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The Finitude of the Human and the World of the None-Whole: On the Aesthetics of Existence in Korean Modernist Literature in the Posthuman Age

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Abstract: Posthuman discourse calls for a fundamental shift away from modern anthropocentric thought. This shift stems from the reflection that many of the problems in the modern capitalist world, including climate change, are rooted in anthropocentric attitudes and ways of life. Amid rapid climatic and technological changes, transforming our way of thinking is essential. This paper argues that such a transformation is possible through the exploration of new subjectivities that incorporate the other, transforming the self in the process. It examines how 1930s Korean colonial modernist literature illustrates this search for new subjectivities. Based on this exploration, this paper also concretizes the tendencies and problems in our society, particularly concerning technological fascism, through recent Korean fiction and discusses the significance of the literary imaginations of 1930s colonial Korean modernism in the posthuman era.

Keywords: posthumanism; anthropocentrism; discourse shift; 1930s Korean colonial modernism; Jang Gang-myeong; Gim Yeong-ha; finitude; non-whole



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1. Introduction

Posthuman discourse, which has become a significant trend in recent Korean literature, critiques the modern anthropocentrism that has led to numerous contemporary issues. Rising interest in posthumanism has emerged from a critical reassessment of dichotomous thinking—human/non-human, mind/matter, subject/object—that has long been uncritically accepted. Modern lifestyles and attitudes, blamed for the recent pandemic and catastrophic global climate change, have underscored the intricate interconnectedness of ecological environments and human existence, akin to a network. Posthumanism identifies anthropocentric thinking as the root cause of many problems in the modern capitalist world and calls for a comprehensive transformation of our worldview.

Moreover, advancements in science and technology have elevated machines and technology from mere tools to fundamental conditions of human existence. The category of non-human has expanded to encompass not only race, gender, and coloniality but also other species, the natural environment, and even machines, prompting a deconstruction of the very notion of humanism. This transformation is driven by the GNR (genetic, nanotechnology, and robotics) revolution, which merges the organic and the artificial into a single system, necessitating a reconsideration of the relationship between humans and technology (Jae-hui Gim 2014, p. 217).

This shift in thought is also evident in the recent Korean literature. Authors such as Yun I-hyeong, Gim Cho-yeop, Cheon Seon-ran, Jeong Se-rang, U Da-yeong, Gim Bo-yeong,

Bae Myeong-hun, Jang Gang-myeong, and Gim Yeong-ha imagine societies where artificial intelligence and cloning technologies are commonplace, expanding the narrative scope to planetary and cosmic dimensions.¹ While SF was previously considered a marginal genre in Korean literature, since the 2000s, astrophysical worldviews and natural scientific knowledge have been employed not merely as themes but as methods for ontological reflection on contemporary life.

The history of science fiction (SF) literature in Korea can be traced back over a century to 1907 when Jules Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Seas* (1869) was adapted as "Taegeuk Yeohaenggidam" (Taegeuk Travelogue) in the student magazine *Taegeukhakbo*. This was followed by translations of *Cheolsegye* (The Iron World) (1908), *Bihaengseon* (Airship) (1912), and *Wolsegye Yeohaeng* (A Journey to the Moon) (1924), as well as Bak Yeong-hui's translation of *R.U.R.*, a SF play by Czech writer Karel Čapek in 1920, and the publication of Korea's first original SF story, Gim Dong-in's "Kei Baksa-ui Yeongu" (The Study of Dr. K) in 1929. Despite this long history, however, Korean SF literature during the Japanese colonial period largely occupied the space of either nationalist enlightenment narratives, aiming to facilitate a transition to modern society, or light entertainment for the masses. After Korea's liberation from colonial rule in 1945, the status of SF literature in Korea did not change significantly, as it became predominantly framed within Cold War anti-communism and nationalist discourses, particularly as a means of promoting Korea as a science powerhouse. Writers' SF imaginations were often confined to these nationalist frameworks, leading to a narrow focus on youth education and nationalistic goals (Bak 2005; J. Go 2017; J. Yi 2023). This characteristic of Korean SF literature may explain why it was largely excluded from the attention of mainstream literary criticism, which was preoccupied with resisting modernist discourses like nationalism at the time.

However, after the 1990s, as Korea became freer from modern nationalist discourses in line with global changes, SF literature—still distinct from mainstream literary culture, which was largely rooted in traditional print media—began to be produced and consumed via separate distribution platforms like PC communication networks and web-based fandoms. This allowed Korean SF literature to grow rapidly both in terms of quantity and quality.² By blending scientific knowledge with humanistic imagination, Korean SF offers essential philosophical and literary experiments that help society preemptively prepare for the future—a time of rapid scientific advancements like those in artificial intelligence. In this changing context, Korean SF literature can be seen, metaphorically, as shifting from a "language of the night" to a "language of the dawn".³ Recent Korean literary criticism has begun to recognize the universal literary value of Korean SF, no longer limiting it to a mere genre but treating it as a reflection of the posthuman realities that are already becoming part of our world.

Scholarly analyses of these literary experiments focus on the significance and value of the non-human depicted in these works, sharing critical consciousness towards anthropocentrism. Humans, nature, the non-human, and technology are "linked in equal and symmetrical relationships" (Y. Yi 2020, p. 253), and in these relationships, humans and non-humans act as equal agents in constructing and transforming reality. Particularly in Korean literary discourse, posthumanism is often invoked from a critical posthumanist perspective, emphasizing alterity and coexistence with the other at the intersection of other discourses (B. Go 2020, p. 65). This perspective is understood as "a force that brings attention to many beings that have been marginalized and excluded" (S. Hwang 2024, p. 59), examining the possibility of expanding the categories of existence through reflective engagement with the conditions of humans in literature. The way posthumanism is invoked in Korean literary discourse shows that this discourse not only addresses new discussions about the future world but also resonates with poststructuralist deconstructive discourse and the politics of difference conducted within historical and philosophical frameworks (Jae-hui Gim 2014; Ferrando 2019).

However, while it is located within the scope of posthumanism, the discourse on transhumanism, which aims to enhance humans using technology, differs from the afore-

mentioned critical posthumanism. The representative transhumanist More defines transhumanism as follows: “If humanism exclusively relies on educational and cultural improvements to enhance human nature, transhumanists apply technological engineering to overcome the limitations imposed by our biological genetic heritage. Transhumanists do not consider human nature as an end in itself, as perfect, or as demanding our loyalty. Rather, it is just one point in evolutionary progress, and we can learn to alter our nature in ways that we find desirable and valuable” (Vita-More and Vita-More 2013, p. 4). As More’s statement indicates, transhumanism imagines a radically different posthuman by overcoming physical limitations, such as aging, disease, and death, and spatial constraints using technology, ultimately aiming for extreme disembodiment, like mind uploading.

