

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF FOUR NOVELS OF KOREA:
Richard Kim's *Lost Names: Scenes from a Korean Boyhood*; Mira Stout's *One Thousand Chestnut Trees*; Chaim Potok's *I am the Clay*;
and Hahn Moo-Sook's *Encounter*

GRADES: 10-college

AUTHOR: Jane Shlensky

SUBJECT: Asian Studies (history, literature)

TIME REQUIRED: Five to eight days, depending upon length of discussion sessions

MATERIALS REQUIRED:

- Four novels (see References)
- Computers with Internet access
- Packet of information about each novel (attached)
- Maps of East Asia and Korea
- Comparative timelines of China, Korea and Japan during the 20th century

PROCEDURE:

Students will be required to read the assigned novel. To demonstrate their mastery of the content, they will then be required to discuss the novel in discussion groups and prepare papers and presentations on it.

1. Divide students into collaborative learning groups and let each team select a novel by lottery (i.e., the team that draws first gets first choice). Give the students approximately one week to read the books before the collaborative study begins.
2. Give the members of each group the packet, the outline of daily discussions and an explanation of the paper assignment, then explain the research and discussion components that will follow (see study project outline below).
3. Explain to the class the expected outcomes: (a) worthy research and discussion, (b) a plan that will guide their presentation to classmates, (c) an individual paper that will be edited by one classmate within and outside their group, and (d) a part in the assessment of self, other groups and of the project itself.
4. Since each student should facilitate one day of discussion, on day one allow students to determine the order of facilitation and ways to keep the discussion on task.
5. When the plan is completed on day five, give the students the order of presentation for the following classes and outline with them the methods they can use to present their novel (e.g. PowerPoint, five-minute commercial, study guide and so forth). At least half a class period should be set aside for editing papers.
6. All students will be asked to assess classmates in other groups during the presentations; both students and teacher will use the assessment form provided below. Each team will receive all of these after their presentation, along with their presentation grade.

EVALUATION:

- Students will be evaluated based on their performance in discussion groups, both facilitators and as discussants. They will also be evaluated on the quality of their discussion notes.
- Students will be evaluated based on their oral presentations. See the evaluation sheet below.
- Students will be evaluated on their critical essay. Their essay evaluation will be based upon a student created rubric.

ENRICHMENT:

- Instead of having students read novels, have them watch films and apply the same system of analysis.
- Eat Korean food one day as a class. Each novel group can bring in one dish for the class.
- Have each group create a short script of a major scene and act it out for the class.
- Have students create a tourism brochure that details Korean sites connected to their novel.

REFERENCES:

Hahn Moo-sook. *Encounter: A Novel of Nineteenth-Century Korea*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986.

Kim, Richard. *Lost Names: Scenes From a Korean Boyhood*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988.

Potok, Chaim. *I Am the Clay*. New York: Fawcett Crest, 1992.

Stout, Mira. *One Thousand Chestnut Trees: A Novel of Korea*. New York: Penguin Putnam, 1998.

Auxiliary Texts:

Park, Ki-seok. *Korean Cultural Heritage: Seen Through Pictures and Names*, Vol. 1 and 2. Seoul: Sigong Tech, 2005.

Eckert, Carter J., Ki-baik Lee, Young Ick Lew, Michael Robinson, and Edward W. Wagner. *Korea Old and New: A History*. Cambridge, Korea Institute: Harvard University Press, 1990.

Web Resources:

Korean War Project	www.koreanwar.org
Korean History Project	www.koreanhistoryproject.org
Asia Source	www.asiasource.org

GUIDELINES FOR COLLABORATIVE LEARNING GROUP DISCUSSIONS

You and your group members have selected one of the novels above to read and explore during these collaborative sessions. Each novel group will research their book, discuss it thoroughly and create a presentation on it to be given to your classmates at the end of the unit. As they proceed, the novel groups will also create an outline to guide their discussion and presentation. Outlines will include: (a) articles about the writers, novels and interpretations of the novels, (b) possible films and Web sites where you can find other information, (c) cultural, linguistic, and historical information particular to your novel and (d) pertinent questions about your work. As the discussions begin, each group should appoint one member to act as facilitator to keep the group on-task. This facilitator will rotate daily, so that several members will have an opportunity to guide the discussion. **All members of the groups must participate in discussions, in editing of essays, and in presentation of ideas.** The first day of study will take place in the lab where you can explore the links to articles and ideas for your novel that will inform your study for the rest of the week. Use the following outline to structure your group's discussion:

Day One: Structure of the Novel

Each group will discuss the authorial choices within their novel's structure. Consider your writer's (a) division of the novel into chapters and the means by which they represent the passages of time and changes in theme; (b) settings and their effects on other elements; (c) character development, including minor characters' interactions with primary characters; (d) plotlines and actions, including the historical backdrop to the novel and what it reveals about Korea during the time represented; (e) the title's appropriateness and meaning, and (f) the cultural and ethnic focus of your novel. Since two novels are written by Americans and two by Koreans, consider each writer's experience with Korea and his or her point of view.

Day Two: Characters

Consider the ways in which the writers develop their characters. List and discuss all the characters in your novel, focusing on (a) the purpose of each character in the novel, (b) theme(s) the characters introduce or advance, (c) the use of dialect and social classes represented, and (d) lessons the characters teach in your novel. Please note that sometimes groups of characters may function as a single entity and can be discussed as such (refugees at a particular place or generic American soldiers). Discuss whose story the novel is telling and why you believe this is. If you consider that the nation of Korea is itself a character in your novel, what do these focus items reveal about it?

Day Three: Themes and Motifs

Examine the major themes of your novel. Identify the primary themes of your novel. Which is most meaningful and revealing to readers? How does the writer introduce and construct them within the story? Review the connection of characters and themes discussed earlier. Discuss the critical articles in the packet about your novel, considering whether you agree with the critics. What cultural or religious concepts are important to the study of your novel—Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, Shamanism or Catholicism? Research! What is your novel's relevance to the study of modern Korea? What does your novel suggest about the Korea's history and culture? **See course packets for ideas specific to your novels.**

Day Four: Critical Approaches

On BlackBoard.com you will find a file of articles and Web sites explaining various critical approaches to literature. Read these and browse the Web sites until you are familiar with the concepts. Then determine the critical ways in which your book may be read and interpreted. Discuss these possibilities: Cultural Criticism, Post-structuralism, Semiotics, Feminist Criticism, Deconstructionism, New Historicism, and Psychoanalytic Criticism. Since you are all familiar with Reader Response theory, you may omit that one. Flesh out for your classmates how a few of these approaches open out your novel to be read in a variety of ways and for a variety of purposes. For example, do the female characters in the works offer a feminist approach to understanding the work? Are history and event deconstructed? (Compare events within the work and within a general history of Korea.)

Day Five: Sharing Plan

Work with your group to organize a presentation/discussion. It should inform your classmates about the importance of the work. It should exceed 30 minutes. You should provide a study sheet to the class before your presentation. Your study sheet should include (1) a synopsis of the book, (2) a bibliography of Web sites that students may use to explore information about the writer, the book and relevant themes, (3) a review of any films and criticisms of the novel, (4) and either a mock jacket cover with blurbs and cover art representing your group's consensus on the book's merits OR a five-minute commercial for your book. In your presentation, your group should prepare an outline of how you feel the book should be taught, suggesting the length of time and the methods you feel would be successful with high school-aged or early college students. Your sharing sessions will begin the day following class discussion week. The rough draft of your literary analysis paper must be edited both by a group member and by a classmate outside your group.

