's business sharply declines after another café with a fancy interior opens nearby.

The most interesting part of the novel comes at the end. The owner of Bangranjang loses his artistic sensitivity while trying to stay in business, and he starts dreaming of a space that has a different rhythm from that of market capitalism. This space turns out to be the study of Mr. Sookyung, who is famous for his elegant and noble hobby of growing orchids. However, the owner witnesses Mr. Sookyung's miserable everyday life filled with his wife's hysterical nagging. In contrast to the poised manner he displays in the café, he appears flustered and frustrated in his study. After this twist the story ends with a scene in which the café owner feels lonely in an autumn field that reminds him of the wilderness.

This short story does not present the space of Bangranjang as a stage inspiring artistic creativity, neither does it record an unworldly artist's failure to keep an establishment in business within the capitalist market. Rather, "The Owner of Café Bangranjang" suggests that nobody can be free from capitalism's tyranny. The owner felt lonely and devastated because he realizes that there is no such thing as a utopia in reality. In this sense, the four texts from *Poetry and Novel* discuss one subject in four different ways. All these texts are genealogical explorations of streets.

Eternal Recurrence and Guinhoe as a Writing Community

Within its main texts, Guinhoe's publication *Poetry and Novel* describes a world without an exit. Each work represents the notion that all poetic subjects encountering the world experience the feeling of its collapse. The

writers are the poetic subjects of the collapse, their pain over this downfall empowering and inspiring them to create the texts within *Poetry and Novel*. Guinhoe poets are not victims of the collapsing world but instead accept this moment as their own, converting the experience into power for the purposes of artistic creation. To the writers in the collapsing world, this is not a short-lived moment of despair to try and overcome. Lee Sang states through his paradoxical sentences in the preface of *Poetry and Novel*; "contemporary people in all times fall into despair. Despair gives birth to techniques and with these techniques the people fall into despair again." Just as with the Guinhoe writers, contemporary people of all epochs cannot avoid despair. Despair gives birth to techniques designated as art, and art then is employed to deconstruct the world, vividly revealing its despair rather than feebly pretending to overcome it through unwarranted and false hope. The despair in contemporary people is the catalyst to create an artistic world and through the creation of art, through this action and by engaging themselves and their will, they move towards becoming Nietzsche's ideal of the overman. The sentences of Lee Sang describe a creative subject's way of living life as art.

By pursuing a methodology based upon the statements above, Lee Sang navigated the artistic and theoretical direction of *Poetry and Novel*. Lee took responsibility as editor for compiling, editing, and publishing the magazine, and Guinhoe's existence was more precious to Lee Sang than to anyone else. Lee was very unhappy that Guinhoe members no longer met together after Kim Girim left Korea to study at Tohoku Imperial University in Japan. When Lee was forced by readers' complaints to stop publishing his serial poem "Crow's Eye View" in the newspaper *Chosunjungan Ilbo*, he imagined an artists' community that was not controlled by literary power, capital or the popular taste, and all things despised by Nietzsche. These thoughts led Lee to open the famous Café Jebi (Swallow). Lee created Café Jebi with the dream of building his imagined artists' community. In an editorial review of his beloved magazine, Lee Sang voiced gratitude to his friend and sponsor Gu Bonwoong, noting that Gu's help allowed him to freely place content into the book without interference. In the review Lee stated, "It's clean from cover to cover; as you see, you will realize that it couldn't get any better." His comment indicates the tremendous effort it took to create the book. Additionally, the image on the cover can be viewed as an important part of the text of *Poetry and Novel*.

Figure 1. The Image on the Cover of *Poetry and Novel* (1936).