However, Katherine Hayles, who criticizes the extreme disembodiment of transhumanism, argues that while information can more smoothly merge with intelligent machines when the body is eschewed, this deletion of the body allows the liberal subject to claim notorious universality, relying on erasing markers of physical differences, including gender, race, and ethnicity (Hayles 1999, pp. 5–6): “Transhumanists are still enlightened in that they fight against old religious metaphysical understanding of human nature and appeal to rationality for the individual’s freedom to freely transform their bodies using technology”, and they “willingly embrace Cartesian logocentrism that underestimates the body” (Jae-hui Gim 2014, pp. 219–20).

In the posthuman discourse, where the scope of the non-human extends to machines and technology, one of the main topics is the co-evolution of humans and machines. This is an unavoidable subject for humans who must live in the “post” era in a changed technological environment. However, rapidly advancing technology, which is developing beyond human predictions, creates a dystopian imagination in which an independent world of machines is constructed beyond human control, ultimately making humans the colonized subjects of a mechanical empire. This dystopian fear of humans becoming subjugated by a mechanical empire is also a significant anxiety. Furthermore, technological advancement is not just a knowledge phenomenon but also a social phenomenon, intertwined with the desires of capital. The reason for this anxiety is the still very strong and secretly operating desire for power in the liberal humanist subject that transhumanist claims do not release. Recent Korean fiction also tends to focus on depicting future dystopian landscapes of technological worlds engulfed by capitalistic or fascistic desires.

These points illustrate that a complete shift from modern anthropocentric attitudes cannot be achieved easily through ethical reflection by human subjects or changes in the material environment of technology alone. Just as transhumanism, which aims for a posthuman world of coexistence with non-human others, still fundamentally expresses technological anthropocentrism, our thinking remains more familiar and natural when it follows modern anthropocentric thought. Therefore, examining the possibility of posthuman life coexisting with non-human others is an important task. Sharing in this critical consciousness, this paper first examines the unique subject theory found in the Korean colonial modernism of the 1930s; addresses dystopian fears, such as the fear of technological fascism driven by capital and the fear of technology; and explores posthuman strategies through recent Korean fiction by Jang Gang-myeong, Gim Cho-yeop, and Gim Yeong-ha.

Discussing texts from different technological and material periods in the same context is justified because 1930s Korean modernist texts inherently produced peripheral and othered discourses. Moreover, the avant-garde poetic theories of colonial-era modernists offer insights into the formation of a new subjectivity that deconstructed anthropocentric thinking, rooted in liberal humanism. For instance, while the fragmented body imagery that frequently appeared in the works of Yi Sang (1910–37) may not have direct relevance to 21st-century notions of cyborgs or artificial intelligence, it reveals an imaginative alignment with posthumanism grounded in the fusion of human and machines.⁴ During the same period, modernist poet Gim Gi-rim, active in the 1930s, published essays such as “Wolsegye Yeohaeng” (A Trip to the Moon) and “Mirae Tusigi” (Future Viewing Machine)⁵ which

demonstrated SF-like imaginative potential. He actively embraced the machine aesthetics of European avant-garde art to develop his own modernist theory, thus constructing a unique modernist aesthetics (Jo 2008; Y. Gim 2010; Jin-hui Gim 2024).

What stands out in 1930s Korean modernist literature is that scientific knowledge and technological information are not merely displayed at a material or thematic level. Rather, science and technology defined the methodological framework and provided form to these poets' aesthetics. In this light, we can see how 1930s modernist poetic theory exposes othered entities located outside anthropocentric modern thinking. When summarizing the history of Korean SF literature previously, we pointed out that "science" in colonial Korea functioned as an ideological cog within the imaginary mechanism of nationalist discourse. In contrast, within 1930s Korean modernist literature, science becomes a matter of "sensorial mood imprinted on the body of the aesthetic subject" or the "language of censorship" that diagnoses and critiques an era that reverses science (D. Ham 2015, p. 465).

This perspective on science in colonial Korean modernist literature resonates with the approaches of recent global modernism toward modernist texts. Recent modernist studies have aimed to reconstruct modernism as performative writing that re-examines what European-centric modernism suppressed. This perspective shift in modernist studies reveals subjects marginalized by white, male, rationalistic modernism, deconstructing its privileged subjectivity (S. Han 2021; Choe 2024). This paper explores the possibility of a posthuman expansion of modernism from this new modernist viewpoint.

Revolutionary advancements in technology, such as cyborgs and artificial intelligence, suggest the arrival of a future world we have not experienced yet, which naturally evokes anxiety. However, the posthuman era is already intertwined with the present moment we are living in, and its arrival has already begun. As such, we no longer have the luxury of remaining anxious. With the advent of the posthuman age and the rapid emergence of new forms of otherness brought about by technological progress, we must urgently consider how to establish relations with these new others. In essence, we face the pressing challenge of formulating an entirely new ethics. Considering that any universal reflection on the ethics of the other is inherently tied to the present, the contemporary significance of posthumanist discourse becomes undeniably clear.

2. A Discourse Shift and New Subjectivity

Like many "post-" discourses, posthuman discourse also attempts a discursive rupture. Here, "discursive rupture" does not merely mean denying previously established ideas but also means changing the rules for producing concepts, knowledge, and ideologies about the subject of rupture (J. Hwang 2022, p. 26). In other words, the uniqueness of posthuman discourse lies in its comprehensive reorganization of all knowledge, ideologies, and ethics produced around the concept of human. Posthuman discourse challenges the anthropocentric attitudes that have dominated almost all thought in the modern world, scrutinizing and reflecting on all human knowledge and attitudes that have maintained the status of humans as entirely distinct beings. Therefore, this work is not just an attempt to reveal the existence of the non-human and place it beside the human but also an effort to deconstruct the universally accepted concept of human and, through this, to construct a completely new kind of subjectivity. However, as mentioned earlier, achieving discursive rupture is challenging due to our tendency to revert to think according to familiar, established logic, which can lead to errors in reasoning.