NOVEL GROUP PRESENTATION ASSESSMENT FORM

Novel _____

Class Period _____

Teammates _____

DID THE GROUP SUBMIT THESE MATERIALS?

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| ___ Synopsis | ___ Mock Jacket Cover or Commercial |
| ___ Bibliography of Web sites and Sources | ___ Teaching Tips for Novel |
| ___ Review of Films and Criticisms | ___ Full Group Participation |

Content and Organization:

(Comments)

- ___ Introduction is clear, interesting and succinct
- ___ Information is accurate and easy to follow and understand
- ___ Project easily adheres to the time constraints (15-20 minutes)
- ___ Project uses clear and effective audio and visual elements
- ___ Project uses the text effectively to make arguments

Delivery:

- ___ Presenters project energy
- ___ Presenters use effective gestures and poise
- ___ Presenters make good eye contact with the whole audience
- ___ Presenters' voices are effective, using appropriate volume, clarity, enunciation and pacing
- ___ Presentation is organized and effective

___ **Total**

Pointers for specific group members:

Name:

Name:

Name:

Name:

PERSONAL ASSESSMENT**KOREAN NOVELS PROJECT**

NAME _____ Class Period _____

PROJECT TITLE _____

BEFORE COMPLETING THIS FORM, please re-read the criteria for the presentation. Then answer as honestly and completely as you can the following questions about your group's preparation and performance. This form must be submitted before a project grade is given.

1. What was your primary responsibility within your group?

What were the responsibilities of your teammates?

2. Approximately how many hours did you spend preparing your project? _____

Approximately how many hours did your teammates spend on the research and preparation? _____

Do you feel the team shared the work load fairly? _____

Did each teammate contribute equally to the presentation of your research? _____

What problems did you encounter in coordinating your efforts? _____

3. What was your primary intention in making this presentation?

Did you fulfill to your satisfaction your own expectations, as well as your classmates'? _____

What changes would you make in the presentation if you could? (Consider delivery, articulation, poise, verbal and physical tics, or organizational/ informational concerns)

4. Considering your contribution to the team effort and final product, what grade do you feel you deserve? _____ Defend your choice in a sentence or two.

6. What changes in the project's guidelines would you suggest to make it better, more meaningful, more energetic and more engaging for both presenters observers?

7. Would you suggest doing this sort of project in future classes? _____ If not, what sort of project would you suggest?

Collaborative Learning Groups for Korean Novel Study

Students: Listed below are the members of your novel study group. Each member of your group should serve as facilitator for the group discussion and should be an integral part of the presentation. Be sure to research your novels by reading reviews and related articles. These resources will be posted on Blackboard.com to help you prepare for your presentation, paper and group discussions. The rough drafts of your critical analysis papers will be thoroughly edited, first by a member of your group and then by a member of another group. Members may elect to see Korean films together to enhance their research. Enjoy a novel experience together!

Group 1:

Lost Names

Group 2:

One Thousand Chestnut Tree

Group 3:

I Am the Clay

Group 4:

Encounters

WRITING CRITICAL ANALYSES

Jane Shlensky, instructor

DIRECTIONS: You have a number of options in writing about your novel. Since you will formulate and develop your thesis to reflect your own questions and interests, these suggestions are broad. Specific ideas are in your novel study packet on Blackboard.com (BB). Please work within your groups and with your teacher to develop and prove your thesis. **Use the maps, historical information and additional research to support and prove the validity of your thesis.** (A) Since you have articles about various critical approaches to literature, consider using one of these approaches in interpreting and analyzing your text. (B) Use criticism, reviews, Web-based research and the novel itself to support your ideas. **Quotations and sources must be cited correctly and documented in your works cited and bibliography.**

As always, your paper must include these components: (1) A title page with a meaningful title and your name, course name, instructor name, school and the date submitted; (2) well-developed and interesting thesis, supported with direct quotations and research; (3) pagination in the upper right hand of each page, beginning with the second page of text; (4) a conclusion that ties together all loose ends and makes sense of the novel; (5) a works cited and bibliography page; (6) the appropriate use of MLA documentation. Please pay attention to punctuation and format your paper using MLA guidelines. If you have trouble with this, ask your teacher. **All MLA guidelines are posted on BB.**

THEME ANALYSIS

From the list of themes you made during your discussions, select the one that is most compelling to you. Explain how and why you believe the author develops this theme. Develop that thesis and find support to prove your point of view.

SETTING (TIME AND PLACE)

In what ways does the novel's landscape determine the actions and reactions of the characters? In what ways does the time period in which a writer sets a book determine the actions and choices of characters? Do the choices that the characters face mirror larger choices faced by society (both Korean and American) today? Does the landscape used within the novel mirror the interior landscape of a character or characters?

STRUCTURE OF NOVEL

How a storyteller chooses to tell his or her story is often as interesting as the story itself. What structure has the writer of your novel chosen? Do you find it effective or ineffective? Please note that "it was hard to understand" is not a valid response here, since you are asked to think and research further to try to understand. A novel is not just about entertainment, after all. You may discuss the use of recurring motifs, imagery, metaphor and poetic language. You may consider the other ideas you discussed in your groups. **Remember that the process of leaving and returning to Seoul in these novels sets up a series of changes and structures the novel around historic events.**

CULTURAL EXPLORATION

Each novel explores a particular culture, ethnicity, economic/social group and gender. What are the writers suggesting about what it is like to be Korean in the time period within the novel as well as in the modern age? To be Catholic in a Confucian or Buddhist community? To be a Japanese soldier in Korea? To be a second-generation Korean American traveling to find one's roots? To be an American or Korean soldier during the Korean War? To be a woman in a masculine world? A citizen dehumanized by events and societal structures? A human being in need of love, selfhood and power? Dig in here and formulate your thesis based upon the cultural, historical and gender questions you think are most apparent and meaningful in your novel.

The best theses often come from a question that bothers the reader, forces him or her to find out more about a subject in order to answer that question. Make a list of your five most prominent and compelling questions about your novel. After formulating the questions, write about how they might be answered. Develop your thesis from these questions and answers, and use your research and reading to prove your it.

THE HAHN MOO-SOOK PACKET, *ENCOUNTER*

1. Book Review <http://canadianasianstudies.concordia.ca/htm/cre.htm>

Encounter: A Novel of Nineteenth-Century Korea. Hahn Moo-Sook. Translated by Ok Young Kim Chang. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.

This is a volume in the UCP's Voices from Asia series. It was originally published in Korean in 1986. That year, Hahn Moo-Sook, the author, won the Grand Prix of the Republic of Korea Literature Award, in effect, adding credibility to her novel's Korean "voice". Yet this voice does not sound sufficiently persuasive.

Hahn talks about several early nineteenth century Koreans persecuted for their Roman Catholic belief. She portrays them as true Christians living up to the teachings of their acquired religion, and attaining communion ("encounter") with God and, in God, with each other on their road to martyrdom.

But Hahn seems to forget that Christianity pertains to a particular culture or cultures, and that when it obtains converts among different cultures, the latter's behavior is often aberrant. Korean converts may not be exceptional. The known fact in the nineteenth century history of Christianity in Korea is that only a few hundred Korean Christians were persecuted. This, nevertheless, does not mean that they were actually Christian. Hahn seems mixed up in this regard.

