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Between ‘minjung’ and ‘literature’: Korean labor poetry and reportage literature in the 1980s

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Abstract: This paper reviews three books which symbolically represent a new direction in ‘minjung literature’ in the 1980s. Labor poet Park No-hae (박노해)’s collection of poems, *Dawn of Labor* (노동의 새벽), was popular when it was published because it was literature in the form of poetry written by a real member of the minjung who kept his identity as a worker secret by becoming a faceless poet. Song Hyo-soon (송효순)’s memoir, *Road to Seoul* (서울로 가는 길) records the miserable reality of factories as the subaltern writing. Park Tae-soon (박태순)’s *The Land and the Minjung* (국토와 민중) was reportage (reporting) literature that records his travels around the country. He shows that the history of ‘minjung’ physically exists within the country and testifies that the land was owned by the ‘minjung’. These three books reflect how ‘minjung literature’ in the 1980s testified to the ‘minjung’. Concern about how to describe and represent the ‘minjung’ shows thoughts

about both the 'minjung' and literature. The 'minjung' testimonies written in a variety of literary styles cause readers to ask themselves what literature is. 'Minjung' poetry and reportage in the 1980s can help answer this question.

Keywords: minjung; minjung literature; labor literature; minjung poetry; labor memoir; reportage literature; travel writing; Park No-hae; Song Hyo-soon; Park Tae-soon.

‘민중’과 ‘문학’ 사이: 1980년대 노동시와 르포르타주 문학

초록: 이 글은 1980년대 민중문학의 새로운 방향을 상징적으로 보여준 세 권의 책을 검토하는 것을 목적으로 한다. 노동시인 박노해의 시집 『노동의 새벽』은 민중의 당사자로부터 발신된 문학이라는 점에서 각광받았고, 박노해는 얼굴 없는 시인으로 활동함으로써 자신의 노동자성을 지켰다. 송효순의 수기 『서울로 가는 길』은 서울로 상경한 공장 여성 노동자의 비참한 현실을 기록한 책으로, 우리는 이 텍스트를 통해 서발턴 글쓰기와 대면하게 된다. 박태순의 『국토와 민중』은 르포르타주 문학으로서 국토 기행을 기록한 기행문집이다. 국토라는 공간 안에 민중의 역사가 삽입되어 있음을 보여주는 그의 국토 재현은 그 자체로 민중 재현이며 하나의 증언이 된다. 이상의 세 텍스트는 민중적인 것을 증언하는 것이 민중문학의 새로운 길이라고 믿었던 당대 담론을 잘 보여준다. 민중을 어떻게 묘사하고 대리할 것인가에 대한 고민은 ‘민중’에 대한 사유인 동시에 ‘문학’에 대한 사유였다. 우리는 기성의 문학 형식 안팎을 넘나들며 수행된 민중적 증언 글쓰기를 통해 ‘문학이란 무엇인가’를 되물어보게 된다. 바로 이 점에 1980년대 민중 시와 르포르타주 문학의 현재적 의의가 있다.

핵심어: 민중; 민중문학; 노동문학; 민중시; 노동수기; 르포르타주 문학; 기행문; 박노해; 송효순; 박태순.

Między ‘narodem’ a ‘literaturą’: koreańska poezja robotnicza i literatura reportażu w latach 80. wieku XX

Abstrakt: Niniejszy artykuł zwraca uwagę na trzy książki, które symbolicznie rysują nowy kierunek w ‘literaturze narodowej’ w latach 80. wieku XX. Tomik poezji robotniczej Park No-hae zatytułowany *Świt pracy* zyskał popularność już z chwilą ukazania się – była to poezja napisana przez rzeczywistego przedstawiciela narodu, który ukrył swoją robotniczą tożsamość za maską bezimiennego poety. Lakonicznie zapisane wspomnienia Song Hyo-soon, zatytułowane *Droga do Seulu*, odnotowują nędzne realia pracy w fabrykach. *Kraj i naród* Park Tae-soona to przykład literatury reporterskiej, która opisuje jego podróże po kraju. Pokazuje on, że historia ‘narodu’ istnieje w kraju namacalnie i zaświadcza o tym, że kraj należy