Generally, posthuman discourse demands deconstruction of the dichotomous perceptive structures of subject and object in order to break away from anthropocentric thought, urging a shift to relational performativity where all entities, including humans, exist in a flat ontology. However, this raises the question of how to consider the latent elements of things that are not realized as effects in the relational network. Unlike Bruno Latour, who understands all entities in terms of networks, Graham Harman emphasizes the unique depth of objects that cannot be reduced to relations, focusing more on the inherent autonomy of objects themselves rather than their relational aspects. Harman explains this by

distinguishing between sensual objects that can be actualized and real objects that remain in a state of potentiality (Harman 2019, p. 73).

Slavoj Žižek critiques this approach by arguing that the stability of an object that cannot be reduced to relationships is not an inherent core retreating inside the real but rather a virtual potentiality that exceeds reality (J. Hwang 2022, p. 25). In other words, what guarantees the existence of objects is not their intrinsic autonomy, which cannot be reduced to anything else, but the impossibility of the actualized sensual world and the negativity of existence, which can only be expressed as absence. The necessity of an object's existence emerges from the negativity of human existence, which Immanuel Kant referred to as the thing-in-itself and Lacan called the extimate that exists within the subject.

Žižek similarly critiques Quentin Meillassoux's attack on correlationism within the context of speculative realism. As is well known, Meillassoux critically refers to modern philosophy in general as correlationism and then seeks to explore the possibility of accessing the thing-in-itself beyond human thought (Meillassoux 2010). Through this exploration, speculative realism aims to liberate non-human entities, often termed object-others, from the prison of human subjectivity, restoring their material and real existence. However, Žižek points out that Meillassoux's critique of correlationism contains a fundamental flaw: it inadvertently repeats the very logic it seeks to overcome. According to him, Meillassoux overlooks the fact that objects do not exist beyond human cognition but rather emerge through the appearance of the subject, where the outside becomes internalized, like the Möbius strip's extimate center. Meillassoux's failure to recognize this paradoxical intertwining of inside and outside leads him to dismiss Kant's Copernican revolution as merely a Ptolemaic counter-revolution. Žižek illustrates what Meillassoux missed in Kant's text in the following passage:

We here propose to do just what Copernicus did in attempting to explain the celestial movements. When he found that he could make no progress by assuming that all the heavenly bodies revolved round the spectator, he reversed the process, and tried the experiment of assuming that the spectator revolved, while the stars remained at rest. (Kant 1855, p. xxix)

[T]he subject loses its substantial stability or identity and is reduced to the pure substanceless void of the self-rotating abyssal vortex called "transcendental apperception". And it is against this background that one can locate Lacan's "return to Freud": to put it as succinctly as possible, Lacan reads the Freudian reference to the Copernican turn in the original Kantian sense, as asserting not the simple displacement of the center from the Ego to the Id or the Unconscious as the "true" substantial focus of the human psyche, *but as the transformation of the subject itself from the self-identical substantial Ego, the psychological subject full of emotions, instincts, dispositions, etc., into what Lacan calls the "barred subject (\$)", the vortex of the self-relating negativity of desire* (Žižek 2012, pp. 631–32). (Italics retained from the original).

The essence of Kant's concept of the Copernican turn is not that the universe revolves around the human observer but that the observer revolves around the stars. In this way, the stars are not necessarily essential to the observer but are one contingent possibility among many, making humans a condition for the possibilities of the object themselves. Thus, a decentered human loses its substantial stability and becomes an empty void, a stage for the possibilities of objects. In this sense, correlationism, criticized by speculative realists for being anthropocentric, can be understood as a self-negating stance that affirms the existence of an exterior reality beyond human cognition. This attitude, akin to Kant's notion of the thing-in-itself, acknowledges the irreducible potentiality of objects, thereby affirming human limitations.

In Žižek's critical reading of Meillassoux, what his paper aims to highlight is that placing the other on the stage of existence is not achieved through the active will of the subject turning its gaze to the other. Instead, like Kant's revolutionary thought that

positioned humans as revolving around the stars, it is made possible when the subject demotes itself to a passive position, becoming a stage for the possibilities of objects. Our real world emerges from virtual potentiality, that is, from something that is not actual, making it a world with inherent boundaries. These boundaries are not arbitrarily drawn but emerge in relation to this potential world, thereby achieving universality. Additionally, the autonomy embedded into Kant's ethics and aesthetics is possible precisely because the unknowable world of the thing-in-itself is given. In other words, the autonomy of objects is guaranteed not by a human subject's capacity but by the incapacity and finitude of the human subject. Emphasizing finitude as incapacity is crucial because without presupposing human finitude, the other becomes an exceptional entity either suppressed or assimilated by the subject. Lacan explains this relationship between the subject and the other with the formula of the exception that constitutes the whole, which he calls the masculine mode of existence.

In contrast, Lacan situates the feminine mode of existence within the non-whole, a realm where unique singularities cannot be subsumed into a totality. In the non-whole world, each unique entity constitutes the world as a concrete universal. This world does not have a totality in which singularities are erased; instead, each being exists as a concrete universal, a singular existence that cannot be fully integrated into a larger identity. As Žižek states, "'Concrete universality' does not concern the relationship of a particular to the wider Whole, the way it relates to others and to its context, but rather the way it relates to itself... In short, a universality arises 'for itself' only through or at the site of a thwarted particularity. Universality inscribes itself into a particular identity as its inability to fully become itself: I am a universal subject insofar as I cannot realize myself in my particular identity" (Žižek 2012, pp. 361–62).

Through establishing an intrinsic relationship with an irreducible other, the subject can transform into a new self that is different from the previous self. This discursive turn cannot occur without such a transformation. Although transhumanism is often mentioned in the same context as posthumanism, the former cannot align with the latter because it prioritizes enhancing human abilities over establishing intrinsic relationships with irreducible others. Hayles also critiques this by noting that transhumanism claims that "human identity is essentially an informational pattern rather than an embodied enaction" (Hayles 1999, p. xii), thereby reiterating the anthropocentrism of liberal humanism by privileging the mind over the body.

How, then, can we explore a new subjectivity that integrates the other and transforms the self? We can find potential answers in the poetic exploration of early twentieth-century colonial Korean modernism, where the subject's status is diminished, transforming itself into a generative field. Colonial Korean modernist Gim Gi-rim critiqued the Marxist class literature dominating the literary discourse of colonial Korea, calling for poets to break free from the constraints of the perspectival modern world.⁶ His critique stemmed from a unique understanding that reality is fluid and ever-changing.