At first glance the book cover, which features a young woman in *hanbok* (a traditional Korean dress), seems ordinary. However, after a closer inspection, one can see that the allegorical image reveals hidden meanings. The woman presents two images: she looks like an androgenous and innocent child, while at the same time holds a rough whip that might leave a deep scratch on the skin. Her image on the cover reminds us of some of the female characters, Geumhong or Jeonghee, that appear in the romantic stories of Lee Sang's novels. Research on Lee Sang's works highlight the use of "woman" in his texts as the origin of Lee's subversive imagination; his "woman" is a symbol that refuses to have a fixed meaning (Lee 2010, 102). Each of his novels contemplate the theme of the "failed love story" (Seo 2004). His literature consists of stories referring to the many masks he wears to block him from others (Shin 2013). Lee's "woman" is one that does not show her real face, and accordingly she is a metaphor for his subversive writing.

Seeing Lee Sang's "woman" image, which is a metaphor of the act of writing itself, we once again encounter Nietzschean thinking. "You are going to women? Do not forget the whip!" (Nietzsche [1883] 1978, 67) is a notorious line from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, a statement offering the reader an example of Nietzsche's misogynistic tendencies. However, woman is also another form for "untruth" which is truth in the Nietzschean sense (Baek 2015). Nietzschean philosophy, which begins with the denial of God and

metaphysics is a misogynistic system of truth, wherein women are merely another symbol for the (non)truth. As mentioned in the first section, in addition to the denial of God and metaphysics within Nietzsche's concepts one will not find a transcendental position. The impossibility of seeing the true world led to the birth of Nietzsche's "perspectivism." In perspectivism, there is no choice but to accept multiple perspectives from multiple viewpoints.

It should be noted that Kim Girim developed an almost identical concept to perspectivism in his theoretical writings of the 1930s. His modernist vision of new poetics is summarized in his turn of phrase the "moving subject." As in Nietzsche's way of seeing the world, Kim Girim views the world not as fixed, but as a subject in the process of constant movement and change. This was Kim's representation of a world under capitalism's tyranny. Kim criticized the common model of representation because it was impossible for him to represent the constantly moving and changing world through words. At the moment of representing reality with words, the changing world will be completely different from the world that it reproduced. Therefore, reality is already a representable target.

Kim Girim's claim is conveyed through this unique view on linguistics: language is not just a symbol that immediately refers to reality; it is also an act of organizing new meanings that transcend reality by instigating conflicts amongst words. In doing so, language then becomes a sign system independent from any given reality. At its height, language becomes a symbol to express newly created things. That is, language is not a passive tool that directs or reproduces but is instead an active trigger, one that has the potential to visualize and create new things. It is a "moving subject" that senses the rhythm of change and movement. The moving subject is a representation of the subject in the process, one that can only occur in the middle of a change in the subject. This means that it is a "relative subject," a subject that consists of new and different angles in every moment, one that destroys its own identity by constantly moving and constantly rebuilding itself (Kim 2013).

The new version of reality painted by the subject must be composed of countless relative images captured from a myriad of angles; therefore one who reads the poems from this perspective should ideally be listening to the

countless voices created by the images in the poems. The pluralistic world full of countless voices is the world of eternal recurrence, which is also the world of Dionysus. Unlike conceptual language that conveys meaning, poetic images are a collection of worlds, grasped by countless eyes, with white light condensing all the colors of the worlds and sounds made by countless mouths. This is why poetic images are silent and they convey no single meaning such as the poetic images found in Jeong Jiyong's "Streamlined Shape." However, for those who do not pay close attention, poetic images appear to say nothing and therefore do not seem to exist. Images are a whole collection of worlds that keep themselves intact in shimmering lights. This whole collection of worlds continues to speak to us though an inaudible noise and shimmer in front of our eyes like the faintly glowing star at the crossroads in Gwanghwamun's poem, "New Year's Eve." Therefore, the act of thinking about images in a poem can be said to be carried out by the images themselves. The object and the images become the subject because the images themselves cause us to think. "Objectivism," which Kim Girim asserted was the direction of modern poetry, is not the act of thinking about images but an attitude toward an artistic world where images lead us to think.