do 'narodu'. Te trzy dzieła przybliżają sposób, w jaki 'literatura narodowa' lat 80. wieku XX świadczyła o 'narodzie'. Troska o to, jak opisać i odzwierciedlić 'naród' ukazuje myśli zarówno o 'narodzie', jak i o 'literaturze'. Świadczenia 'narodu' ujęte w różnych stylach literackich sprawiają, że czytelnicy zadają sobie pytanie o to, czym jest 'literatura'. Poezja 'narodowa' i reportaż lat 80. minionego wieku mogą udzielić na te pytania odpowiedzi.

Słowa kluczowe: naród; literatura narodowa; literatura robotnicza; poezja narodowa; wspomnienia robotników; literatura reportażu; zapiski podróżnicze; Park No-hae; Song Hyo-soon; Park Tae-soon.

1. Preface

'Minjung (민중, the people) literature' left a clear mark on South Korean literature more broadly in the 1970s and 1980s, but it is not easy to define. 'Minjung literature' encompasses literature read and written by and representative of the 'minjung', represented by 'minjung', and written by 'minjung'. It was a literature that explored what was popular and anti-popular. Therefore, 'minjung literature' asked serious questions about what it is or should be. It is difficult to define what the 'minjung' is. Who is or was the 'minjung'? Does the concept of the 'minjung' change over time? Is it a valid concept today? The 'minjung' were the interpellated subjects in between the political subject of the 'people' which was born out of the ideology of the people's sovereignty, and the class subject of the 'proletariat' which could be liberated from alienation only by ending the rule of capital. Today, the 'minjung' seems to repeatedly appear and disappear in the concept of the 'population' an identity that encompasses everyone within the boundaries of a territory regardless of the will of the subjects within it. The minjung are constituted to modify or abolish the present ruling power. So, they have no choice but to rise and fall on the surface of the population according to the form of the state while basing their existence in a community to come or one that has passed.

The best way to define the 'minjung' might be to define their most obvious characteristics first. One of the 'minjung's most obvious attributes is their plurality. The 'minjung' can never be just one

person. Even if most of the minjung are only potential members, the word *minjung* has the concept of a large number of people in it. The second letter of 'minjung', *jung* (衆) is a Chinese letter that means 'a crowd'. However, the concepts of modern literature and the plurality of the 'minjung' sometimes collide. For example, when writing 'minjung poetry', how should first-person modern lyric poetry deal with the 'minjung's plurality? Is the plurality delegated to the singular subject? Can 'minjung' literature keep its name even after its plurality disappears? Or is the singular subject erased by 'minjung's plurality? How is 'I' present in 'we'? Can 'I' ever represent 'we'?

These questions show the predicament that 'minjung' literature faced throughout the 1970s and 1980s. However, this conflict between the concepts of 'minjung' and literature was also driving force behind the writing of 'minjung' literature. Kim Ji-ha (김지하)'s critique *Satire or Suicide* (풍자냐 자살이냐) argued that the poet should remain as an individual but commit to the 'minjung'. He said that poet should reach "self affirmation as the minjung"¹(Kim Ji-ha 김지하 2002: 43). Also, he said that authors can only produce minjung literature that expresses the 'minjung's sorrow when they refuse to remain as a singular 'I' enters into the minjung and conform themselves as a part of it. This logic was repeated in Cho Tae-il (조태일) and Shin Gyeong-rim (신경림) and became the main premise of 'minjung' literary theory. Cho insisted that poets should write poems by means of 'popular language' to create vital beauty (Cho Tae-il 조태일 1972: 59). And Shin Gyeong-rim (신경림 1973: 10) requested 'literature rooted in the minjung's real life emotions' and emphasized that 'literature must be return to the minjung' (Shin 1973: 26). The ontological commitment to and self-affirmation of authors as a part of the 'minjung' led to discussions on how writers identify with the minjung. The consensus of these discussions was that intellectuals needed to be awakened. For example, Go Eun (고은 1983: 252) said that 'the awakening of intellectuals' brings the minjung's conscioueness.