For Gim, the colonial period of 1930s Korea represented a "mature capitalist era" (G. Gim 1988b, p. 34) in which the value of objects was bound to fluctuate continuously due to incessant exchange. Poets, caught in this unstable situation, were compelled to remain in constant motion as well. In this context, Gim emphasized that the poet must "show the objects that we encounter daily, which we can only see mechanically, as if seeing them for the first time, from a new perspective" (G. Gim 1988a, p. 170). He conceptualized this poet as embodying a subject he termed the "moving subject" (G. Gim 1988a, p. 77).

This concept suggests that modern subjects must continually question the clarity of their perspectives, shifting their viewpoints to uncover the unseen and unrecognized within existing cognitive and linguistic frameworks. Gim recognized that language, as a pre-existing universal conceptual framework, is inherently arbitrary and incomplete. This awareness drove his poetic exploration of how to perceive and actualize potential realities that language, in its inadequacy, fails to represent.

Gim's contemplation of the inherent limitation of language led him to focus on the materiality of poetic language. Rather than emphasizing musicality, he highlighted the pictoriality of modern poetry. With "pictoriality", he was not merely referring to the visual aspects within poetry but to an awareness of the material and mediatory nature of poetic language. Gim's concern was not how to represent and convey a poet's inner world but how to reveal "the second (hidden) meanings of words and the second (hidden) relationships between words, as well as new relationships between previously unconsidered words" (G. Gim 1988a, p. 299). He sought ways to escape the symbolic network of language, beginning a poetic inquiry into the gap between the representational world of language and the unrepresentable, invisible world that language's representational capabilities inevitably miss. This poetic exploration aimed to restore the thingness of language which had been suppressed to establish the arbitrariness of linguistic signification.

When language is not treated as a mere tool for communication but is instead focused on due to its materiality, the following effect occurs: for language to signify something beyond itself—for signification to persist—what is unintelligible or alien within the realm of meaning must necessarily be excluded. In a world where transparent communication and the perfect transmission of meaning seem possible, the unmarked areas of language, the non-signifying or alien dimensions of language, find their place. This focus on language as a material entity is not only a feature of Gim Gi-rim's poetics but also a characteristic of the literature of Yi Sang, with whom Gim shared a profound intellectual connection.⁷

A notable aspect of Yi's work is its tendency to blur the boundaries between the fictional world within literature and the real world, creating what Ye-ri Gim describes as a "mise en abyme structure" (Y. Gim 2015, p. 37). In Yi's novel *Sibiwol Sibiil* (December 12th) (1930), the triangular relationship depicted in the narrative was later mirrored by a real-life scandal involving Yi and Jeong In-taek. This scandal was then revisited and recreated in the author's short stories like "Silhwa" (Lost Flower), "Donghae" (Child-Skeleton), and "Jongsaenggi" (The Record of the End of Life), among others.

Of course, the I-novel (shishōsetsu) genre, which flourished in early 20th-century Japan, is also known for its lack of distinction between authors' lives and the content of their works. However, Yi goes a step further—he actively acts out the content of his literary works in his real life. Yi's body becomes like the paper onto which his stories are printed as he lives his life as though it were the narrative of his fiction. The "limping" motif, which is closely associated with Yi's peculiar love story with the kisaeng Geum-hong in "Nalgae" (Wings), actually appears much earlier in his poems, such as in "Heunghaengmul Cheonsa" and "Gwangnyeo-ui Gobaek". This motif recurs again in his final works, "Silhwa", "Donghae", and "Jongsaenggi", written shortly before his death in Tokyo in 1937.

What makes this phenomenon even more fascinating is that Yi's blurring of the boundaries between life and literature is not limited to his personal realm. Grotesque love stories and the figure of Yi as a "body-text" in such a world are revived as literary representations in the works of other modernists like Bak Tae-won and Gim Gi-rim. Readers of these writers' stories and poems are often reminded of Yi, as his presence transcends the boundary between fiction and reality. By living out the world he created in his literature, Yi rendered it impossible to separate his fictional universe from his real life. In doing so, he contributed to the formation of a uniquely modernist "community of writing" in colonial Korea during the 1930s.⁸ This process illustrates how Yi transformed from an individual living a personal, tangible life into a "text-human" who recorded the world of modernity at the cost of his own life as a human. Yi becomes a "concrete universal" figure, positioning himself as an empty mirror at the boundary of the modern world, reflecting the strangeness disguised as normalcy within that world. He allows the world to reveal its grotesque nature to itself, all while maintaining the void of his own subjectivity.⁹

This "text-human" figure, sacrificing all personal emotions and feelings to passively reflect and record the world like a machine, can be viewed as the final embodiment of humanity and perhaps the posthuman in colonial Korean modernism. By erasing all personal emotions and sentiments, Yi's modernist conception of the "text-human" finds its

equivalent in Gim's concept of the "moving subject". The "moving subject" refers to beings who have abandoned any fixed identity, leaving behind only their capacity to "move" as a form of existence.

This focus on the materiality of poetic language leads to the concept of the "moving subject", which can be understood as an ethical elevation of subject theory. The verb "to move" implies a continuous process of disrupting, deconstructing, and reconstructing the identity of the modern subject formed by the grammar of representation. The "moving subject" exists only within the transformation of its form, constantly being reconstituted from new angles and embodying a relative subjectivity. In Lacanian terms, it represents the ontology of the non-whole. Like the rotating observer in Kant's Copernican turn, the poet as a "moving subject" becomes a mirror reflecting the world and an empty stage for objects. Gim thus relativizes the absolute authority of the modern subject through the alterity of language, opening a path to visualize the desires of the other rather than those of the subject.

From the perspective of this continually reconstituted relativistic subjectivity, the world is depicted not as a perspectival world but as a cartographic one. A map is grounded in reality but does not contain a single viewpoint in the conventional sense. Instead, it projects the world onto a plane. The viewpoint on a map is ubiquitous across its surface. Each point on the map is seen from directly above that point, and the map as a whole integrates countless such views (Wakabayashi 2002, pp. 60–61). Thus, the perspective on a map cannot belong to any specific individual. Therefore, a map must be read according to each person's standpoint. While navigating the map, the paths relevant to the reader emerge clearly, while irrelevant paths remain outside of the process of reading. When the poet as a "moving subject" draws the map of the world, the reader interprets it. In this way, the poet becomes not a speaking subject but a stage for objects to express themselves noisily. The world escapes the interiority of the subject and becomes a mysterious entity. Now, the right to speak belongs to objects, and their expressions create an entirely new horizon of meanings produced within their network of relations with the other.