Writing poems and creating artwork from the view of the moving subject can be a process of constantly denying and deconstructing oneself, this is no different from living during the eternal recurrence, where people constantly experience the process of changing themselves. Kim Girim emphasized the impossibility of representation in artistic language. Lee Tae Jun stressed an individual writing style through his theory of writing. In addition, Park Tae Won pointed out every writer has to work to build his/her own writing, which cannot be substituted. All of these poets did not mean to describe reality in a sophisticated way, but instead meant to convey that it is important to independently experience the time of life flowing in reality. In his writing about masterpiece published alongside "New Year's Eve" (Jeya), in *Poetry and Novel*, Kim Girim—quoting T.S. Eliot—said that a masterpiece has a relationship to "growth of experience" and it is made by "the people who risk adventure or radical advance…in their every life." Literature is life itself and the form of life that is not separate from a life of experience, and this life condensed with the experience of every moment

is the one living the eternal recurrence, allowing it to experience itself as a different thing at each moment.

A being that writes poems and wants to be the "moving subject," attempts to carry out the act of writing about the eternal recurrence. Kim Girim's particular poetic subject, the "moving subject," is not different from that of an overman living in the world of the eternal recurrence. Kim Girim's poetic subject, the "moving subjects," can only be defined by inducing creation and by constant denial. In Nietzsche's language this is referred to as the "body" (Nietzsche 1978, 34). Nietzsche's body is "not a permanent being with inherent characteristics but something that constantly changes and is newly made up" (Jeon 2011, 76). In other words, the Nietzschean "body" is Dionysian in which it is the agency itself as well as the fundamental basis of practice and action.

Lee Sang created a dynamic image within his poem, "The Story of a Street Out of a Street." The poem ends with a scene in which clean wallpaper feels itchy, and the amount of trash starts to increase again. The movement in this scene was possible because Lee Sang mixed up symbols of the body with city streets. In short, the poem experimented with using bodily images as metaphors for streets. The metaphorical body moves according to its own flow of time and thereby expresses active forces that drive the streets toward the collapse of the world. This active force is artistic power in the sense that it does not come from an absolute, metaphysical experience, like reasonable and rational recognition, but is created using the asphalt pavement as a metaphor for a living body. This artistic power takes the clean, simple, colonial city streets that have no apparent meaning and creates something mysterious by veiling them, leaving countless possible interpretations.[5]

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5. Not only "The Story of a Street Out of a Street" but rather all of Lee Sang's texts are very powerful. Countless studies and interpretations of Lee's writing substantiate this power. Some researchers approach his texts as if they are solving riddles and feel a sense of accomplishment about "solving" him, but in doing so, they become prey caught in his spider web. In this context, Lee is a woman, in the sense of woman referred to in earlier paragraphs. This can be also applied to Jeong Jiyong's writing in "Streamlined Shape" (Yuseonaesang). When we read such a poem, we try to answer the question, "What does the poem describe?" The power of the image dissolving solid individuality disappears from the text.

In the world of the eternal recurrence, there is no truth, all words are mere metaphors. Metaphors always connote the copulas "be" and "not be," at the same time; therefore in a metaphorical sentence the two concepts are linked through identification while simultaneously maintaining negation and tension through a denial of complete identification (Kim 2002, 163). When metaphors take the place of the truth, this metaphor-truth is incomprehensible truth like philosophical truth; thus its incomprehensibility makes the metaphor-truth unpossessable. In other words, it is impossible for one to grasp the truth and yet to experience constantly becoming another being amid the tension created by the constant clashes of "be" and "not be." Therefore, a metaphor is a life. For Nietzsche, another name for this "metaphor-life" is "woman." Within Nietzsche's philosophy truth means life itself, not something that is hidden in our lives. To be precise, for him the truth means the verbal and intentional act "to live." For Nietzsche, to live is not to experience Chronos, which consumes time, but of Kairos, which is time that is newly created and formed every moment. That is again why life is woman. Only woman has a body that is able to give birth to a new life. According to Nietzsche (1998, 87), "To be the child who is newly born, the creator must also want to be the mother who gives birth and experience the pangs of the birth-giver." Hence, the gender of the overman is female, and this overwoman is a being who continuously experiences the pangs of delivery and the joy of birth.