On the other hand, there was an article that did not view the 'minjung' as a specific population group and so changed the direction of this discussion. Kim Joo-yeon (김주연)'s *The Minjung and the*

¹ "민중으로서의 자기 확신" (김지하 2002: 43). All translations from Korean are by Author.

Masses (민중과 대중) takes issue with the obsession to substantiate the popular and defines ‘the masses’ as referring to the substantial majority of people and ‘minjung’ as referring to specific values (Kim Joo-yeon 김주연 1979: 37). It was rooted in the masses and saw things, such as intellectuals experience mental agony, as reflecting minjung values. This article also stated that ontological agony is a core quality of the minjung. Seong Min-yeop (성민엽)’s *The Logic of Minjung Literature* (민중문학의 논리) expressed this as a kind of ‘existential transition’ (Seong Min-yeop 성민엽 1984: 59). Thus, literature that simply reflected the reality of the ‘minjung’ was not enough to qualify as ‘minjung literature’. In ‘minjung’ literary discourse in the 1970s, the singular ‘I’ became a part of the ‘minjung’ concept.

Since the 1980s, the Korean literary world has undergone some notable changes. Several major magazines that played an important role in the literary discourse in the 1970s, such as *Literature and Intelligence* (문학과 지성), *Creation and Criticism* (창작과 비평), *Tree with Deep Roots* (뿌리 깊은 나무), and *The Sound of Seeds* (씨알의 소리) were forced to close by the military government. Starting with the publication of *Practical Literature* in 1980, the era of small group literature and irregular magazines (mook) began.

Consequently, the literary movement diversified both regionally and over, and led ‘minjung literature’ in a more practical direction for the next 10 years. As a result of these changes, ‘minjung literature’ began to pay attention to testimony. For example, the magazine *Practical Literature* (실천문학) got its name because it aims for literature that practices history beyond literature that participates in history. In its first issue of 1980, the editors (편집부 1980: 374) declared “We are a community of testimony”². The practice they sought was eventually achieved through testimony. This clear shift to focus on testimony solved the numerical difference between the plural ‘minjung’ and the singular writer and presented a new answer to the question of what the ‘minjung’ is.

The trend in the 1970s of realizing ‘minjung literature’ by the transfer of the author’s existence was expanded in the 1980s to creating practical ‘minjung literature’ through testimony. This change came from the realization that representation of ‘minjung literature’

² “우리는 증언 공동체다” (편집부 1980: 374).

until then was insufficient. There was the 'minjung' who exceeded the 'minjung' composed of texts.

In this paper, I review three testimony-style books that represent the new practices of 'minjung literature' in the 1980s. The first is Park No-hae (박노해)'s collection of poems, *Dawn of Labor* (노동의 새벽, 1984). Park was both a poet and a worker, so this book was thought to clearly embody the concerned party of 'minjung literature'. The second is Song Hyo-soon (송효순)'s memoir *Road to Seoul* (서울로 가는 길, 1982), which vividly shows the reality of female workers at the time. The last is Park Tae-soon (박태순)'s *The Land and the Minjung* (국토와 민중, 1983), which is a collection of travel writings that is classified as reportage(reporting) literature. This paper shows how each book reflects the new direction of 'minjung literature' in the 1980s and discusses the current definition of the 'minjung'.

