The Female Speaker in Koryŏ Sokyo*

Park Hye-sook**

1. The Female Speaker and the Poetics of Femininity

A lyric poem is usually in the form of a specific speaker’s monologue. Often in a self-confessional mode, the text of a lyric poem is also a place where the speaker’s identity is constructed. The reader is able to become familiar with the speaker’s gender, social status, age, and particular situation through his or her voice. Of the many different components that form the speaker’s identity in a lyric poem, I would like to concentrate on gender.

There are some cases where the speaker’s gender is ambiguous, but in most lyric poems the speaker’s voice can be clearly classified as either male or female. The gender of the speaker and the author may coincide or differ. Whereas most women poets speak in a feminine voice, there are quite a few cases in which a male poet assumes the

---

* This essay is an English translation, with a number of revisions, of Park Hye-sook’s 박혜숙 "Koryŏ Sokyo Yuriyǒng Hwaja" 고려숙요의 여성화자 (The Female Speaker in Koryŏ Sokyo), originally published in Kojŏn Munhak Yŏng’gu 고전문학연구, Vol 14, Han’guk Kojŏn Munhakhoe (1998).

** Professor of Korean Literature, Inha University

voice of a woman. When the speaker is a woman, the text realizes the "poetics of femininity" by using uniquely female situations, consciousness, psychology, imagination, vocabulary, and imagery.

It is often said that a certain work is feminine, or that a specific poet expresses feminine virtue well. However, it is also an acknowledged fact that why such things are said, what exactly can be termed "feminine," and what femininity means within literature, are all issues that need to be discussed in more detail.

Are there differences between the feminine voice as expressed by a female or a male poet? Why does a male poet speak in the voice of a woman? How are feminine voices realized? How does "femininity" change within literature according to the author's status or literary genre? Has there been a change in the term's meaning throughout history? How does femininity in literature and in real life relate to each other? All these questions can be classified under the subject, "poetics of femininity."

Numerous Koryŏ sokyo¹ and kisaeng sijo² took the form of "songs by female speakers," and left a large mark on the development of poetry written in the Korean language. Poets such as Ch'oe Sŏng-dae and Yi Ok concentrated on expressing feminine sentiments in hansī,³ thus playing a large part in the development of the genre in the later Chosŏn dynasty. It is already well known that Kim So-wŏl and

---
¹ 'Sokyo' can be translated into either 'folk songs' or 'popular songs' Koryŏ sokyo are poems or written texts of popular song lyrics from the Koryŏ dynasty
² 'Sijo' is the most popular and mnemonic poetic form in Korean vernacular verse, usually in three lines A 'kisaeng sijo' is sijo written by a kisaeng, a female artist-entertainer
³ Poems written in Chinese
Han Yong-un used the feminine voice to achieve a special poetic effect. As can be seen, the "poetics of femininity" holds an important place in the history of Korean poetry.

The first problem one runs into when starting to study the "poetics of femininity" is how to understand "gender." Gender, unlike the biologically determined "sex," is something that is formed socially and culturally. The phrase "one is not born a woman but is made into one" puts forth that a person's gender identity is formed through his or her social and cultural surroundings and experience. Not only do the so-called "male" and "female" characteristics differ according to each culture, they have continued to change throughout history. Femininity is not an unchanging characteristic independent from history or culture. The standards of femininity differ according to the culture and times. These standards create a discourse about each society's women and femininity. The discourse of femininity comes to wield a specific and real power, not only through everyday language, but through the discourses of literature, religion, philosophy, science, tradition, law, medicine, etc.

Do women have certain innate qualities that make them women? Is the femininity put forth by literary texts in any way related to these innate qualities? It is difficult to accept that women have an innate essence or qualities that makes them what they are. Often times, these thoughts serve to aid the ideology that alienates and suppresses women. It will be more helpful to think that the femininity realized within literary texts reflect the discourse of femininity commonly used

---
4 Refer to Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*
5 Refer to the work of Margaret Mead's *Sex and temperament in three primitive societies* (1935)
within the society that created the text. The text, once created, also becomes a palpable force which plays a part in forming the thoughts of what is feminine in its readers. In fact, literary texts play a large part in forming the society's general views about femininity and masculinity. Literary texts directly influence the existence of men and women within that society by structuralizing and reproducing the regnant gender ideology. Therefore, the women and ideas of femininity reproduced in literary texts need be read in a more critical manner.

Discourse of femininity, in the case of prose, is usually expressed through the female character's thoughts, actions, and language, but in the case of a lyric poem, it is expressed through the female speaker's voice. This is the reason for the deep interest in female voices when studying the poetics of femininity.

The female speaker can be found in numerous poetic forms, including Koryŏ sokyo, sijo, sasŏl sijo, kasa, women's kasa, puyo, hansi, and modern poetry. The social position of the author ranges from high to low, and there are many cases in which the poet is a man. The works are spread out over a long chronological period, and the feminine characteristics expressed within vary a great deal as well. This article will concentrate on Koryŏ sokyo.

Women's sexuality and love as expressed within Koryŏ sokyo has

---

6 A narrative sijo A form of sijo with longer verses, with the exception of the first phrase of the last verse
7 Literally "song texts" A form of vernacular narrative verse, usually without stanzas division
8 The term 'puyo' literally means 'folksongs by women' It is a poetic genre not based on form, but on authoral characteristics
been of interest for a long time. The poem "Kasiri"9 has been highly praised for its "heartfelt expression of womanly sorrows unparalleled anywhere,"10 and have been considered the representative work of feminine sentiment. Poems "S sang hwajōm"11 and "Ma njōnch'un Pyōlsa"12 have been used to claim that women of Koryō were very bold and liberal in sexual matters. Works such as "Sŏkyŏng Pyŏlgok,"13 "Chōngsŏk-ka"14 and "Tongdong"15 are often considered love songs that celebrate women's virtue.16 Views towards female characteristics found in Koryō sokyo vary greatly. However, before trying to generalize the poems or Koryō women through reading certain works, we must examine the female voice within Koryō sokyo in more detail.

