

韓国が日本の植民地であったとき  
英作文のテキストとして口承物語を用いる

レオナルド・ランドマーク

When Korea Was a Japanese Colony:  
Oral Narrative as English Composition Text

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**Introduction**

Colonialism is an ugly, degrading thing and it is the subject of Linda Sue Park's 2002 novel *When My Name Was Keoko*. Although it very directly exposes the brutality of the Japanese occupation of Korea, it is not a depressing book. Rather, it shows the strength of family and the power of love. It is Park's fourth book. The other three titles also deal with various periods of Korean history and are categorized as children's literature. Her portrait of a potter in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, *A Single Shard*, was awarded the American Library Association's Newbery Medal as the most distinguished contribution to children's literature.

Park mentions in an "Author's Note" that *When My Name Was Keoko* is fiction but based on stories she heard her parents tell about being children in Korea when it was a colony of Japan. In this way it is similar to Richard Kim's *Lost Names* and Sook Nyul Choi's *Year of Impossible Goodbyes* (although Choi's book is directly autobiographical). All three books are thus narratives of life under Japanese colonial rule. They present a view of Japan that is quite different from the one which Japanese, especially university-aged students, are used to seeing: a Japan with a definite colonial policy aimed at suppressing Korean culture and humiliating its people.

In this respect, Park's, Kim's, and Choi's books resemble those of black American author Mildred Taylor who writes also writes of her family's history and the discrimination and humiliation blacks experienced in the South. Taylor mentions repeatedly that her books are based on stories she heard her father and others tell. Interestingly, our three narratives of wartime Korea have many points of similarity to Kappa Senoh's tale of growing up in wartime Japan, *A Boy Called H*.

All in all, how are we to understand any of these narratives of colonialism? What gives them any redeeming value? All of them let us see, experience, and understand what that generation (in Korea, Japan, or the United States) lived through. Seen through the eyes of children, we know what degradation and humiliation feel like. We know what love of family and strength of will means. And if we can learn to understand such things, we will be more tolerant and understanding of those around us.

This is not a matter of schmaltz, but rather of life and death: our life and death (as the work of Elisabeth Kübler-Ross demonstrates all too clearly). Her research on the near-death experience of 22,000 people revealed the same patterns: each of us is totally responsible and accountable for each thought, word, and action. And if we do not freely choose love and open ourselves to suffering, we must be taught to do so.

## Discussion

Linda Sue Park's *When My Name Was Keoko* tells the story of the Kim family during the years 1940 to 1945 as seen through the eyes of Sun-hee and her older brother Tae-yul. The story is narrated in more or less alternating chapters, with Sun-hee having both the first word and the last. We see, step by step, the systematic degradation and humiliation of a policy of colonialism put into action. First, in the name of modernization and acculturation, the Confucian scholars are humiliated. Sun-hee's father tells how his father and other scholars were ordered to cut off their topknots and remove the jade buttons symbolic of their status. As he refused, soldiers came to his house and forcibly cut it off and removed the jade button. To add to the humiliation, a handful of his hair was laughingly thrown into the family kimchee pot.

There is a comparable incident in Choi's *Year of Impossible Goodbyes* involving Sookan's grandfather. Her mother narrates it: "When the Japanese occupied Korea, they gathered all the scholars in the town square and cut their topknots off... to your grandfather and the other proud scholars, it was a symbol of their culture" (p. 37). This happened when he was young. As an old man, in 1945, he is humiliated again. The old pine tree in the yard under which he meditates is wantonly chopped down by two young Korean policemen on the orders of Captain Narita to punish the old scholar for writing Chinese and Hangul. Sookan wonders how Captain Narita intuitively knew that would cause him the greatest pain.

These incidents are very similar to that in Mildred Taylor's *The Well*, where two of the Simms boys (whites) purposely foul the well on the Logan family property in order to repay an insult done to them by Hammer Logan, a black. It is a time of drought and the Logan well is the only well in the area that hasn't gone dry, so many families in the area (the Simms family also) depend on it for drinking water. When their deed is revealed, their father publicly humiliates them.