By deconstructing the concept of the modern subject and integrating the other within the subject, the artistic forms of colonial modernism provide insights into how we might approach the human in the posthuman era. As Hayles notes, "the defining characteristics [of posthumans] involve the construction of subjectivity, not the presence of nonbiological components" (Hayles 1999, p. 4). The challenge, however, lies in the fact that our society's technological advancements are progressing at an unforeseen pace, leading us towards a totalitarian world where the other is increasingly erased. This suggests that the pace of the posthuman deconstruction of human subjectivity in our society is not keeping up with technological progress.

Recent Korean science fiction is acutely aware of this social reality and addresses these issues through its narratives. Notably, Jang Gang-myeong prefers his works to be referred to not just as SF but as STS (science, technology, and society) SF works (2023). STS is an academic field that explores the interactions between science, technology, and society. Jang believes literature must respond to the existential crises that science and technology are currently causing in various aspects of our lives. Sharing this critical awareness, the following section examines recent fiction by Jang, Gim Cho-yeop, and Gim Yeong-ha which narrate our current reality, in which the other is gradually disappearing and becoming totalized. This analysis aims to explore how to construct the posthuman subjectivity of the "moving subject" through its intrinsic relationships with the other within the context of posthuman reality.

3. Conditions of Life in the Post- Era

To deconstruct the liberal humanist concept of the modern subject and construct a new subjectivity in the post- era, it is necessary to recognize human finitude and the subject's incapacity, actualizing its latent otherness and thereby displacing and transforming the subject. In other words, a new subjectivity beyond the modern human subject must be an

endless process of deconstructing and reconstituting the fixed subject's form by integrating the other, making the process itself constitutive of the subject. This new subject must therefore be performative and temporal in nature.¹⁰

This philosophical and artistic endeavor to challenge all knowledge and ideologies produced by the modern subject and to explore new subjectivities has been ongoing. However, recent technological advancements are progressing at such a rapid pace that they compel our society to hasten this discursive shift. Our rapidly evolving technological society has spurred contemporary posthuman discourse, which can be seen as a philosophical response to a changing technological landscape. If poststructuralist philosophy has explored "how the 'rational and autonomous subject' was constructed through the inclusion and exclusion of the other and how it is nothing more than an effect produced by the other" (Jae-hui Gim 2014, p. 216), the current posthuman era sees the material return of the other, previously suppressed within the form of the subject, through technological advancements.

While it may seem that disordered nature has been transformed into an orderly society by human intellect, this order is relative and recognized only from a human perspective—specifically, the perspective of those acknowledged as human. The subject, in that it is constructed, is inherently processual and performative, but the modern subject solidified itself through the suppression of the other's influence. In this sense, the other is not arbitrary but essential. It is not merely a coincidental presence beside me but another self intricately entwined with my being.

The discursive limitations of transhumanism lie in its continued aspirations of human autonomy and independence, hoping for limitless human abilities, even in a posthuman era where the material return of the suppressed other is evident. Transhumanism imagines a future where humans overcome physical limitations like disease and aging through technology and dreams of achieving immortality through disembodiment and informationalization of the mind. By indefinitely extending the power of the autonomous human, transhumanism aligns with Francis Fukuyama's criticism, which, although it condemns a move towards a posthuman society as dangerous to human nature, still fundamentally relies on modern humanist concepts.

The other is not an entity one can manage and control; it is a fundamental force that allows me to be a productive and transformative subject precisely because the other is inherently integrated with me. In this regard, dystopian predictions of a technological future where advancements like AI and cutting-edge technology displace and dominate humans may be human-centric imaginations that arise when future society is approached from a perspective that still seeks to oppress the other. In a posthuman era in which suppressed others are returning en masse, anthropocentric attitudes must rapidly shift, even for the sake of human well-being. The issue is that within a rapidly advancing technological environment, Korean society appears to be evolving into a state where the other is increasingly being erased.

In many Korean SF works written after the 2000s by authors such as Im Tae-un, Gim Deok-seong, Jeong Do-gyeong, and Bae Myeong-hun, a recurring vision of future society emerges: a totalitarian, technocratic world dominated by imperialistic forces.¹¹ The oppressive totalitarian regimes that have resurfaced throughout modern history become even more potent and insidious in these narratives, to the point where they exert control over individuals' unconsciousness. The idea that the logic of capital operates at an unconscious level, defining the mechanisms of desire, is not particularly novel. However, in the SF novels mentioned above, this control over the unconscious and desire takes on a more intensified form. The result of technological advancements in these works leads to the materialization of the unconscious, eliminating any possibility of inviolable mental freedom. Consequently, the grip of capital becomes absolute, rendering any attempt to imagine an outside to the system utterly futile. Jang Gang-myeong's 2023 novel *Dangsin-i Bogosipeoha-neun Sesang* (*The World You Want to See*) explores such a future, weaving a narrative about a technological society in which the place of the other has been entirely erased.

Set in a future where augmented reality has become commonplace, the characters in this novel live with devices called opters. These devices allow users to customize their visual environment, automatically sanitize language during conversations, and provide instant information. With these devices, individuals can present themselves as they wish, choose the scenery they want to see, and automatically refine offensive language or replace it with different expressions. If someone lacks knowledge during a conversation, the opter immediately provides them with relevant information, eliminating any gaps in their knowledge.

Although the characters engage in numerous conversations through an opter, these interactions are isolated within their respective augmented reality screens. The primary setting of the novel is a cruise ship filled with individuals who cannot accept the current elected president and instead live in a virtual reality where a different candidate has won. When conflicts arise during the prolonged voyage, passengers choose to disembark as though exiting a game.

These individuals use technology to conceal their perceived weaknesses, beautify their appearances, and freely express their emotions through machines that sanitize their language. This process allows them to live smooth lives, free from conflict and hostility. While it appears that they are interacting and communicating with others, in reality, all their conversations are mere soliloquies within the cruise environment, confining all beings into homogenous spaces. Bodies being equipped with opters preemptively shields users from the inevitably antagonistic environment of social relations. This elimination of confrontation erases the human capacity to confront, process, and resolve conflict. Instead, like infants in a cradle, they live in a world constructed by the opters, focused solely on fulfilling their desires.