2. Literature of a Worker-poet: *Dawn of Labor*

In 1977, workers' memoirs published in the monthly *Dialogue* (대화) became popular as workers' writings began to become popular forms of literature more generally. Yu Dong-woo (유동우)'s *The Cry of a Stone* (어느 돌멩이의 외침) and Seok Jeong-nam (석정남)'s *I Want to Live as a Human Being* (인간답게 살고 싶다) are representative of these memoirs. As interest in workers' diaries and memoirs, which were subalterns' writings, increased, labor literature gradually became its own genre and people began discussing the subject of 'minjung literature'. Many authors wrote at the intersection of labor literature and 'minjung literature', combining the expertise and sophistication of intellectuals and the practicality and simplicity of workers. The emergence of labor writers made people accept the 'minjung' of 'minjung literature' not as the contents of representation, but as a mark indicating the subject of representation, and thus attributed the core of 'minjung literature' to the concerned parties. In adversarial legal systems parties directly argue their case without being represented by an expert. Since the late 1970s, the emergence of labor writers has evoked an adversarial system within 'minjung literature'. Unlike intellectuals who had to become part of the 'minjung' produce

‘minjung literature’, workers were already part of it so the ‘minjung’ literature they produced was thought to be more authentic.

In this context, Park No-hae (박노해), a worker poet who debuted in 1983 with *Dream of Sida* (시다의 꿈) shocked the poetry world. The emergence of workers’ writings, which were a perfected form of poetry, shocked the literary field. For a while, he was called ‘the faceless poet’ because he showed that he was not as an ordinary poet but rather a worker-poet by not appearing at awards ceremonies or conducting solo interviews. In other words, he did not act as a poet and maintained his role as worker, choosing the worker’s face over the poet’s face. His short profile, “[B]orn in Jeonnam in 1956, moved to Seoul at the age of 15, and now a craftsman”³(Park No-hae 박노해 1984: 1), did not say much more than his name No-hae (노해), which means ‘labor liberation’ (노동 해방).

Worker poets who did not clearly reveal their identities continued to emerge. For example, the description of the 19 workers poets whose poems were included in the *Anthology of Labor Poems* (노동시선집) also lived as so-called faceless poets. Among them, five were unnamed and most of those who were named had the note with “biography unknown”(Chae 1985: 10) under their names. Some poets had job descriptions such as ‘bus attendant’ ‘craftman’ and ‘construction worker’ along with the year they were born. This information did not do much to reveal the poets’ individual characteristics but rather emphasized their anonymity as part of the ‘minjung’. The appearance of faceless worker poets was unfamiliar and new at the time.

However, the anonymity of labor poems reflected the existence and identities of workers as part of ‘minjung literature’. One of the key attributes of the proletariat is that its members have no individual identities. Labor literature denounces the loss of workers’ individuality and their exploitation as replaceable inputs to production. However, when workers become poets to denounce their situation, their identity as a member of the proletariat and not as an individual is suspended. Therefore, most labor poems had a name column only for the purpose of erasing individuality. The anonymity of worker poets remind readers of their status as workers and give them certain faces as poets.

³ “1956년 전남 출생. 15 세에 상경하여 현재 기능공” (박노해 1984: 1).

Park's *Dawn of Labor* (노동의 새벽), published in 1984, vividly describes workers' reality. The military regime immediately banned the book from being sold, but this did not stop its popularity because of readers' desire for truth and realism. *Finding Fingerprints* (지문을 부른다) is a poem that strongly conveys how workers' individual identities are erased. The narrator says, "at least once to confirm that we are the same citizen / to renew our resident registration" they went to the public office, but "oh / disappeared, clearly / disappeared / mashed fingerprints / no proof that you and I are different / no fingerprints came out"⁴ (Park No-hae 박노해 1984: 45–46). The act of finding the fingerprint, the poem its title, was a call for workers to recover their individual identities.

The poem *The Hand Grave* (손무덤) has the same theme. This poem reveals the terrible reality of a worker whose hand was cut off by a press:

"His hand in my arms / is cold and green / We wash it in soju / We bury it under the sunny factory wall / On the blood and sweat of the workers / The yellow hands of exploitation enjoying the prosperous nation / White hands playing and eating without labor / I bury / Crush them with a press / I bury (ask) and bury (ask) again"⁵ (Park No-hae 박노해 1984: 88).