Her treatment of Tasan stretches the historical evidence. In her story, this neo-Confucian scholar is "a fellow Christian" (p. 102) although he denies it, allegedly for the sake of his family's security. She supports her account by fragmentary drawings upon Tasan's diverse works. In doing so, however, she leaves aside the facts that Tasan read the Christian literature only when he was young, and that nowhere in the vast works he directly employed Christian conceptual tools to advance his points. The consequences are inconsistencies and incoherences in her story. In one place, for instance, Mateo Ricci presents Christianity as a means to "supplement Confucian belief" and Tasan and other Sirhak scholars accept it as such and as an object of their Western study (p. 25). In another place, Confucian teachings turn to be subservient to Christian belief, for Tasan now takes Confucius to have taught what Christ was to teach several centuries later by suggesting "enlightenment based on the Will of Heaven" to be "man's ultimate objective of life" (p. 196). Stressing Koreans' acceptance of and even conversion to Christianity is one thing, presenting them as Christians is another. As in the case of Richard Kim's *The Martyred*, "true" Christians are often hard to find among Koreans although too many of them are officially Christian.

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2. Book and Author Information

<http://www.ucpress.edu/books/pages/5740.html>

This historical novel, *Encounter (Mannam)*, by Hahn Moo-Sook, one of Asia's most honored writers, tells of the resilience in the Korean spirit. It is told through the experiences of Tasan, a high-ranking official and leading neo-Confucian scholar at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Because of Tasan's fascination with Western learning, then synonymous with Catholicism, he is exiled to a remote province for 18 years. In exile he meets people from various social and religious backgrounds—Buddhist monks, peasants, shamans—whom he would not otherwise have met. The events of Tasan's life are effectively used to depict the confluence of Buddhist, neo-Confucian, Taoist and shamanistic beliefs in traditional Korea.

A subplot involves three young sisters, the daughters of a prominent Catholic aristocrat, and affords the reader vivid glimpses into Yi-dynasty women's lives, particularly those of palace ladies, scholars' wives, tavern keepers, shamans and slaves. In contrast to the long-held Confucian stereotype of female subservience, this story illustrates the richness of women's contribution to Korean culture and tradition.

Encounter's detailed narrative provides a broad and informed view of nineteenth-century Korea, making it a highly useful book for courses on Korean literature and society. It will also be an engaging read for lovers of historical fiction.

About the Author

Hahn Moo-Sook was born in Seoul, Korea, in 1918. She has received many prestigious awards, including the Republic of Korea Samil Culture Award (1989) and the Korean Academy of Arts Prize for Literature (1991). Ok Young Kim Chang was born in Seoul, Korea, and received the Korean Culture and Arts Foundation's Best New Translator Award. She now lives in Connecticut. Don Baker is assistant professor of Korean Studies at the University of British Columbia. He has written widely on Korean religions.

Awards

Winner of the 1986 Grand Prix of the Republic of Korea Literature Award

3. Information about the writer

Hahn Moo-Sook was born into a progressive, yet very traditional, Korean family. She had a strict early education, which emphasized propriety and knowledge of the East Asian classics. Hahn, whose artistic talent was discovered and nurtured from early childhood, first pursued painting. An extended illness, and her marriage in 1940 to Kim Jin-Heung, a banker from an extremely conservative family, forced her to switch to writing to satisfy her artistic desires. In 1941, she won first prize in a contest sponsored by a leading monthly magazine, *Sinsedae*, for a novel titled *A Woman with a Lantern*. Soon afterwards, Hahn won several drama competitions with her one-act play, *Heart*, in 1943 and her four-act play, *Frost Flowers* in 1944. In 1948 her full-length novel *And So Flows History*, placed first in a literary competition sponsored by *Kukche Sinbo*, a

daily newspaper. She won the Asia Foundation's Freedom Literature Award for a short story entitled *Abyss* (1957) and the Grand Prix of the Republic of Korea National Literature Award for her novel *Encounter* (1986). The total literary work of Hahn Moo-Sook, collected in a ten-volume anthology (1992-1993), demonstrates the diversity of her literary activities, from novels and short stories to essays, criticism, public lectures, broadcasts, interviews and travelogues. Her works in translation appear in five volumes, one of which is the much acclaimed *Encounter* (University of California Press, 1992).

Hahn Moo-Sook is known for her description of human dilemmas resulting from the conflicting worlds of individual consciousness and conventional reality. Critics have identified Hahn as a perceptive literary mediator, who sought harmony and balance between the contrasting forces, seeing human existence in terms of "dialectic interactions of seemingly binary opposites. "Some others have noted how Hahn "accommodates the Western concept of sin within a dialectic binary opposites provided by Korean tradition," often with an "explicit presentation of the complementary nature and interchangeability of sin and sanctity."

One of the most traumatic experiences in Hahn's life was the tragic accident that killed her third child, a promising and popular young doctor and concert cellist. Through this experience she met death in a most personal and intense way. She injured her back shortly after the funeral. Heart broken, she lay paralyzed physically and mentally for a while. When she finally "came back to life," her literature seemed to show a maturity that only such extreme experiences could bring. *Everything Between Us* (1971) is a heart rending story told in a form of letter addressed to her departed son.

4. Critical Article: "Literature as Encounter and Discovery, as exemplified by Hahn Moo-Sook's novel *Encounter*" by Ch'oe In-ho

The Italian explorer Columbus discovered the American continent in 1492. Of course, the unknown continent had existed even before he discovered it. But through Columbus' discovery the unknown entity has emerged above the surface of the historical waters as a "new world." Literature is like a voyage in search of a new continent, and the author is like Columbus. In the course of our lives, undiscovered subject matter abounds like countless islands in the gigantic ocean of awareness. If perchance such a continent is not discovered through the eyes of a writer, it would sink to eternal oblivion. An author, therefore, is like an explorer who, through an endless literary voyage, discovers and reveals a fascinating new world. Accordingly, an author may be called a christener of a particular subject matter just as Columbus who, upon discovery of an unknown continent, finally helped it exist by naming it America. Just as a conductor's baton directs a violinist in an orchestra or a drummer's dance, when a writer names something, he or she confers upon it both its existence and meaning.

In classical Korean literature, two great literary pieces, *The Tale of Ch'unhyang* and *The Tale of Shimchong*, represent two prototypes to which modern Korean literature can be related. In the classical tale of Ch'unhyang, the important motif is none other than an encounter. Love sprouts from an encounter at the Kwanghan Pavilion in Namwon in the southwestern province of Cholla,

between Yi Mong-nyong, son of the county magistrate, and Ch'unhyang, daughter of a retired *kisaeng* (a female entertainer, similar to Japanese geisha). For them, their class difference is not an obstacle. The romance, whose beauty is unrivaled in world literature, falls into a crisis with the entrance of an evil figure by the name of Pyon who succeeds Mong-nyong's father as the magistrate. Eventually, following his "homecoming in golden robes" as the secret royal inspector, Yi Mong-nyong rescues Ch'unhyang, and the evil magistrate is dismissed and punished. The story has a happy ending, as their love is fulfilled.

In contrast, the theme of the story of Simch'ong, based on a Buddhist legend, is about an opening of the eyes (i.e., a prototype of "discovery.") Simch'ong, the 16-year old daughter of a blind man, sells herself to boat people, who throw her into the ocean as a sacrifice to the god of the sea. The pious daughter Simch'ong is resurrected and is betrothed to a king, who invites all the blind people of the country to his palace in hopes of finding among them his wife's father. The blind Sim's eyes open at the dramatic moment of his re-encounter with his daughter. In Asian thinking, based on the Buddhist belief, "seeing with open eyes" corresponds to "being awake and seeing through the Truth."