Another one of Mildred Taylor's books, *The Road to Memphis*, shows the humiliation of Clarence Hopkins, a black American soldier in uniform on the eve of World War II, by a group of young white

men, the Aames brothers. Although Clarence is “a good-sized boy, well built, and standing some six and a half feet tall” (p. 24), he is bullied into bending over and having his head rubbed after one of them, Statler, says “Papa always told me it bring good luck to rub a nigger’s head” (p.117). Cassie Logan, who witnesses the incident, knows that Clarence has the size and strength to give any of the three Aames brothers a beating, but also knows that there would be a terrible price to pay later. She watches as Clarence bows his head and accepts the humiliation and the ridicule.

This is the kind of thing Frantz Fanon describes in his 1952 book *Black Skins, White Masks* as characteristic of colonialism: “A white man addressing a Negro behaves exactly like an adult with a child and starts smirking, whispering, patronizing, cozening. It is not one white man I have watched, but hundreds... I have made a point of observing such behavior in physicians, policemen, employers.”<sup>1</sup> In his biography of Fanon, David Macey says that in this book Fanon was trying “to explore and analyse his own situation and experience” as a black man.<sup>2</sup> The experience Fanon describes others have had too. Macey mentions the Barbadian Georges Lamming and Léopold Sédar Senghor (later president of Senegal) as having it too.<sup>3</sup>

Sun-hee experiences it herself in elementary school. Her father is the vice-principal of the Japanese-administered school, but since she calls a classmate by her Korean name she is punished. Not only is the exclusive use of Japanese in school obligatory, but all Koreans have been required to take Japanese names. Her teacher (who is Korean) would prefer to overlook the mistake, but the Japanese military attaché that oversees the school “to make sure all the students were learning to be good citizens of the Empire” is in the room at the time and punishment becomes mandatory.

When Sun-hee’s mother (who is always called by the Korean term for mother, Omoni, as her father is called by the Korean term for father, Abuji) sees the marks on her daughter’s legs she says nothing. Instead, she makes a paste of herbs to take away the sting. This is similar to the scene in *The Well* where Hammer and David’s mother Caroline is forced to whip them in public, before Sheriff Peterson Rankins and the Simmses in order to avoid worse trouble. After the whipping she is the one who applies the healing salve: “I’m the one done whipped ’em. I’m the one done cut them welts on ’em, and I’m gonna be the one sees t’ ’em healin’ ” (p. 63).

Sun-hee’s older brother Tae-yul experiences the humiliation of life under Japanese rule too. Unlike the bookish Sun-hee, Tae-yul is a born mechanic. As he says: “Ever since I was little, I’ve liked mechanical stuff---things that move.” He and Abuji’s younger brother, Uncle, make a bicycle from an assortment of old parts and Tae-yul is finally able to ride it when Uncle brings home two old tires. But one day two

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1 *Black Skins, White Masks* by Frantz Fanon translated by Charles Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1967), p. 31.

2 *Frantz Fanon: A Biography* by David Macey (New York: Picador, 2000), p. 163.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 167.

Japanese soldiers see him riding it near his house and confiscate it. They say to Abuji that they are commandeering it in the name of the Emperor, but then they walk off with the bicycle as if it's all been a joke. Tae-yul's father, Abuji, does nothing and Tae-yul turns on him in anger because of his apparent lack of courage.

We can see how much father and daughter resemble each other, as well as how much Uncle and nephew are alike. Abuji and Sun-hee are both bookish and quiet. In religious terms they are born examples of the contemplative life, whereas Uncle and Tae-yul are born examples of the active life. This matching is something we can also see in the Logan family, particularly in David Logan and his older brother Hammer. David is a contemplative in the mold of Abuji or Sun-hee, while Hammer is a living example of the tool that bears his name.