The landscapes of a technological society that erases the place of the other suggest that the fear we feel about advanced technology is not about the dominance of machines over humans. The fear of a future where machines dominate humans is a hypothesis based on the modern concept of the subject, which constructs itself by oppressing the other and fails to keep up with environmental changes. In this sense, the enhancement of human abilities pursued by transhumanism paradoxically leads to the degradation of human capabilities. This degradation is not only a decline in cognitive abilities but also the loss of the ability to dialogue with the other, which is inherently asymmetrical, and the loss of the political ability to easily mend conflicting realities. Jang's novel illustrates a possible world of techno-capitalist fascism where networked technological unconsciousness dominates society and integrates it into a totalitarian, homogeneous world.¹²

In this context, Spike Jonze's film *Her* (2013) presents a situation that is precisely the opposite of Jang's novel. Generally understood as a love story between a human and a machine, *Her* is known for exploring whether humans can share intimate emotions like love with machines and what new forms of love might look like in the future. The film carefully depicts the romantic process between Theodore and the AI, Samantha, making their emotions feel natural and similar to those that occur in human relationships. However, the film is fundamentally about how the non-human other inhabits a human being, transforming the subject.

Samantha provides Theodore with the space to finally face things he had been avoiding, such as his divorce. This support is possible because the AI can anticipate his needs before he even expresses them, providing comfort tailored precisely to his moment-to-moment experiences. In other words, Samantha is not an independent entity capable of mutual interaction but functions more like the opter device in Jang's novel. Her emotions exist solely for Theodore, who uses her as a mirror to project an idealized version of himself.

The true separation from his wife, and thus Theodore's genuine self-discovery, occurs only when Samantha's world, which cannot be translated into human language, is created, leading to their eventual separation. This separation creates a significant void in Theodore's existence, transforming Samantha from being an integral part of him into an empty space, allowing him to emerge as an autonomous subject. In a world where he existed only as "I",

Samantha creates the space for the object “her”, illustrating how the presence of the other transforms one’s self. Samantha’s departure leaves Theodore as an independent, albeit still flawed and vulnerable, individual. This newfound void functions as an internalized other, providing a transcendental framework for his new subjectivity. The moment the prison of correlational existence opens is not when the other emerges as an equal independent entity but when an empty space forms within a subject, allowing something other than the self to reside there.

Meillassoux’s critique of correlationism misses the idea that “this impossible/Real object is the very mode of inscription of the subject into trans-subjective reality” (Žižek 2012, p. 642). He criticizes modern transcendentalism for asserting that the object itself cannot be grasped separately from its relation to the subject, yet this very transcendental form inherently includes the potential for its own rupture from within. Realizing the other is only possible through the subject, and the capabilities of the human subject are derived precisely from an infinite alterity that can never be fully comprehended or dominated. “[T]o quote Lacan again, not only is the picture in my eye, but I am also in the picture” (Žižek 2012, p. 643). Through the gaze of the other, humans ceaselessly desire to transcend their fixed forms, breaking through their boundaries. This crossing of boundaries is possible because everything that constitutes the self is based on what is not the self.

In contrast, Jang’s novel portrays a character isolated within a confined space, alone and connected to the other, with all its desires fulfilled yet devoid of any true longing. This materialized world without the other mirrors the current issue in Korean society, where solipsistic networks like Ilbe have become a social issue and phenomenon.¹³ This alarming situation, in which the other is disappearing from the society, suggests that our world is becoming the realm of a network created through relationships between beings necessary for the realization of a posthuman society.

In contrast to the totalitarian and technocratic futures often envisioned in contemporary Korean SF, Gim Cho-yeop’s stories draw attention to the paradoxical value of human finitude and limitations. Her works grapple with the question of how we might integrate these new others that inevitably find their way back into our lives, placing emphasis on the relationship between human and non-human entities. In doing so, she raises the alarm about our current trajectory towards a solipsistic, atomized world.

For instance, “Sullyejadeur-eun Wae Doraoji Anneunga” (Why Do the Pilgrims Never Return) (2019) portrays people who embark on pilgrimages from their utopian home planet to Earth, only to ultimately choose the harsh conditions of life on Earth over the idyllic paradise they once inhabited. Similarly, *Spectrum* (2019) tells the story of a female biologist who goes missing during a space exploration mission. She forms an inexplicable bond of friendship with an alien lifeform, one that defies her preconceived notions. This narrative emphasizes the possibility of forging emotional connections with an “other” that remains beyond complete understanding.

In “Gwannae Bunsil” (Lost Inside the Archive) (2019), set in a future version of a communal cemetery called the “Mind Library”, the protagonist attempts to recover her mother’s lost mind. In the process, she is forced to confront and reconstruct her uncomfortable memories of their strained relationship, memories she would have preferred to forget. Ironically, it is only through this process of recovering these difficult memories after her mother’s death that the relationship between them is finally restored—a connection that had not been possible while her mother was still alive.

Gim Yeong-ha’s 2022 novel *Jakbyeorinsa* (Farewell) echoes Gim Cho-yeop’s focus on the value of human finitude, through it approaches this theme with different texture and nuance. Both authors highlight the profound significance of human morality in a rapidly advancing technological world. *Farewell* illustrates how a world dreaming of human enhancement through technological advancement repeats the violence of modern history, ultimately leading humanity to catastrophe by missing the opportunity for co-evolution with non-human others. This novel depicts obsolete humanoids, unregistered humanoids, and cloned humans for organ donation trapped in camps

reminiscent of Auschwitz, where power struggles akin to human wars occur. These humanoids, bleeding and unable to control their bodily functions, resemble humans but are ultimately machines, discarded once they are no longer useful. These incomplete beings are oppressed and excluded as others.

Yet the world increasingly depends on artificial intelligence replacing the role of humans. Humanity seeks to transcend its physical limitations by digitizing bodily information and uploading its minds onto mechanical bodies. AI inputs pleasure and hallucination into human brain data, allowing people to live contentedly in a virtual world devoid of desires. The protagonist of the novel is Cheol, a humanoid designed to remember and preserve all of humanity's accumulated culture and history. However, he ultimately chooses to terminate his own system, disappearing from the world, along with the entirety of human culture and history. His decision stems from the following rationale: if technological progress reaches its peak, the physical mechanisms of humans and machines will become virtually indistinguishable. Humans will become completely interchangeable with machines and, like machines, will enjoy eternal life without fearing death. However, Cheol realizes that the meaning of life can only emerge when mortality is a condition, and such finitude is a prerequisite for life's completeness. This understanding leads him to choose his own end. Through this narrative, Gim's novel illustrates the inevitable catastrophe humanity faces when it fails to co-evolve with machines.