Modern Korean literature has inherited the spiritual legacy of the tales of Ch'unhang and Simch'ong. One notable example is Hahn Moo-Sook's novel, *Encounter*. The novel's very title and plot correspond with the eternal themes of encounter and discovery represented by the tales of Ch'unhyang and Simch'ong. *Encounter* is a rare novel in Korea, because it explores and probes so deeply into the Catholic faith, a faith which took root in Korean soil through the beliefs and actions of Koreans themselves and not by proselytization. It recounts the early Christians' tenacity that led to their heart rending martyrdom. Hahn creates her work around two historical figures, Tasan Chong Yag-yong, a modern thinker and a scholar of the Sirhak (Practical Learning) School, and Hasang, Tasan's nephew and a Catholic martyr. The novel *Encounter* is distinguished by Hahn's ability to produce great fiction at the same time that she chronicles an actual historical event.

In the twilight of her life, Hahn Moo-Sook, a practicing Catholic, had a burning desire to write a novel based on her faith. It might not be a coincidence that, between 1985 and 1989, she was the president of the Korean Catholic Writers' Association. In her preface to *Encounter*, Hahn explains her motivation to write a Catholic novel that sums up her own life:

Tasan Chong Yag-yong, in spite of his noble life based on pure principles, was unable to free himself from the attachment of human nature. This gigantic but lonely soul, paradoxical and impregnated with human weaknesses, has long captivated me. His very human faults and trespasses came to move me just as deeply as his greatness. Another personage that I have adored is Tasan's nephew, St. Paul Chong Hasang, who unlike Tasan, trod the road of unwavering faith, for which he willingly sacrificed his life. St. Paul Hasang's immaculate life has always cleansed my soul. These two souls, contrasting as they are, have filled my heart, one just as dearly as the other.

Hahn Moo-Sook made her debut as a writer in 1941 at the age of 23 with a novel titled *A Woman with a Lantern*, written in Japanese. She made a spectacular impression on the Korean literary scene in 1948 when her novel, *And So Flows History*, won the *Kukche Sinbo's* literary contest.

Her literary career culminated *Encounter*, which she published in 1986 at the age of 68. It was also her last work, as she passed away in 1993. As a Catholic, Hahn seems to have always felt indebted to Tasan Chong Yag-yong and his nephew Chong Hasang. Hahn Moo-Sook explains her choice of her novel's title as follows: "Tracing the history of mankind, we come across individuals who met pathetic ends after a life of suffering because they were so far above the ordinary people, their lives so lofty, and their eyes open so ahead of their times."

It goes without saying that her encounter with Tasan Chong Yag-yong became a novelistic motif. However, for Hahn Moo-Sook, the encounter was a discovery of a great soul, and in the abyss of her discovery dwelled the sacredness of God. In meeting her God, who dwelled deep in the abyss of her heart, she made an apology for her own human weaknesses through the character of Chong Yag-yong, while expressing her passionate fervor for God through the martyrdom of Chong Yag-yong's nephew Chong Hasang. Chong Yag-yong's human foibles were human weaknesses lurking inside Hahn Moo-Sook, and Chong Hasang's spirit of sacrifice was the passion dwelling inside Hahn's religious subconscious. In other words, Chong Yag-yong and Chong Hasang represent the dual nature of their creator, Hahn Moo-Sook. The novel *Encounter* is Hahn Moo-Sook through and through. Her style is as graceful and articulate as she was. Further, her descriptions are as sentient, spirited and youthful as she was, even in her old age.

The author Hahn Moo-Sook, who lived a life of propriety like Sin Saimdang, Korea's ideal female figure, and who was as aloof as Choson dynasty white porcelain, has left the following poem of farewell to her life through the mouth of Yi Sung-hun as he was being martyred in her novel *Encounter*:

Though the moon disappears from the sky,
It remains in the heavens;
Though the water evaporates on the surface,
It is undiminished in the pond.

[translation by Ok Young Kim Chang, *Encounter*, p. 316]

Hahn Moo-Sook, the author, explains the poem as follows:

Just as the moon is somewhere in the sky, even if it is sunken into the eastern mountain, my faith is constant in my heart. Just as the water is still in the pond, even if it is evaporated from the surface, my faith is constant.

Saint Francis said the following:

Flower petals fall, but the flowers never wither forever.

Indeed, Hahn Moo-Sook has died and left us. However, just as the moon is still in the sky and the flowers come back every year, although flowers fall, she is still meeting us and she is living next to us through her work *Encounter*. The greatness of literature is none other than that.

THE CHAIM POTOK PACKET: *I AM THE CLAY*

1. Information about the Author <http://www.kirjasto.sci.fi/potok.htm>

Chaim Potok (1929-2002) - original name Herman Harold Potok

Chaim Potok was a rabbi and author whose novels depict the life and culture of Orthodox Jews. Potok's works in the 1980s were frequently autobiographical. Throughout his publishing career Potok wrote scholarly and popular articles and reviews. A central theme of Potok's work is the tension between the culture and values of Judaism and those of modern society.

''Reuven, as you grow older you will discover that the most important things that will happen to you will often come as a result of silly things, as you call them - 'ordinary things' is a better expression. That is the way the world is.'''

from *The Chosen*

Herman Harold Potok was born in New York City, in the Bronx, as the eldest son of Jewish immigrants from Poland. Following tradition, Potok's parents also gave him a Hebrew name, Chaim Tvzi (Chaim means "life" or "alive"). His father, Benjamin Max Potok, was a jeweler and watchmaker. As a child Potok received primary education in Jewish schools where a secular curriculum was taught in tandem with the Talmud. Potok's upbringing, Orthodox if not quite Hasidic, was the inspiration for several of his novels, which are set in Orthodox Jewish communities in Brooklyn and the Bronx.

As drawing and painting were considered by the Orthodox community to be a violation of the second commandment, as well as frivolous, Potok focused on writing. He read works by James Joyce, Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, Thomas Mann and Evelyn Waugh, whose novel *Brideshead Revisited* (1945) impressed him deeply. After finishing his education at the Talmudic Academy High School of Yeshiva University in Washington Heights, Manhattan, and the Jewish Theological Seminary, Potok received his MA in Hebrew literature. At the age of 25 he was ordained a conservative rabbi. Between the years 1955 and 1957 he was a chaplain with the U.S. Army, spending more than 15 months of his service with front line units in Korea. This experience provided material for Potok's novels *The Book of Lights* (1981) and *I Am the Clay* (1992). From 1957 to 1959 Potok taught at the University of Judaism. In 1958 he married Adena Sarah Mosevitzsky, a psychiatric social worker. Their first child, Rosa, was born in 1962. In 1963, Potok took his family to Israel for a year.

In 1964 Potok became the managing editor of *Conservative Judaism*. In 1965 he was appointed editor-in-chief of the Jewish Publication Society in Philadelphia, and was subsequently promoted to chairman of its publication committee. 1965 was also the year that Potok received his Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Pennsylvania. In the early 1980s he was a visiting philosophy professor at the University of Pennsylvania and Bryn Mawr College. Potok died of brain cancer on July 23, 2002 in Merion, Pennsylvania.

"How the world drinks our blood," Reb Saunders said. "How the world makes us suffer. It is the will of God. We must accept the will of God." He was silent for a long moment. Then he raised his eyes and said softly, "Master of the Universe, how do you permit such a thing to happen?"

from *The Chosen*

As a novelist Potok made his debut with *The Chosen* (1967), a story about the rivalry and friendship between a progressive Orthodox Jewish scholar and a young Hasid: Reuven Malter, the secular Jew, and Danny Saunders, from a Hasidic family. Danny's father is a *tzaddik* (Hebrew for "righteous one"), a spiritual leader of a Hasidic community. He expects that Danny, his elder son, will succeed him. The book became a best-seller, which was a surprise for the author. "I thought 500 people might be interested in reading this story about two Jewish kids," Potok said. The novel stayed on *The New York Times* best-seller list for more than six months and was nominated for a National Book Award. Two years later, Potok published *The Promise* (1969), which follows the same characters. Danny's secular studies and faith with Freudian psychology have lured him away from the faith of his father. The book was a Literary Guild Choice and had a first printing of 100,000 copies. A film version of *The Chosen* was filmed in 1981, starring Rod Steiger.