If we look at Chris Crowe's study of Mildred Taylor, we can see the parallels extended to the political realm.<sup>4</sup> There the comparison is between the approaches of Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois, with the former being accustomed to getting along with others and the latter accustomed to confrontation. In Taylor's short novel, *The Well*, Hammer is the one who confronts Charlie Simms when Charlie and his brother Ed-Rose come to the Logan well to get water. Later, when Hammer and David go to the Rosa Lee River to water their cows, Charlie Simms returns the favor: "Y' all Logans some mighty uppity niggers, ya know that? Think y' all good's as white folks 'cause you got a little land and some livestock" (p. 25).

David, on the other hand, would rather help when help is needed. So when he and Hammer see the Simms wagon in a ditch, he offers to help although he has an injured leg and is using a crutch. David has pride like his brother, but he is able to see beyond the present situation: "I knew that if we didn't help Charlie out, the trouble between us was just going to get worse" (p. 29). And so he puts down his crutch and goes to help Charlie put the wheel back on the Simms wagon. Charlie toys with David and delays putting the wheel back on, with the result that David is forced to drop the wagon before the wheel is in place. When that happens, Charlie slaps him hard across the face, knocking him down. In true Old Testament fashion, Hammer, who has been watching all now flies into action and badly beats Charlie for abusing his younger brother. As may be expected, the confrontations increase (the first result being the public whipping of Hammer and David by their mother mentioned above) and end in the Logan well being poisoned. Charlie and Ed-Rose are revealed as the culprits by the simple-minded Joe McCalister ("I done asked y' all what y' all was gonna do with that skunk y' all done caught, and y' all done said it was for a joke and not t' tell nobody!"). And although their father forces them to climb down into the well and remove the dead animals, the well's water is undrinkable. The public humiliation is so great that even in

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4 *Presenting Mildred D. Taylor* by Chris Crowe (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1999), p. 58.

the next period of drought no one from the Simms family ever returns to the Logan well.

Here we need to digress for a moment. There is humiliation for the Kim family as well as for the Logan/Taylor family, but implicit here is also the strength of family and tradition. Taylor talks about learning about this in stories her relatives told: "I remember the adults talking about the past. As they talked I began to visualize all the family who had once known the land, and I felt as if I knew them too..."<sup>5</sup>

Being connected to the past is important. Being part of an ongoing tradition of family and of faith is important. Vietnamese Cardinal Francis Xavier Nguyễn Van Thuân mentions that "For Asians, and in particular for me as a Vietnamese, the remembrance of ancestors has an immense value." This is because "through our genealogies, we come to realize that we are part of a history greater than we are, and we welcome with greater truth the sense of our own histories."<sup>6</sup> He says that he personally knows the names of fifteen generations of his ancestors, going back to 1698. Cardinal Van Thuân's remarks are not merely personal, but are given in the course of the first of the twenty-two Spiritual Exercises he preached before Pope John Paul II and the Vatican Curia in the Spring of 2000. Not only that, but they are part of the meditation titled *The Book of the Genealogy of Jesus Christ: Before the Mystery of God*. And so, if there is humiliation, there is also the ability to root that humiliation in a tradition of family and faith that provides the strength to endure it.

If we look at that meditation of Cardinal Van Thuân's on the genealogy of Jesus, we can see many things. We can see that whatever humiliation and suffering we may endure, others before us have also borne such things. We can see that God does not act in the ways we expect or imagine Him to act. As Van Thuân puts it elsewhere: "The people wanted a God who conformed to their notions of deity...If the Lord did not know how to behave, then they had no alternative but to re-educate him."<sup>7</sup> God acts in His own way, in His own time. And He acts completely out of love. It is for us to accept that.

The policy of humiliation in Korea was a thorough one. Since Korea was a part of Japan, it was only fitting that cherry trees, the symbol of Japan, should be planted everywhere. The corollary to that policy was that all rose of Sharon trees, the national symbol of Korea, were to be uprooted and burned. The military police inspected each house to make sure that the required things were done. Even so, the Kim family preserves one small rose of Sharon tree and hides it away in a shed.

To insure that orders were carried out, neighborhood associations were formed with ten families in one group. A group leader was named and all had to assemble immediately when ordered. Part of this

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5 Ibid., p. 8. The ellipsis marks are in Crowe.