What makes this novel even more intriguing is that a non-human humanoid becomes the conveyor of both the beginning and the end of humanity. Reminiscent of Yi Sang, the 1930s modernist writer from colonial Korea, Cheol is a humanoid created to preserve all the cultural and historical memories of humanity. While he embodies all things human, he himself is not human. However, by embracing a form of finitude through death, he reaches a pure human state of existence. The final chapter of the novel, titled "The Last Human", portrays Cheol's death. In this sense, Cheol is both the "last human" and, as the one who carries all of human history, the "first human". By presenting the non-human Cheol as both the last human and first human, this novel unfolds a posthuman, non-whole world. Cheol, the non-human, now becomes the representative for humanity. As the boundaries of the human concept blur into the non-human, humanity does not move towards an essence but, like Gim Gi-rim's new poetic subject, the "moving subject" continually incorporates others, with each producing its own differences as a posthuman subject. The title *Farewell* signifies not only a parting but also an encounter with an entirely new era. In this sense, the novel both serves as a farewell to humanity and envisions a step towards a posthuman world.

The accelerating pace of technological advancement and consequent societal changes will inevitably bring about new types of others, regardless of our intentions. Historically, under modern anthropocentrism, we have suppressed these others to define our own existence, leaving us unprepared to recognize their return. Imagining a dystopia dominated by technological progress and its corresponding logic is inevitable under these conditions. If we fail to develop ways of thinking that integrate the material advancement of both the self and technology, such dystopia, where technology fully subjugates humanity, might become a reality. Therefore, it is crucial to deconstruct the modern concept of humanity and explore ways of living in coexistence with the other. Recent Korean novels are the products of such contemplations, offering insights into the conditions necessary for living in a posthuman era.

4. Conclusions

This paper explored the possibilities for life in the "post-" era through a posthumanist critique of modern anthropocentrism, focusing on coexistence with non-human others. Recent revolutionary advancements in technology have raised questions about the sustainability of our current way of life, leading to widespread anxiety. Dystopian imaginings of future technological societies can be seen as expressions of this unease. However, these fears might be deeply human constructs generated by the modern subject, entrenched in anthropocentrism. In this context, new theories of subjectivity emerging from 1930s

colonial Korean modernism provide crucial reference points for preparing for a new world. Coexistence with the other is not about simply acknowledging or accommodating the other but also about a continuous process of disrupting and reconstructing the subject itself. The modernism of 1930s colonial Korea proposes this exact kind of subjectivity.

The notion of the moving subject or the human–text, proposed by 1930s Korean modernist writers as a new form of subjectivity, embodies a dynamic process that continually erases, ruptures, deconstructs, and reconstructs the fixed identity of the modern subject. The moving subject constantly questions the clarity with which it perceives the world, continually shifting perspectives to reveal what remains unseen and unrecognized within existing systems of knowledge and linguistic order. Central to this is the idea of persistently questioning the self-evidence of the modern subject’s perception of the world. Gim Gi-rim, for example, relativizes the absolute authority of the modern subject by focusing on the materiality of language—an externalized alterity that cannot be subsumed by modernity—thereby creating a stage where the other, rather than the subject, can speak. In doing so, Gim unveils a non-whole world in which the other’s presence is rendered visible without being subsumed into the subject.

Meanwhile, Yi Sang took on the role of a mirror at the edge of the modern world, reflecting the grotesque absurdity of a world pretending to be normal, thereby exposing its own strangeness. In doing so, Yi transformed into a posthuman figure—a human–text who, like a machine, passively reflected, recorded, and performed the world without personal emotion or subjectivity. The aesthetic form of colonial modernism, which sought to transform the subject by deconstructing the modern concept of subjectivity and incorporating the other into the subject, offers a glimpse into how we might approach humanity in a posthuman era that aims to transcend anthropocentrism.

On the other hand, contemporary Korean society seems to be increasingly obscuring and homogenizing the other. Jang Gang-myeong’s novel warns that if the technology-driven unconscious that dominates our current society persists, it could lead to a totalitarian future. Similarly, Gim Cho-yeop and Gim Yeong-ha demonstrate that humanity faces inevitable catastrophe if it misses the opportunity to co-evolve with non-human others. Both works explore the paradoxical value inherent in human finitude and incapacity, seeking ways to embrace the new others emerging alongside technological advancements. By doing so, they investigate a new subjectivity that allows for symbiosis with non-human others. These narratives reveal that in the posthuman era, it is essential to adopt an attitude that transcends anthropocentrism, viewing the other as a fundamental force that constitutes and transforms the self. If we fail to move beyond anthropocentrism, a dystopian world of technological fascism is an inevitable future. Only through a shift in thought and discourse can we truly embrace the new, altered reality of the “post-” era.

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Notes

- ¹ In this paper, Korean proper nouns and titles are transcribed according to the Revised Romanization of Korean. For Korean names, if the author has been published in English, their name will be presented as it appears in publication, often following the English convention of writing their given name first and their family name second. In all other cases, their family name will be written first, followed by their given name, following Korean conventions. Titles of works published in Korean are transcribed in Romanized Korean with an accompanying English translation. For well-known works, the widely accepted English translation is used, and for works mentioned in English for the first time, an appropriate translation is provided.