Potok's next work, *My Name is Asher Lev* (1972) is the story of a young artist, whose religiously conservative family does not approve of his career choice. A sequel, *The Gift of Asher Lev*, appeared in 1990. Lev, now a world-renowned author living in Paris, is called back to Brooklyn, and forced to make a choice between the worldly and the sacred. *The Gates of November* (1996) is a family chronicle, but depicting the real-life family of Russian Jews. The story of Solomon and Volodya Slepak, a father and son, is simultaneously the story of Soviet Jewry and the rise and fall of the Soviet Union.

Potok also wrote *In the Beginning* (1975) is a modern criticism of the Bible and tradition. *The Book of Lights* (1981), and *Davita's Harp* (1985) explore the conflict between religious and secular interest. Among Potok's non-fiction works is *Chaim Potok's History of the Jews* (1978), in which the author combines scholarship with dramatic narrative..

2. Hymn Reference

<http://www.lasierra.edu/~ballen/potok/Potok.clay.html>

"*Have Thine Own Way, Lord*", is a Christian hymn frequently referenced toward the end of *I Am the Clay*. The hymn was written by George C. Stebbins in 1907.

Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!
Thou art the Potter; I am the clay.
Mold me and make me After Thy will,
While I am waiting, Yielded and still.

Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!

Search me and try me, Master, today!
Whiter than snow, Lord, Wash me just now,
As in Thy presence Humbly I bow.

Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!
Wounded and weary Help me, I pray!
Power--all power--Surely is Thine!
Touch me and heal me, Saviour divine!

Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!
Hold o'er my being Absolute sway!
Fill with Thy Spirit Till all shall see
Christ only, always, Living in me!

Jeremiah 18:6 is a great biblical reference, however, Isaiah 64:8 is even better: "But now, Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay, thou the potter, and all of us are thy handiwork." NEB [Isaiah 64:7, Tanakh]

3. Author Information

http://www.gradesaver.com/ClassicNotes/Authors/about_chaim_potok.html

4. Book Review

<http://www.trageser.com/archive/books/bookreview-clay.html>

“Potok's Tale Crosses Cultural Lines” by Jim Trageser
This review first appeared in the *Oceanside Blade-Citizen*.

For three decades, Chaim Potok has been, like Kurt Vonnegut, like Norman Mailer, like Hemingway before them, one of those rare writers who transcends the boundary between literature and popular fiction.

His first novels, *The Chosen* and *The Promise* were runaway best-sellers. Detailing the lives of ultraorthodox Hasidic Jews in World War II era Brooklyn, these novels so successfully cut across cultural lines in describing what it is like to be an adolescent rebelling against one's culture without rejecting it that, in spite of their popular sales, they received the critical and academic attention reserved for our most respected works.

Potok's subsequent novels have, likewise, focused on different aspects of American Judaism, and all have been written in an open, accessible style comparable to any other best-selling writer's. There is nothing patronizing or trite about Potok's work; he has that rare gift of being able to convey deep, serious thought in clear, everyday language.

I Am the Clay is a departure for Potok on two levels. The most obvious is that *I Am the Clay* is not about Jews, American or otherwise. Indeed, this novel details the lives of three Korean refugees—an elderly couple and a young boy they nurse back from a near-fatal wound—fleeing south during the Chinese offensive of the Korean War.

The book is also a departure from his earlier works in that it has a much heavier, darker tone. While far more spiritually inclined than most postwar European fiction, *I Am the Clay* is nonetheless startlingly similar to works by Albert Camus and Marguerite Duras in its stark, barren landscapes and brooding tone of resignation to fate.

This is a most un-American novel in that the individuals do not believe they control their own destinies, but are instead unmistakably caught up in forces beyond their control—a situation they accept.

A deeply moving book, *I Am the Clay* is certainly Potok's most challenging. And while the brutal day-to-day reality of life as a war refugee and agricultural peasant weighs far more heavily in the book than any references to Korean culture, the book still succeeds wonderfully in capturing the essence of the three protagonists.

In order to convey the feeling of being an uneducated peasant whose life has rarely ventured beyond the boundaries of a village of a couple dozen farmers, Potok uses short, clipped sentences and incomplete thoughts. The repetition of daily routines and simple, reflexive religious ceremonies also bring across the limits of life for the uneducated and poor.

When confronted with a potential disaster—such as the lack of firewood in the dead of winter, for instance—the characters typically invoke the surrounding spirits or memories of their parents or grandparents. The woman also instinctively makes a sign of the cross her mother learned from missionaries decades ago, not even knowing what it means, hoping only to appease whatever gods control her destiny.

A recurring theme in all of Potok's work has been that of reconciliation. In this case, the old man opposes the woman's adopting of the orphaned boy who is not related to them. Each of the three of them must come to terms with the new situation, without having anything in their life experiences to measure it against.

As with all of Potok's novels, pleasure is its own reward—the pleasure of reading a well-written tale of people seemingly very different from ourselves who nonetheless manage to illustrate the important issues in our own lives.

THE MIRA STOUT PACKET: *ONE THOUSAND CHESTNUT TREES*

1. Information and Discussion Questions for the Book

http://www.readinggroupguides.com/guides_O/one_thousand_chestnut_trees1.asp

The main character of *One Thousand Chestnut Trees* is a Korean American teenager named Anna. When her Uncle Hong-do arrives in the U.S. to visit, his eccentric customs inject a fresh curiosity about Korea into Anna's life.

Years later, Anna, now an artist in Manhattan, finds herself in a state of Bohemian malaise—unhappy, aimless, uninspired, and mired in routine. She seeks to fill the void with an expedition to Korea, retracing her mother's journey in an effort "to see my family undie." Her departure stirs up vivid, shocking memories for her mother, of her gilded childhood, and of her noble clan's fall from power. Long ago, her grandfather commanded his own private armies and owned vast estates across the country from north to south. In defiance of centuries of barbarous invasions—by the Japanese, Manchus and finally the Communists—he built a temple high in the mountains and planted one thousand chestnut trees to shield it from view. Generations later, his trees call back his great-granddaughter Anna, who sets out with Uncle Hong-do to find the hidden temple and excavate from history the remains of her family's legacy.

Mira Stout's debut novel has the sweep of a generational saga and the historical weight of grand epic. It is her great achievement to have captured the turbulent and largely unknown century of Korean history with such elegance and assurance, all the while keeping the threads of this family tapestry firmly in hand.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Uncle Hong-do's visit to Vermont has a lasting effect on Anna. Discuss the differences between Hong-do's when he arrives in America and years later when he is a businessman in Fort Lee. Did he seem more American as he embraced the American dream of success or did he seem simply more capitalist?
2. When Anna spends time with Hong-do in Korea, he is again a successful businessman. Are there differences between his personality as a businessman in Korea and as a businessman in America? If so, how does this relate to Anna? If we are all influenced by our cultural surroundings, as well as our cultural heritage, how might we use this knowledge to better our society?
3. Before Anna visits Korea, she feels little connection to her Korean heritage. In what way does this contribute to problems she has with her mother? Does her exploration of her ancestry help her to better understand her mother? Discuss what Anna's voyage reveals about her mother's character and how you think their relationship could change as a result.
4. Korea's history is a particularly violent one. Discuss the Confucian attitude of compassion toward Japanese aggressors. Given the repeated atrocities that Japan perpetrated against Korea

over the centuries, what do you make of this pacifism? Do you find it frustrating? Or does the national refusal to violate deeply-held beliefs in the face of horrific suffering amount to a kind of victory over their aggressors?