If all language is metaphor, and all the positions of language are the positions of woman-life, then the act of writing is no different from drawing oneself, erasing one's face and creating a new face. The woman on the cover of *Poetry and Novel* symbolizes a blank slate. The more one writes something on it, the more it is erased, and the more blank slates are created. At the same time, the woman on the cover symbolizes Nietzsche's and Lee Sang's woman for whom anything is possible and symbolizes the Dionysian world of eternal-recurrence that holds everything. Her modern appearance, with short hair and traditional *hanbok*, her indeterminate features, her right hand softly touching the *otgoreum* as if she was seducing a man; her wild, frightening left hand that carries a whip, these all suggest that the woman on the cover is a blank slate on which erasure and creation are repeated.

Furthermore, in the Dionysian world where pain must be felt in every moment, the whip held by the woman symbolizes the will to power, a will to violently turn man into overwoman and a tool for self-reflection, not one to avoid pain.

In this context, it is worth revisiting the short story "The Owner of Bangranjang." I argued that "The Owner of Café Bangranjang" is a story about the failed business of an artist that is not acquainted with the rules of the market, and how he anguishes over searching for a way out. The reason that the owner of the café postpones closing his business despite incurring more losses is his employee Misae. The artist can return or dispose of the things that were donated for the interior decoration of the café, but he cannot do this with his employee, one that provided him with labor. She was introduced to the owner by Mr. Sookyung, and just as the other items intended for interior decoration, she could not be defined as a tradable item in the market. The owner of the café cannot pay her monthly wages because of his slow business and many months of being in arrears. His failure to fulfil his duty to pay her does not culminate in the termination of her contract because Misae is unaware of her rights under her employment contract. Misae is considered an unfinished product, one that could not be traded in the market and hence creates trouble for the owner that handles her.

The more the artist thinks about what to do with Misae the more he dreams about building a nice home with her. He establishes Café Bangranjang as a venue for pursuing art freely, which contains donated goods instead of goods that are traded in the market, also not being a real place in Musashino. However, Misae encourages the artist to pursue his dream. This story demonstrates that the real owner of Bangranjang is Misae herself. The story also describes what one encounters the moment they visualize a utopia, as the owner of Bangranjang did, it is the loneliness of being in the middle of a wasteland. The utopia that people dream of can be found in reality itself.

Conclusion

Entering the world of dreams does not involve dreaming about a world different from reality but instead dissolving and killing oneself to be created anew and experience reality from a different perspective. This is about experiencing the pain of birth and becoming another person by experiencing the pain of death of Dionysian proportions. Finally, this is the experience of becoming another being. "I" am equal to another, not an entity of identical characteristics but a transformative subject with many faces. The subject of such transformation can only be a Dionysian being, who is one and many simultaneously. As Zarathustra said, "one must still have chaos in oneself to be able to give birth to a dancing star." (Nietzsche 1978, 17). Each Guinhoe writer was a dancing star, burning himself with the heat of chaos to shine. For a star to shine means each star is born into another within each moment. Each moment of a star is time shared by two different beings, one dead and the other born again. To live in this world is to live in another world. The moment a star dances is the time for communicating with and relating to others in a community. This community is a writing community and a living community because it represents the moment of writing for the eternal recurrence, an act of Dionysian birth. This is how Guinhoe, an art community and a "cluster of stars" (sunggun 星群)[6] exists.

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6. "Sunggun" (Cluster of Stars 星群) is the subtitle of "The Owner of Café Bangranjang." Later, Park (1937) wrote the novel "Sunggun." Shin(2015, 33), inspired by the subtitle, named his artistic thoughts on Guinhoe "Thoughts on a cluster of stars."

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