The cold served hand that was held by the surviving workers is a kind of black hole in their lives that will never be filled, so the poem's narrator has to ask and bury again and again while holding this served hand without being treated fairly. The poem's author was Park No-hae, a faceless worker. It is desperate testimony of the 'minjung' whose individual identities have been erased.

⁴ "한번쯤은 똑같은 국민임을 확인하며/ 주민등록갱신을 하(지만) ... / 아/ 없어, 선명하게 없어/ 노동 속에 문드러져/ 너와 나 사람마다 다르다는/ 지문이나 오지를 알아" (박노해 1984: 45–46).

⁵ "내 품 속의 정형 손은/ 싸늘히 식어 푸르텡텡하고/ 우리는 손을 소주에 씻어 들고/ 양지바른 공장 담벼락 밑에 묻는다/ 노동자의 피땀 위에서/ 변영의 조국을 향락하는 누런 착취의 손들을/ 일 안하고 놀고먹는 하얀 손들을/ 묻는다/ 프레스로 짹짹 짓찧라/ 원한의 눈물로 묻는다/ 일하는 손들이/ 기쁨의 손짓으로 살아날 때까지/ 묻고 또 묻는다" (박노해 1984: 88).

3. A Female Worker's Memoir: *Road to Seoul*

Another type of testimony is reportage writing that delivers only objective facts without any fiction or sentimentality. The goal of 'minjung literature' to represent the reality of the 'minjung' was dramatically achieved in memoirs and reportage. Thus, in the 1980s, reportage writing became an increasingly large part of minjung literature. Irregular magazines that specialized in reportage, such as *Era of Reportage* (크뽀시대; 1983) and *Reportage Literature* (크뽀문학; 1984), were published, expanding the variety of 'minjung literature'. The desire for testimony led to this new genre of writing that went beyond more traditional forms of literature, such as poetry and novels.

Workers' memoirs were for and by the 'minjung' and were accepted as unaffected truth. 'Minjung literature', which must necessarily reflect on popular values, is explosively powerful in the forms of diaries and memoirs, which are self-reflecting. In the 1980s, female workers' writing began to achieve recognition. Song Hyo-soon (송효순)'s *Road to Seoul* (서울로 가는 길; 1982), Seok Jeong-nam (석정남)'s *Factory Light* (공장의 불빛; 1984), and Jang Nam-soo (장남수)'s *The Stolen Workplace* (빼앗긴 일터; 1984) are representative examples of this newly popular women's writing. In these works, the authors look back on and affirm their history and show how they understood their social context as workers and members of the 'minjung'. These works show that they understood that they were the victims of a social contradiction that could not be explained by individual misfortune and had a sense of solidarity based on popular awareness. The most important part of this literature was that it showed the authors' identities as both women and workers, making them doubly disadvantaged.

Song Hyo-soon (송효순)'s memoir *Road to Seoul* (서울로 가는 길; 1982) shows the prototype of a country girl becoming a factory worker in the city. This is what most workers have experienced in Korea at that time. Song grew up in a poor family that lived in the countryside and whose interests were sacrificed so that her older and younger brothers could continue attending school. After graduating from elementary school, she went to Seoul and did various jobs before getting a job at a factory. Tragically, even though she was

not legally old enough for such work, she had to earn money, so she used her nephew's name and submitted fake documents to get the job.

"I hesitated to borrow and use the name of my nephew. Because my brother's family didn't treat me well. I thought it would be better to borrow the name of someone I don't know. In addition, I was afraid that I would secretly get a job using someone else's name and be found out. My sister said that many girls get jobs like this. It is miserable to have to work in a factory at such a young age. Others are studying at this age. My brother sent me back a letter telling me to accept all of this situation as fate and live on. It's a miserable fate. I really hated my strict brother. I hate my fate of having to borrow the brother's daughter's name"⁶ (Song Hyo-soon 송효순 1982: 32-33).