5. Hong-do believes that America fought against Communism rather than for Korea during the war and that the continued American presence there keeps Korea divided and weak. What do you think? Hong-do is obviously a capitalist as well as a nationalist. If South Koreans are willing to risk having their country usurped by North Korean Communists, should American troops come home? Or is this attitude unfair given the fact that America and the United Nations had to "rescue" them before?

6. Despite Anna's disappointment at being unable to visit the family estate and the temple, she does experience moments of intense spiritual connection to Korea—a sense of mystical déjà vu. Have you ever visited the land of your ancestors and felt something similar?

7. Discuss the apparent differences between Korean and American cultures. How do the two cultures differ in their concepts of family, duty, loyalty and history?

8. Consider the plight of Aunt Pusan, who was all but ignored by her family during her depression. Contrast Pusan with other fictional and/or historical characters who have suffered from mental illness. How does her treatment compare with theirs? Do you think Stout uses Pusan to critique 1940s Korean culture?

9. In many ways, Anna's journey to Korea is also one of self-discovery. Learning about her mother's life helps her understand the difficulties they've had in communicating. Do you think that learning about her extended family's suffering and the history of Korea helps Anna to mature in other ways?

10. When visiting her grandmother's grave, Anna realizes that "maybe it was possible to face a blank canvas and put something sincere on it." Why do you think she finds the idea of sincerity jarring? How do you think her trip has helped her to understand the source of her artwork?

2. Information on Korean War's Impact

http://www.calvin.edu/news/releases/2001_02/korea.htm

50 Years And Counting *The Impact of the Korean War on the People of the Peninsula* May 2002, Phil de Haan

It was 50 years ago next summer that an armistice was signed at Panmunjŏm, ending the Korean War and bringing an uneasy peace to the ravaged peninsula. But for the Korean people, peace is a relative term. A physical peace has for the most part been achieved. But a psychological peace is not yet part of the Korean existence. For the Korean War split a land and separated a people. And

no armistice can remedy that ill.

War, of course, always exacts a heavy toll on civilians. But the impact of the Korean War on the civilian population was especially dramatic. Korean civilian casualties—dead, wounded and missing—totalled between three and four million during the three years of war (1950-1953). Recent media reports on reunions in Korea estimate that as many as one million civilians in the northern part of the country fled south ahead of the Communists in the early days of fighting. Many of those people assumed their flight to be a temporary measure; they fully expected to return to their lands after the fighting ended. So many left not just property and heirlooms, but also close relatives. In fact, this year's government-sponsored reunions in North Korea brought together some of those families after 50 years of exile.

Others fled with both immediate and extended family but then saw their family bonds breached in the actual rush south as parents were captured or killed and children were lost or died of starvation.

No one knows for sure how many families were severed because of the Korean War, but in the fall of 1999 the world learned of one brutal incident that impacted hundreds of Korean civilians. That year the Associated Press told the sad saga of No Gun Ri, where U.S. soldiers killed hundreds of South Korean refugees, fearing that North Korean agents had infiltrated the fleeing families.

The soldiers, AP said, were unprepared for war, "teenagers who viewed unarmed farmers as enemies, led by officers who had never commanded men in battle. And the Koreans were peasant families trapped in their ancestral valley between the North Korean invaders and the American intervention force."

Such blatant incidents, in which civilians were shot under direct orders, while perhaps rare, were not the only dangers Korean civilians faced. They also were often victims of random and indirect violence. The civilian population suffered enormous casualties in both the north and the south for the duration of the three-year war. The city of Seoul, for example, was first taken by the Communists in their first push south and then retaken by the UN troops after the amphibious landing led by MacArthur at Inch'on. But when the Chinese entered the war and pushed the U.N. back to the south, Seoul fell again to the Communists only to be retaken a fourth time in the subsequent UN counteroffensive.

During much of this fighting civilians were fleeing Seoul (and then returning), but others stayed in the city the entire time, alternately hiding from the Communists and welcoming the UN liberators. There, of course, they were subjected not only to the fates that might befall them should they be captured by the Communists, they also were exposed to fierce battles in the street of the city as well as regular overhead bombing raids.

Author Mira Stout speaks of this in her novel *One Thousand Chestnut Trees*.

The main character of the novel is Anna, a contemporary Korean American woman. The story flashes back to the Korean War, when Anna's mother, Myung-ja, was a civilian in Seoul. As the Communists advance on the city, Myung-ja and her family decide to stay. They take shelter in a small house in Seoul, pretending to be farmers and determined to stay. But they see others fleeing.

Stout tells us of the horrible panic that accompanied that flight.

"Millions of people were heading toward the Han River like sheep toward a cliff," she writes. But the ferries were overcrowded. Hundreds perished in the Han, drowned on sinking boats or trying to swim across the river. Seoul falls, the Han River bridge is obliterated by Rhee's retreating forces and the family is trapped in the city with the enemy.

During this time of occupation, Myung-ja visits a school friend whose family have become Communists. Myung-ja worries that her friend's family will turn her family in to the authorities. This was a legitimate concern. Many non-Communists in the south and north did meet deaths after being turned in by fellow civilians. Indeed, Korean writer Pak Wan-so lost her uncle and her brother soon after the war broke out; both were falsely accused of being Communists and died as a result. Her 1972 novel, *A Season of Thirst*, deals with her brother's death and the two occupations of Seoul by the Communists.

During the second occupation of Seoul the escape to the south was even more desperate. This flight was ahead of the Chinese who were routing the UN forces and moving the front south at a rapid pace. Civilians in Seoul were understandably panicked, especially when they saw the pace with which the military was heading south.

Stout describes the scene. Civilians trying to cross the Han are told to stop by the police. The roads are full south of the Han. But the poor people of Seoul cross anyhow. And as they do South Korean policemen begin to shoot. The ice cracks and swallows up animals and people alike. Bombed-out bridges are not passable but people attempt to cross them nonetheless, in some cases traversing the girders above the span. At the railroad station in Seoul the scene is the same. The train to Taegu, in the south of Korea, is not only full inside its cars, but also sees people clinging to the sides and the roof. Those of the top of the train are killed when it reaches the first tunnel; many on the sides froze to death during the seven-hour journey south.

Max Desfor, an Associated Press correspondent in Korea during the war, remembered the flight from Seoul and the casualties suffered by civilians in *Remembering the Forgotten War: The Korean War Through Literature and Art*. His account of the aftermath of a gun battle in Seoul is memorable and moving.

"The tragedy of conflicts," said Desfor, "is that it is not only the combatants who pay with their lives. It is not uncommon for civilians to pay the price of being caught in the path of war, and it is not uncommon for the camera to capture such tragic sights. In a street in the heart of the city, after the immediate shooting passed through the area, I caught sight of the aftermath of battle. Lying in the street were a man and his wife, she cradling a young man in her lap, helplessly sprawled in the midst of their household possessions, which were strewn on the ground. They apparently had been caught in the crossfire as they tried to flee the area.

"On another occasion, I photographed another heart-rending scene. A mother was awkwardly sprawled in death on the side of a road. Alongside her were her two children, crying and bewildered, left there to an unknown fate."

Desfor, incidentally, would win a Pulitzer-prize in 1951 for a picture of civilians attempting to cross one of the damaged bridges as they fled to the south.