6 *Testimony of Hope: The Spiritual Exercises of John Paul II* by Francis Xavier Nguyễn Van Thuân, translated by Julia Darrenkamp, FSP and Anne Herrernan, FSP (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2000) , p. 4.

7 *Prayers of Hope, Words of Courage* by Francis Xavier Nguyễn Van Thuân (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2002) , p. 119.

procedure involved counting to ten in Japanese. There is an old woman in Sun-hee and Tae-yul's group named Mrs. Ahn who knows little Japanese. She has no family to help her when the call for assembly comes and ends up saying "Yo-sut" the Korean word for six. A Japanese soldier hears what she says and comes over. When she attempts to apologize she does so in Korean. Hearing Korean infuriates him and he knocks her senseless.

The government ordered such neighborhood associations formed in Japan too. Hajime (the "H" of the book's title) sums it up: "More and more the individual was finding himself at the disposal of the state, with little or no to say in his own destiny."<sup>8</sup> Hajime's father, Morio, tells him how the neighborhood associations were an example of this. During the Edo period the Tokugawa government grouped families into fives. If a crime were committed, everyone in the group was punished. The people in the group were meant to both assist and control each other. And the neighborhood associations of Hajime's day "are much the same kind of thing." The ever-tightening government control Sun-hee and her family were feeling in Korea was not restricted to the colonies, it was also being felt by ordinary people like Hajime and his family in Japan.

Sun-hee narrates another aspect of this as happening during 1943-44: all the girls in the school sixteen years and older are ordered to assemble and told of "a wonderful opportunity" for them in Japan: "in the textile factories making uniforms for the honorable members of the Imperial forces." They are told they "will be given a place to stay and ample food to eat" and that "a salary will be paid to your families here in Korea." The principal then asks: "Who among you would like to volunteer for this noble cause?" (p. 96). Sun-hee knows from past experience that things are never as wonderful as such announcements suggest, but cannot understand what is at stake here. Buntaro-san, the military attaché at the school, pulls twenty "volunteers" from the assembled group. When the principal sees that one of them is Hee-won, the older sister of Sun-hee's friend Jung-shin, he tells Buntaro "Not that one" and it becomes clear to Sun-hee that her friend's father is *chin-il-pa*: a friend of the Japanese. In other words, one who profits by collaborating with the Japanese occupiers.

The implications of what Sun-hee sees and hears never become clear to her. Nor are they made clear elsewhere in *When My Name Was Keoko*. The only hint we are given is in Parks' short bibliography where there is a listing for Keith Howard's *True Stories of the Korean Comfort Women*.<sup>9</sup> In other words, we are dealing with the problem of women drafted for military sexual slavery by Japan. In more colloquial terms, we are dealing with women who became "Sex Slaves of the Japanese Imperial Forces" (as they are

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8 *A Boy Called H: A Childhood in Wartime Japan* by Kappa Senoh, translated by John Bester (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1999), p. 114.

9 *True Stories of the Korean Comfort Women*, edited by Keith Howard (New York: Cassell, 1995). Howard lists George Hicks' *The Comfort Women* as an additional source.

described on the cover of Hicks' book). If we look at the Howard book, we learn that between 100,000 and 200,000 were kidnapped or otherwise coerced into becoming prostitutes for the Japanese military forces in Japan and Asia.<sup>10</sup> We also learn that between 80 and 90 per cent of the women were Korean, generally between 14 and 18 years old. Hicks tells us that Filipina, Chinese, Malaysian, Indonesian, Burmese, Dutch, and White Russian women were also victimized.<sup>11</sup>

As we saw above, teenaged girls were often recruited for factory work in Japan and told they would be housed, fed, and paid well for their labors. Sook Nyul Choi tells of the reality of working in a factory in Korea. It is a small factory managed by her mother that makes socks for Japanese soldiers: "The girls constantly pedaled in a desperate attempt to complete their work." If there was an equipment failure or breakdown, "the girls panicked, for that meant they would have to stay until all hours to complete their work" (p. 11). And hanging over their heads was always the threat that they would be "volunteered to help our soldiers fight better. Your girls will be honored to bring glory to the Emperor" as comfort women (p. 52).