This quote clearly shows the feelings of contempt and despair she felt at having to choose the path of a worker at such a young age. Her father and brother told her to accept her fate as a worker while her older sister, a woman, comforted her and helped her accept the reality that she had no choice but to borrow someone else's name to get a job. Her older sister, who became a worker before her, may have walked a similar path.

Song describes how she worked hard to support her family back home. She sent money to them to pay for her younger brother's school fees. At the time, many urban workers missed their hometowns and the harsher their jobs, the stronger their nostalgia for them. Some women sang this song while working overtime through the night in a factory where the heaters did not work in the winter:

"The light of the factory, which used to shine beautifully, have nowhere to go, only dimly lit work lights. I can't go back to my dear

⁶ "다른 사람도 아닌 큰오빠 딸이라는 것이 마음에 걸렸다. 내게 잘해주지도 않는 사람들인데 차라리 남의 식구 이름을 빌리는 것이 낫다는 생각이 들었다. 게다가 남의 이름으로 몰래 들어가야 한다니 그러다 들키기라고 하면 어쩔담. 웬지 무섭기도 하였다. 언니는 남의 이름으로 공장에 들어가는 아이들이 많으니 팬찮다고 달랬다. 왜 가난하게 태어나 너무나 어려 공장에서든 받아주지 않는 나이에 공장에 들어가야만 되는가. 남들은 공부를 하는 나이인데. 전에 내가 아버지에게 편지를 하였을 때 오빠는 모든 것을 숙명으로 받아들이고 살아가라고 답장이 왔다. 숙명치고는 너무 더럽다. 가장 무섭고 가장 싫어하는 큰오빠의 딸 이름으로 공장에 들억야 하다니" (송효순 1982: 32-33).

hometown. On a clod, weary night, here is another home”⁷ (Song Hyo-soon 1982: 140).

Song came into contact with the labor movement through ‘Industrial Mission’⁸ and became aware of the absurd reality of female workers. However, she was punished by her company after meeting with the actor from Industrial Mission. Even though she did nothing wrong, she was required to write a letter of resignation. When she repeatedly refused to write the resignation, she was eventually required to write the resignation because of her disobedience. She protested at the company’s unfairness, was forced to work in a far-off province, and later was fired. This process shows the harsh reality that female workers faced.

Road to Seoul (서울로 가는 길) exposes various structural burdens imposed on female workers. First was the burden of having to support the men in her family as a daughter and sister. Second was the fact that, as a woman, she was subordinate to male workers and company executives. Third was the humiliation she felt because of the gaze around her. People did not respect them, calling them ‘Gongsuni (공순이)’, which means female workers of factory. ‘Gongsuni’ seemed to be the lowest class of the social hierarchy. Her company offered a class called How to be a Good Wife?” in which the instructor said:

“Please don’t wear jeans. Jeans make you look rude and uneducated. If you go to a famous department store, it only costs 50,000 to 60,000 won for a set of clothes. Buy it and wear it”⁹ (Song Hyo-soon 송효순 1982: 117).

⁷ “예쁘게 빛나던 불빛 공장의 불빛, 올 테 갈 테도 없는 회부연 작업등만. 이대론 못 돌아가지. 그리운 고향 마을. 춥고 지친 밤, 여기는 또 다른 고향” (송효순 1982: 140).

⁸ ‘Industrial Mission (산업선교)’ was a labor movement organization that had a great influence on various labor issues and labor movements that occurred in Korea in the 1960s and 1980s.

⁹ “여러분들, 제발 청바지 입지 마세요. 청바지를 입으면 공순이 티 나고 교양이 없어 보이니까요. 유명백화점에 가면 옷 한 벌에 5, 6 만 원밖에 안 해요. 한 벌씩 사 입으세요” (송효순 1982: 117).

The monthly salary of the women in that class was 50,000 won. In this liberal arts class taught by a woman, female workers became uncountable subalterns.