But it was not just those in the south who suffered. In the north, too, civilians were subject to both fire from UN ground troops and regular and intense air campaigns. They also were subject to intense recriminations from the UN forces each time the UN pushed back to the North. The South Koreans were capable of great cruelty to the North Koreans; equal to that meted out by the North Koreans during the Communist push to the south. And that cruelty extended to the South too. In the Associated Press package on No Gun Ri it noted that: "In one notorious case, two South Korean army officers were sentenced to life in prison in 1951 for leading an army massacre of 187 people in a South Korean village deemed supportive of Communist guerrillas."

Even after most of the fighting in Korea had ended the bombing of the North continued. For while bombs were an important military strategy early in the war, they became a primary means of military might in the latter stages of the conflict (even during the peace talks). This included final stage bombing campaigns against dams and water supplies that flooded much of the rice paddies and destroyed the crops, thus subjecting the people to terrible famine.

It's easy sometimes to think of bombs as sterile instruments of war. They're dropped from on high and when their fall is observed, often in old, grainy, black and white footage, they look almost harmless. But for the people on the ground the impact of a bombing campaign is catastrophic. And now and again, in an unexpected place, there are reminders of what bombs did in Korea. Take a passage early in Richard Kim's 1964 masterpiece *The Martyred* in which Kim describes living in Pyongyang early in the war as a member of the South Korean army. He writes of the scene after the first U.N. occupation of Pyongyang:

"The people were back at their labor, working as silently and stubbornly as they had day after day. Ever since I arrived in the city, I had been watching these people. Occasionally, I saw them drag out of the debris some shapeless remains of their household goods or, sometimes, a dead body, which they would quietly carry away on a hand-pushed cart. Then they would continue digging in the crumbled mess of brick, boards and chunks of concrete."

This scene was repeated in towns and villages across North Korea where the bombs fell from the sky with terrible and predictable regularity. Compounding the destruction was the terrain of the rugged peninsula, described by the United States Air Force (and many others) as "an inhospitable site for a war." Korea is about the size of Minnesota, but unlike that state Korea is predominantly rough and mountainous, with peaks rising to 8,700 feet in the northeast. From those mountains a range extends south along the east coast of Korea. That range then supports several smaller spurs that run southwest. The mountains thus tend to restrict movement in any direction across the country and effectively shrink the size of the country in terms of "fighting space." Because of this the war tended to be restricted to certain key sectors and most of those involved heavy civilian populations. It was a recipe for terrible loss of life.

While accurate numbers for deaths are imprecise, various sources approximate the war's South Korean civilian casualties—dead, wounded and missing—at about one million people. North Korean civilian casualties were perhaps twice that, many of them as a result of the U.N. bombing

campaign. The numbers vary, but it's probably safe to say that there were somewhere between three and four million Korean civilian casualties; this at a time when the total population was some 30 to 40 million people. And civilians died at a ghastly rate in Korea. Historian Bruce Cumings, in a 1994 article in the *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, notes that civilian casualty rates in the Korean War were nearly 70-percent of total casualties, compared to about 40-percent in World War II.

According to a June 20, 2000 article in the *Korea Herald*: "The war left about five million people dead, wounded or missing, more than half of them civilians. It also left more than 10 million people separated from their families, 300,000 war widows and 100,000 war orphans."

Indeed, those war orphans were part of a huge river of refugees that summer of 1950. And such incidents were the beginnings of an adoption stream between Korea and the U.S. that continues to flow today. A recent PBS series on international adoption notes that:

"In 1955 Harry Holt, an Oregon farmer, was so moved by the plight of orphans from the Korean War that he and his wife, Bertha, adopted eight children from South Korea. The arrival of these children to their new home in Oregon received national press coverage, sparking interest among Americans from all over the country who also wanted to adopt Korean children. In partial response, Harry and Bertha Holt created what has become the largest agency in the U.S. specializing in Korean children—Holt International Children's Services." Holt has been facilitating international adoptions for almost 50 years (including this author's two Korean children).

In addition to orphans, the Korean War created another phenomenon, biracial children, born to Korean women and fathered by American soldiers. In fact the Korean government's Ministry of Social Affairs, created after the war, sent mostly mixed-race children overseas for adoption in the first decade of its existence. In a society devoted to bloodlines, and for much of its existence known as the Hermit Kingdom, bringing other races into the culture was seen in an extremely negative light.

And while many of those children who were left parentless by the war eventually found families through adoption, other children were often too old for such placements and simply wandered until the war's end. A movie made during the Korean War, *The Steel Helmet*, touches on this when it pairs a crusty American soldier with a young South Korean boy. The soldier's company has been killed; only he survived. The boy's parents, he tells the soldier, "are with Buddha." So together the two set out for shelter. Such stories are not sprung from the director's imagination but are indeed factual.

One such boy is depicted in Helie Lee's *In the Absence of Sun: A Korean American Woman's Promise to Reunite Three Lost Generations of Her Family*. Lee's grandmother, Halmoni, had a son, Lee Yong Un (Helie's uncle), who was left behind in North Korea in the confusion of the flight of civilians from the North to the South. Helie's grandmother made it with four of her children (including Helie's mother), but not with Lee Yong Un, just 16. And although the family searched for him for years he seemed to have disappeared and they gave him up for dead, one of hundreds of thousands of civilian deaths that the war inflicted. But he had not died. And for 40 years he lived in

North Korea, not knowing what had happened to his family.

Then, in 1991, he was located in the North. In another of her books, *Still Life With Rice*, Helie Lee included a letter from his daughter that included the names of relatives still in North Korea, a letter that severely compromised those relatives. Having placed them in danger, Lee set out to rescue them. *In the Absence of Sun* traces that rescue mission from conception to completion. In the end there is success for the Lee family as their separation comes to a glorious conclusion.

But for millions of Koreans the wait continues. And the war lives on.

THE RICHARD KIM PACKET: *LOST NAMES*

1. Synopsis and Short Review http://www.campusi.com/isbn_0520214242.htm

Synopsis:

From 1932 to 1945, the Japanese occupied Korea. Organized in seven vivid scenes, Kim's fictionalized memoir tells the story of one family's experience, told from the perspective of a young boy. The narrative starts in 1933 with a dramatic frozen-river crossing into Manchuria, when the boy was just a year old, a story the boy knows from the many times his mother has told him the tale. The next scene takes place in 1938. The boy and his family have moved back to Korea, where he is the new boy in school and is learning new routines like bowing his head toward where the Japanese emperor is supposed to be in Tokyo. He does as he is told, but wonders if the emperor knows the children are bowing to him, wonders if he's asleep, or eating breakfast—or maybe even in the toilet. He pictures someone knocking on the door, saying, "Your Majesty! The children, the children! They are bowing to Your Majesty!" and him saying, "Wait a minute! I have my pants down!"

A few years later, the children are told they need new names—the Koreans must renounce their family names and take Japanese ones instead. Later, his father takes him to the cemetery to ask forgiveness from their ancestors for the humiliation of losing their names. The scenes continue as the boy grows up, mingling the experiences of childhood with the history of the occupation, seen in the small day-to-day moments that bring history alive. Richard Kim uses a simple but powerful voice to evoke painful times, a loving family, and a strong spirit of survival. *Lost Names* is a beautifully written tribute to the people of Korea that is subtle, moving, and hard to put down.

Book Review:

In this classic tale, Richard Kim paints seven vivid scenes from a boyhood and early adolescence in Korea at the height of the Japanese occupation, 1932 to 1945. Taking its title from the grim fact that the occupiers forced the Koreans to renounce their own names and adopt Japanese names instead, the book follows one Korean family through the Japanese occupation to the surrender of the Japanese empire. *Lost Names* is at once a loving memory of family and a vivid portrayal of life in a time of anguish.