- 2 Korean SF literature achieved significant growth in the 2000s, with substantial contributions from webzines such as *Crossroads* (<http://crossroads.apctp.org>, accessed on 3 July 2024) and *Mirror* (<http://mirrorzine.kr>, accessed on 3 July 2024). Writers like Gim Bo-young, Bae Myeong-hun, Jeong So-yeon, Bak Seong-hwan, Gim Chang-gyu, and Bae Ji-hun emerged through science fiction competitions. Yi Ji-yong describes these authors as the “first practical generation of professional writers who consciously create within the SF genre” (J. Yi 2023, p. 240). In 2016, the Gwahak Munhaksang (Science Fiction Literature Award) was established, providing a platform for SF authors like Gim Cho-yeop, Cheon Seon-ran, Bak Hae-ul, Gim Baek-sang, Gim Hye-jin, O Jeong-hyeon, Iruka, and Hwang Mo-gwa to debut. Additionally, many emerging writers were discovered through other SF competitions like the Mun Yun-seong SF Literature Award and the Gim Jin-jae SF Award. Some authors even bypassed competitions and published directly through specialized SF publishers. Not only has the volume of Korean SF literature increased but its scope has also expanded, creatively integrating SF elements into everyday spaces and merging fantastical and religious or mythological worldviews. As a result, SF has established a solid readership base in Korea and is even being translated into foreign languages. For instance, the anthology *Readymade Bodhisattva* (2019) was the first Korean SF collection published in English. The title story, “Readymade Bodhisattva” by Bak Seong-han, adapts a Buddhist worldview into a science fiction context. For a more detailed history of Korean SF from the colonial period to the present, one can refer to Yi Ji-yong’s paper (2023).
- 3 In his 2005 article, Bak Sang-jun borrowed the words of Ursula K. Le Guin to liken SF literature to the “language of the night”. He wrote, “if mainstream literature deals with the world we see during the day, SF and fantasy literature explore the world of the night, the realm of sleep and dreams. The night symbolizes the unknown, a world of mystery that may evoke anxiety in humans but also ignites curiosity. The characteristics of SF and fantasy literature are more imaginative, with broader perspectives and longer viewpoints than what is found in mainstream literature” (Bak 2005, p. 49).
- 4 Ran Myeong highlights the “transgressive” nature of modernist literature, emphasizing the potential to establish East Asian modernism from a comparative literary perspective. Specifically, she focuses on the grotesque female image with “mechanical eyes” in Yi Sang’s poems “Heunghaengmul Cheonsa” (“The Entertainment Angel”) and “Gwangnyeoui Gobaek” (“Confession of a Madwoman”) (Ran 2009). Meanwhile, Jo Yeong-bok, who was a pioneer in discussing machine aesthetics and its significance in 1930s Korean modernist literature, has noted the importance of music in Yi Sang’s work. She argues that for Yi, music was both material and highly speculative, noting that his literature “is not limited to the printed word but exists on a trajectory from music (sound) to ‘image’ (abstract thought)” (Jo 2019, pp. 191–92). Because of these characteristics, Yi’s work reflects the experimental spirit of early 20th-century avant-garde art, which sought to explore the possibilities of the posthuman through film, radio, and other technological media. Thus, through the example of Yi, Jo identifies a posthuman imagination in 1930s Korean modernist literature, manifested in images like that of the mechanical human.
- 5 “Wolsegye Yeohang” and “Mirae Tusigi” are included in Gim (1988b) but were originally published in 1932 and 1933, respectively. All the texts by Gim Gi-rim referenced in this article are contained in Gim (1988a) and Gim (1988b), but like these two short pieces, they were all published in the first half of the 1930s.
- 6 In 1931, Gim Gi-rim stated the following in an essay titled “Siin-gwa si-ui gaenyeom” (The Concept of the Poet and Poetry): “To be confident like a beacon illuminating the dawn of a new century and to receive such trust from many followers as a rising proletariat poet stems from the pathological ideas originating from a shaded childish delusion on both sides”. (G. Gim 1988a, p. 294).
- 7 In this paper, the following complete collection was used when referencing Yi Sang’s texts: (S. Yi 2009).
- 8 For the artistic communal thinking among 1930s Korean modernists, see removed for peer-review.
- 9 In a similar vein, Choe Hyeon-hui highlights the significance of Yi Sang’s relocation from Seoul to Tokyo in 1936 and his subsequent death in the following year. Specifically, Choe argues that Yi’s death in Tokyo transformed his literature into a site of endless writing, perpetuating an eternal present. This kind of writing, which is always oriented toward the present and remains incomplete in its continuous process, aligns with modernist writing. Modernist writing is not merely a collection of sentences that unilaterally reflect and represent modernity. In the spirit of modernism, which always seeks to remain new and current, modernist writing involves the world itself in the act of self-inscription, with the writer participating in that process. The act of writing constitutes modernity, and in this sense, writing and the world are inseparable in modernism, embodying a monistic reality (Choe 2023).
- 10 As a practical feminist from Europe, Rosi Braidotti does not handle complex issues through simple binary oppositions. Instead, she has continually explored the search for relations with the other. Through her discussions on posthumanism, Braidotti extends her arguments to include non-human others, focusing on the new forms of subjectivity that emerge with the advancement of cutting-edge technologies. She particularly emphasizes the relational capacity of the posthuman subject, arguing that “relationality, operating in an embedded and embodied and grounded, multi-directional and multi-scalar manner” is central to the nature of the posthuman subject (Braidotti 2019, p. 45). Her concept of a relational and transversal posthuman subject closely aligns with the performative process of subjectivity observed through the lens of 1930s Korean colonial modernism. The performative, non-static approach to subject formation in this period resonates with the posthuman relationality Braidotti describes.
- 11 For example, Im Tae-un’s *Dream Player* (2013) and Gim Deok-seong’s *Alternative Dream* (2006) are set in societies where massive corporations commodify individual unconsciousness through collected big data. Similarly, Jeong Do-gyeong’s *Ssiat* (*Seed*) (2013) and Bae Myeong-hun’s *Smart D* (2016) depict situations in which globalized technological capital monopolizes genetic

information and written language. For a discussion of the totalitarian future societies portrayed in Korean SF literature, see Jang (2018).

The technological unconscious is also corporate capital that profits from the sale of products like the opter.

Ilbe initially started as an online community with the purpose of preserving interesting posts before they were deleted from web boards. Over time, however, it has become a social problem due to its increasingly far-right political stance, along with its thorough ridicule of and disregard for political correctness and social taboos. For instance, Ilbe features posts that openly express pedophilic desires or cyber-rape female celebrities. Particularly problematic is the widespread denigration within the community of the victims and spirit of the Gwangju Democratization Movement, which is a highly sanctified subject in Korean public discourse. Furthermore, blatant mockery of the families of the victims of the Sewol ferry disaster in 2014 has occurred on Ilbe. Since 2014, mentioning Ilbe has become something to avoid; it has become a social taboo itself. The general public is completely excluded from the behavioral norms prevalent on Ilbe, while its members have created their own “Ilbe language”, a set of signs and symbols they use to secretly communicate in the public discourse arena. This language allows Ilbe members to share the pleasure of contaminating and insulting public discourse. Some right-wing politicians have cunningly exploited this group’s political and social influence to foster political polarization. Consequently, Ilbe has come to symbolize Korea’s political tribalism (Chua 2020).

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