Workers' memoirs are meaningful in that they are the writings of subalterns who were represented only by intellectuals' language before. This new form of writing expanded the scope of minjung literature by directly offering the testimony of the minjung. Critic Kim Jong-cheol 김중철 (1980: 92) said that the appearance of labor memoirs, which have "value as vivid testimonies"¹⁰, should be accepted as a literary challenge before asking whether or not they are literature. This testimony challenged literary conventions. It was produced by the vividly living 'minjung', so it was acceptable even though it was not sophisticated literature.

4. Non-literature of 'Minjung' Intellectuals: *The Land and the Minjung*

While memoirs were becoming popular, various non-literary forms of writings were as well. Park Tae-soon (박태순)'s travel writing published serially in the 1970s and 1980s. Park started writing in 1960 and became a novelist who showed a keen understanding of people from the lower classes who lived on the outskirts of cities, which he wrote about in his early novels *On the Hill of a Dear Land* (청든 땅 언덕 위에) and *Collapsed Theater* (무너진 극장). Then, in 1971, he published two noteworthy reportage, *Warning of the Burning Body* (소신의 경고) about the death of Jeon Tae-il (전태일) and *Five Days and Four Nights in the Gwangju Complex* (광주단지에서의 4박5일). The Gwangju Grand Complex Incident in 1971 seems to have caused Park to take a new look at the territory of South Korea. It reflected the spatial divisions that occurred during South Korea's modernization in which people were deported from the shantytowns on the cities to the unmodernized outskirts. After the 1971 event, he began working on travelogues in earnest. His first travelogue, *An Author's Travel* (작가가기행; 1975), was a collection of travel writings

¹⁰ “생생한 증언으로서의 가치” (김중철 1980: 92).

that he had published serially in monthly magazines since 1971. He wrote his second travelogues, *The Land and Minjung* (*국토와 민중*, 1983) between 1982 and 1983.

The theme of national territorial representation has an important meaning. In Korea, two national territorial representations have long been prevalent. Sometimes people naturally imagine the entire Korean Peninsula from Mt. Baekdu to Mt. Halla as a single territory, but sometimes they think of territory under the reality of a divided Korea. This idea is reflected in Korean law about its national territory. The Constitution of the Republic of Korea Article 3 defines the territory of South Korea as “the Korean Peninsula and its annexed islands”¹¹, but in reality, the South Korean government does not actually govern half of this area. Thus, the nation of South Korea views its territory as unfinished.

In this context, in the 1970s, two separate efforts were being made to recover the national territory. These two were based on opposing imaginations. One was the Park Chung-hee (박정희) administration’s national land development project. Based on the 1963 National Territory Construction Comprehensive Planning Act (*국토건설종합계획법*), national land development plans began to be made in the 1970s; the Gyeongbu, Honam, and Yeongdong Expressways were built; and rural environmental improvement and large-scale land reclamation projects were conducted. The other effort was the minjung literature about Korean land. A representative example of this literature is Cho Tae-il (조태일)’s series of poems titled *Homeland* (*국토*). Park Tae-soon (박태순)’s travelogues in the 1970s and 1980s were also part of this trend. The national land development project based on economic logic focused on fostering several representative cities and connecting them efficiently to enable rapid movement of the national territory. The catchphrase ‘one-day living area of the whole country (*전국 1 일 생활권*)’ was emphasized. In contrast, Park Tae-soon (박태순)’s work went in the opposite direction.

The Land and the Minjung (*국토와 민중*, 1983) contains 15 travelogues about the Demarcation Line area, the coal mines of

¹¹ “대한민국의 영토는 한반도와 그 부속도서로 한다.” (대한민국헌법 제 3 조, 법제처 국가법령정보센터 <https://www.law.go.kr/법령/대한민국헌법>). Accessed 10 January, 2023.