2. Review of the book <http://koreaweb.ws/ks/ksr/ksr01-02.htm>

Most readers of this review have probably already read Richard Kim's *Lost Names*. Those who have not should do so at the first opportunity. The reissue of *Lost Names* will be particularly welcome news to two groups: anyone interested in the experience of Koreans living under Japanese rule, and any teacher looking for a non-academic book on the colonial period to assign to students studying Korean history. It is an engaging book, both because of Kim's easy style and because of the youthful perspective from which the story is told. Richard Kim shuns questions of whether the book is fictional or autobiographical, pointing out that while he wrote it as fiction, it has generally been regarded as an account of his own early years. It is as a result of this "happy predicament" (in Kim's words) that the book has both the realism of remembered experience and

the imagination of a series of stories. Kim has stated elsewhere that "everything in the book actually happened" to him. (See *Education About Asia*, Vol. 4, No. 2 [Fall 1999], p. 23.) Nevertheless, he maintains that because he arranged and interpreted events while writing the book, it is not strictly autobiographical. More important than questions about the book's genre, however, is the fact that it puts a human face on the colonial period that can easily be overlooked in more academic treatments.

Each chapter is a separate story, which means that a teacher using this book would not necessarily have to assign the entire thing. Taken together, however, they form a vivid picture not only of life under colonial rule but of family dynamics as well. The incidents cover the period from 1933 (when the storyteller/author was one year old) to liberation in 1945. "Crossing" tells the story of the family's departure, across the frozen Tumen River, from Korea to Manchuria, where the father has taken a job at a Christian school shortly after his release from prison. The setting sun, "plummeting down toward the frozen expanse of the northern Manchurian plain," seems symbolic of the ultimate demise of the Japanese empire, even in the first story, twelve years prior to Japan's defeat.

The father's prison term is referred to a number of times throughout the book, and while it is never clear exactly what his offense was, the manner in which it is mentioned makes it clear that it had something to do with the authorities' perception that he was acting against them. It also becomes clear over the course of the book, however, that the narrator's father has earned the respect not only of his fellow Koreans, but of many Japanese colonial officials as well.

The family returns to Korea after a few years in Manchuria. The remaining chapters of the book chronicle school activities (including humiliation and intimidation at the hands of other pupils as well as teachers), various kinds of mobilization ordered by colonial authorities (from the collecting of rubber balls for recycling to the building of a runway), and the efforts of a family (one that clearly has considerable local prestige) to cope with unwelcome colonial rule while trying to avoid an oppressive siege mentality at home. The title story comes from the requirement that, as subjects of the Japanese emperor, Koreans adopt Japanese names. The day when the boy's father takes him to the local police station in order to register their new names is clearly a painful one for the family. The occasion becomes a chance for the father to teach his son a lesson about both national shame and personal dignity. After the registration is over and the family has been officially renamed Iwamoto, the father, with tears in his eyes, tells his son: "Take a good look at all of this. . . . Remember it. Don't ever forget this day."

Kim suggests the range of reactions to Japanese rule—from cooperation to resistance—that we know of from other sources. There is a mysterious uncle in Manchuria, clearly part of an anti-Japanese resistance movement. One of the boy's teachers, who rescued him from a beating overseen by a Japanese teacher, joins this uncle, only to be captured and killed as a spy in Mongolia by Russian forces. On the other end of the scale, there are Koreans like the detective who interrogates the boy's father at the beginning of the narrative, someone the boy's mother describes as the foreigners' hound. But equally important (and perhaps more representative) are all the Koreans found between these two extremes. These Koreans are not as visibly represented in Kim's volume, but one always knows they are there. Similarly, Kim does not want to depict Japanese as easily pigeonholed, cardboard characters—even those who officially represent the

Japanese state that has subjected Korea. He issues no blanket condemnations of Japan or the Japanese. He hopes primarily to analyze his own motivations and actions, and those of his fellow Koreans. In the 1999 interview referred to earlier, Kim declared that one of his missions in life was "to teach Koreans to accept responsibility for their lives, to stop blaming others, the Japanese, the Chinese. We lost it. . . . but many Koreans would like to think someone grabbed it . . . thinking this justifies hatred. I've often said that Koreans need a national psychotherapy session, a large couch. Why are we as we are, why is self-examination such a rare commodity in Korean life?" (*Education About Asia*, p. 25.) A "national psychotherapy session"? This is quite a call. But such a frank statement, it seems to me, suggests that Kim himself has done rather a lot of thinking about responsibility and history, and about just what else may have been "lost" along with Korean names.

The final chapter, "In the Making of History—Together," is powerfully evocative of the ambiguity both of liberation and of the liberated. The boy and his father have a conversation about what liberation means for them and for all of Korea. The boy has previously told his mother of his feelings of shame that liberation was not won by Koreans, but given to them. "It just dropped from the sky," he had complained. "Just like that. A present!" His father, who knows of this conversation, tries to explain not only what liberation means, but what he sees as the burden of successive generations of Koreans. "You are right. Our liberation is a gift, so to speak, and not something that we have fought for and won. That bothers me, too, son. And perhaps that's why most of us, the grown-ups, are confused and bewildered and feel at a loss." He then explains that his own father's generation was "ineffective and disorganized—not only aimless but also very stupid in many ways, although the royal dynasty had more to be blamed for than anyone else in the country. They let the country get kicked around and, finally, sold down the river, you might say. Then, they handed it over to my generation and said, 'Look, we are sorry about this, but there wasn't anything we could do to save the country.' Now, what could my generation do?" The generation that led Korea in 1910 could have prevented the loss of the country, the father argues, and could have put in place many needed reforms, but as Japanese rule became more and more entrenched after annexation, it was too late. For this generation, the burden was survival: "We could do very little, too, except, perhaps . . . to sustain our faith and remain strong in spirit, hoping, just hoping, that, someday, a day like today would come. Survival, yes, that's it. Survival. Stay alive. Raise families, our children, like you, for the future. Survival, son, that's what my generation accomplished, if that can be called an accomplishment."

But the torch also passes from the father's generation to the son's. Recognizing this, the father expresses his hope for the future: "I am only hoping that your generation will have enough will and strength to make sure the country will not make the same mistakes and repeat its shameful history. I only hope, son, that mere survival will not become the only goal of your generation's lives. There must be more in life than just that." This exchange epitomizes both the anguish behind the history of Korea's liberation, and the multiple possibilities for the future that liberation held. The post-liberation generation, as the concluding chapter's title suggests, must become masters of their future, *making* history rather than merely watching it happen, becoming the shapers of their destinies rather than pawns in others' power schemes. The book ends on that note, and on an optimistic determination on the part of the narrator to ensure that the future of Korea does indeed belong to Koreans.

Since its first publication in 1970, *Lost Names* has attracted a loyal following among teachers and students of Korea. This reissue will make it even more accessible. Perhaps it will also lead some readers in the direction of Kim's other books on Korea, such as *The Martyred* and *The Innocent*.

3. Interview with the Author.

Masalski, Kathleen W. "Interview with Richard Kim." *Education About Asia*. Volume 4, Number 2. Fall, 1999.

4. Pedagogical Articles

All articles in *Education About Asia*. Volume 4, Number 2. Fall, 1999.

Wright, Peter R. "Utilizing Richard Kim's *Lost Names* in the Junior High Classroom."

Mastro, Susan. "Teaching *Lost Names* in an American High School."

Minear, Richard H. "Lost Names, Master Narratives, and Messy History."