Kang Tokkyong talks of being recruited at age 16 (in Korean age) for the Women's Volunteer Corps. She is sent to work in an airplane parts factory in Toyama Prefecture. She works 12-hour shifts, is fed little, and paid nothing. When she tries to run away she is caught and forced to work as a comfort woman.<sup>12</sup> Chin Sung Chung, a member of The Korean Council for Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan, tells us that "the comfort women policy was planned, established and managed, and the women recruited, by the chiefs of the army and navy General Staff." Chin also tells us that "it is clear that the military system was established in direct relation to the Japanese policy of obliterating colonial races, Koreans in particular."<sup>13</sup>

*True Stories of the Korean Comfort Women* includes nineteen Korean women telling their stories in their own words. If one reads through those stories, resentment, anger, and humiliation at what they experienced at the hands of the Japanese as well as their fellow Koreans predominate. Here we need to look at Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's *The Tunnel and the Light: Essential Insights on Living and Dying* to get some perspective.<sup>14</sup> Kübler-Ross reminds us that suffering has a meaning: "Whatever happens to you in terms of ups and downs, every experience that every human being in the world has is for a purpose. It will

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10 Details are given in Howard's "Introduction", p. v.

11 The nationalities are mentioned in Hicks' "Introduction", p. xvii.

12 Her experiences are described in "From the Women's Volunteer Labour Corps to a Comfort Station" in *True Stories of the Korean Comfort Women*, pp. 177-184.

13 "Korean Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan" in *True Stories of the Korean Comfort Women*, pp. 14-15.

14 *The Tunnel and the Light: Essential Insights on Living and Dying* by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, M.D. (New York: Marlowe & Company, 1999).

teach you one specific thing that you would otherwise not learn. And God doesn't give you any more tests than you need" (p.34). She goes on to say that "All the hardships... all the tests and tribulations, all the nightmares and the losses...are gifts to you" and that "every hardship is an opportunity that you are given, an opportunity to grow. To grow is the sole purpose of existence on this planet Earth" (p.35). But in order to grow, one has to cast out all the negativity inside: all the anger, resentment, and hatred. All the fear, shame, grief, and guilt must come out.

As Kübler-Ross says: "If you can get rid of your own negativity, then everything will be open for you ..." But if they do not come out, they become lethal killers: they literally cause the cancer, heart attacks, and asthma that kill so many of us. It's the negativity that is poisoning so many of those comfort women. We can see very clearly in Mildred Taylor's stories how hatred, fear, anger, and resentment are destroying people in the community around the Logans, as well as people like Hammer Logan himself.

Kübler-Ross talks about learning the truth of this in her research on near-death experiences as well as by having laboratory-induced out-of-body experiences. She discusses it in *The Tunnel and the Light* as well as in *The Wheel of Life: A Memoir of Living and Dying*.<sup>15</sup> Over a period of years she and others collected more than 22,000 cases of near-death experiences from people young and old, from different cultural and religious backgrounds. She found they all had the same pattern of experiences and three points are of interest to us. The first point is that "our total life is our own responsibility, that we cannot criticize and blame and judge and hate. We, and we alone are responsible for the sum total of our physical life." The second point is that "the only thing that matters is that we do what we do with love." And the third point is that it is in the light of that love that "we will have to review not only every deed of our life, but also every thought and every word of our total existence." And "we will know how every thought, word and deed and choice of our life has affected others."<sup>16</sup>

Her respondents all told her that when this life review was done, they were wrapped in the warmest and most positive love imaginable. It was from the center of that love that they looked at each moment of their lives. What she found is very similar to words of St. John of the Cross: "In the evening of your life you will be examined in love." They are also very similar to the words of Mother Teresa: "It is not the number of our works that are important, but the intensity of the love that we put into every action." Cardinal Van Thuân (who cited those words of Mother Teresa's) makes much the same point: "Every word, every gesture, every telephone call, every decision that we make should be the most beautiful one of our life, giving our love and our smile to everyone, without losing a second."<sup>17</sup>

The ability to love or to show love is not sentimental in the least. There can be incredible pain and

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15 *The Wheel of Life: A Memoir of Living and Dying* by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, M.D. (New York: Touchstone, 1997).