Gangwon-do, the Namhan River basin, Jirisan, the Nakdong River, and Jeju. It includes areas where people have lived for a long time, that were excluded from government-led development efforts, and that served as the background of minjung literature. It covered a wide range of places in the country, their histories, and cultural artifacts related to the minjung. Park's travels are slow, and his travelogues praise rough roads and detours, saying that we had to deal with the road historically, not efficiently. In short, while Park Chung-hee's government transformed the nation by shortening travel times by building highways, Park Tae-soon expanded people's understanding of the national territory by writing about the 'minjung's lives. He criticized three types of maps. The first is tourist maps that are created by people in an area who reduce it to an object to be seen. The second is development maps that erase the lives of people living in the areas they cover and emphasize national development. The third is historical maps that try to preserve the past so that they fossilize the land. Following these critiques, he presented a new type of minjung map.

However, he did not absolutely aestheticise and mystify the land of 'minjung'. He was wary of simplifying or sanctifying the national territory itself and maintained that it only reflected the diversity of the 'minjung's homes. He wrote in a testifying manner. This book provided an alternative representation of the national territory by naming localities that are not captured or are intentionally eliminated by modernization. He shows how the 'minjung and' their history is a part of the land so the land is a part of their testimony.

Park Tae-soon (박태순)'s writings and the journal *Practical Literature* (실천문학), which he founded in 1980, reflect his view of literature. He said:

“Now, it is meaningless to write novels or poetry and argue about literary or artistic value. Also, literature must become the literature as a movement, that is, literature as a practice of history, not as a part of its participation in history.”¹² (Park Tae-soon 박태순 1980: 6).

¹² “이제는 소설 쓰고 시 쓰고 문학성이 어떻게 예술성이 어떻게 하면서 따지는 것은 도저히 의미가 없다. 문학도 어떤 운동으로서의 문학, 즉 문학이 역사에 어떤 참여를 하는 게 아니라 역사를 실천하는 것으로서의 문학이 아니면 안 된다” (박태순 1980: 6).

This idea was embodied in testimony and reportage. In addition to the state violence of the Yusin regime that was implemented in the 1970s, the reality of the ‘minjung’ symbolized by the deaths of Jeon Tae-il (전태일) and Kim Gyeong-sook (김경숙) and the events in Gwangju in May 1980 neutralized Korean literature. Literary conventions, such as the division between poetry and novels, the procedures for recognizing authors, and publishing practices, were all questioned, returning the field to a kind of blank slate on which new conventions were written. Testimony literature was required in this context. Thus, Park Tae-soon’s travel writings, which was reportage written in prose rather than poetry or a novel, was the writing of a reportage, not a literary author.

5. Conclusion

Poems about labor that were written by the minjung, the memoir of a worker as a subaltern, and travelogues that describe the unprocessed spaces of the minjung are all forms of testimony in ‘minjung literature’ in the 1980s. The shift of emphasis from describing the minjung to testifying to the ‘minjung’ is connected to the two meanings of ‘representation’ one by one. ‘Representation’ is a detailed description of an object such that it re-presents that object, but it can also mean ‘standing for’ someone else. These two definitions are discontinuous but also inseparable, like two sides of a coin. Therefore, no matter how realistic ‘minjung literature’ is, it is still speaking about a situation and is not that situation itself.

Therefore, it is not clear that the singular author can represent the plurality of the ‘minjung’. The key question about representation including self representation, is whether such representation is ‘real’. The vividness of the object can be a problem. ‘Minjung literature’ in the 1970s and 1980s represented the ‘minjung’. Concerns about how to do so were concerns about the ‘minjung’ and literature at the same time. Poems of labor poets bursting out across the official debut system, memoirs of workers writing unaffected self-histories, and prose existed partially within established literary genres while also moving outside of them. However, all of these works were the writings of people trying to represent reality while challenging literary conventions. The desire to represent reality peaked in ‘minjung

literature' in the 1980s. In this way, workers' poetry and reportage literature in the 1980s is significant.

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