16 *The Tunnel and the Light*, p. 73.

17 *Testimony of Hope*, p. 57.



suffering involved. Kübler-Ross experienced this as a result of one of her laboratory-induced out-of-body experiences. Up to that time she had been with about 1,000 patients when they were dying. As a result of this, she herself went through each and every one of those death experiences: she felt all the loneliness and pain that each dying adult or child felt. Somehow it was an example of total and complete empathy and a very clear sign that we are all connected to each other. During this night of crucifixion-like agony, she was alone in a cabin in the Blue Ridge Mountains. She prayed for relief, any kind of relief, but was told very clearly that she would be given no relief. Finally, she said she understood that “she had the strength and the courage to endure this agony all by myself” and “the faith and the knowledge that we are never given more than we can bear.”<sup>18</sup>

Sun-hee and Tae-yul’s story continues, as does Sookan’s and Richard Kim’s. Tae-yul enlists in the Japanese Army and is trained as a kamikaze pilot who is sent on a death mission. On that day the clouds are so heavy that there is no possibility of an attack and he must return to his base. But the shame of that day’s flight is overshadowed by Japan’s surrender and finally the joy of Tae-yul’s return home. Richard Kim’s narrator remains nameless throughout *Lost Names*. His story, which begins in 1933 in Manchuria, also ends with the surrender of the Japanese police garrison in 1945 to his father. Sookan’s story is the only one that continues. The joy that everyone feels in liberation from the Japanese is replaced by sorrow when the Russian troops appear and occupy their town. Japanese oppression is only replaced by Russian oppression and Korean Communism. Sookan’s only chance is to try and escape to the South.

Since the title of this paper includes the subject of oral narrative, a final note on the subject is needed. All three texts are oral narratives, with Park’s being done in the form of alternating chapters by Sun-hee and her older brother Tae-yul. Although it is not clearly expressed, we have here what Erich Kahler describes as *The Inward Turn of Narrative* in which a story is told by intertwining inner and outer life.<sup>19</sup> That is, we see both the events that occur in the lives of Sun-hee and Tae-yul Kim and those around them as well as their inner thoughts and reflections. Kahler traces the use of this technique (“the interpenetration of consciousness and reality”) back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The use of a pair of narrators also allows a thing which Kahler observed in the novels of Samuel Richardson: splitting the point of view gives greater psychological penetration. In Kahler’s words: “The same event is described by different persons in terms of their special nature ... The multiple reflections illuminate the characters in their complexity” (p. 153).

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18 *The Tunnel and the Light*, pp. 101-102.

19 *The Inward Turn of Narrative* by Erich Kahler, translated by Richard & Clara Winston (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973).

## Conclusion

And what are we to learn from these three stories of life in Korea when it was a Japanese colony? There is plenty of oppression, but in each case the families are held together by a strong bond of love. This is similar to the bonds of family, extending through time, which also allow the Logan family to survive colonialism in its native American form. We can see how easily one can succumb to abuse if one does not have the support of a loving family by looking at the narratives of the comfort women. Most of them are filled with anger and resentment at what was systematically done to them by the Japanese military and often their own families in Korea. That anger has only continued through the years up to the present, fueled by the shame of a traditional Confucian society and the indifference of the Japanese government.

The only solution is the one Elisabeth Kübler-Ross offers: one must remove the negativity and live in a spirit of love. Each and every one of us must accept all that has happened in life as being totally the result of the choices we have made. The pain each and every one of us has suffered must be accepted in its entirety and not put on others in the form of blame or criticism. Although it may sound very simple-minded, it is the only solution to the colonialism Park, Choi, Kim, and Taylor narrate.

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