The term "Koryŏ sokyo" describes popular songs sung within the royal court during the Koryŏ dynasty whose lyrics have been written down and transmitted in Korean texts such as Akjang'kasa after the

---

9 "Kasiri" is an anonymous Koryŏ song, its title meaning 'Would you go?'
11 "S sang hwajōm" is a secular song written in 1279. Its title means 'Dumpling Shop' or 'Turkish Bakery.'
12 "Ma njōnch'un Pyŏlsa" is an anonymous Koryŏ song, its title meaning 'Spring Overflows the Pavilion.'
13 "Sŏkyŏng Pyŏlgok" is an anonymous Koryŏ song, meaning 'Song of the Western Capital.'
14 "Chōngsŏk-ka" is a Koryŏ kayo, its title meaning 'Song of the Gong and Chimes.'
15. "Tongdong" is an 'Ode to the Seasons'
16. Pak No-ju, "Han'guk Kojön Saga'e Nataanan Ch'ijŏl'ŭi Mōsaip," Han'gukhuk Nonjup vol 6, (Hanyang University Institute of Korean Studies, 1984). Also refer to "Kojön Saga'ŭi Jongshimme" by Pak No-ju, and Han'guk Kojön Sikasa by Choe Chul, et al (Jibmundang, 1997)
invention of the Korean written language. There are some poems which are thought to have been written by individual poets, while some are thought to be popular songs that were absorbed by the court. However, it is important to remember that the remaining Koryŏ sokyo are not representative of poetry in the Koryŏ dynasty, and that they only show the folk songs that were transmitted within the royal court previous to the Chosŏn dynasty. There were deliberate insertions, abridgements, and choices made in its transmission, so it is difficult to consider woman as represented within these poems as representing all Koryŏ women. It is highly likely that out of the various feminine characteristics of the times, only a select few were chosen for representation.

A reader must consider many reasons when deciding whether the speaker of a poem is male or female. There are cases where the information is directly expressed within the text, and some where the reader may make an educated guess through the setting and tone. Other factors such as diction, imagery, and the speaker's attitude play a role as well. From the aforementioned factors, one may consider the following Koryŏ sokyo to have female speakers: "Kasim," "Tongdong," "Sŏgyŏng Pyŏlgok," "Isanggok," "Sanghwajŏm," and "Sangjŏga."19

There is some controversy as to the gender of the speaker of "Chŏngsŏk-ka" and "Ch'ŏngsan Pyŏlgok"20 and also whether the


18 "Isanggok" is an anonymous Koryŏ song, its title translated into 'Treading Frost'

19 "Sangjŏga" is an anonymous Koryŏ song, its title meaning 'Song of Mutual Pounding (of a Mortar) '"
speaker of "Manjōnch'un Pyōlsa" is a woman or a male and female speaker speaking in turn. This article will exclude controversial works and examine those that are clearly spoken by female speakers. Even when it is clear that the speaker is female, there are many differences in the speakers' identities as women, and in the way they express themselves. Considering such differences, this article will divide the Koryŏ sokyō with female speakers into the following three categories: 1) speaking as a woman, 2) allegorizing woman, and 3) masquerading as a woman, and examine the characteristics of these different feminine voices to ultimately define what is "femininity" as represented through the female voice.

2. Speaking as a Woman

In the majority of poems with female speakers, the speaker's identity as a woman runs throughout the text. It is a well-known fact that the division of the two sexes are not absolute, women having some masculine tendencies while men have some feminine

20 "Ch'ongsan Pyōlgok" is an anonymous Koryŏ song, its title meaning 'Song of Green Mountain'.

21. Even when a speaker's gender is clear, there are cases where the tone of a poem is inconsistent, making it difficult to discuss the work with certainty. The presence of the refrain "Wi ch'ungjulga tepyōngsŏngdae" in "Kusir" is one such example. In these cases, the minor inconsistencies are ignored and the work is discussed in terms of its overall mood.

In the case of "Manjōnch'un Pyōlsa," it is difficult to understand the work with any consistency even if one reads the speaker as being female. This is the result of the poem being a combination of many different songs, and this article will not discuss the work in detail.
tendencies. Despite this "bisexual" tendency, an individual forms his or her own sexual identity depending on which tendencies are stronger. Once the sexual identity is formed, the individual suppresses the components of the opposite sex within himself or herself, to conform to a unified sexual identity. A unified sexual identity is more clearly expressed in social/public dimensions rather than in psychological/private dimensions.

Literary texts may seem like an individual's private discourse, but is in fact a very social and public discourse. The speakers in lyric poems usually speak with a unified sexual identity. The cases where the speaker sustains her sexual identity as a woman throughout the poem will be called "speaking as a woman." The subject who "speaks as a woman" can be a woman or a man. A woman speaking as a woman is natural. A man speaking in the voice of a woman may be thought a relatively recent innovation in literary history, but it is not that strange or rare even in the Koryŏ dynasty. Countless poets such as Li Po and Tu Fu of China and Im Che, Ch'oe Sŏng-dae, Yi Ok, and Kim So-wŏl of Korea all wrote such "gender-bending" poetry. There are cases where the poet wrote such poems in an attempt to defend a specific woman, and there are cases where a psychological replacement occurred between the poet and a specific woman within the text. In whatever case, the poet identifies himself with the female speaker of the text. It is very common for a poet to speak in a

22 This is because a literary text is created with communication in mind.
23 "Gender bending" where a woman speaks as a man or a man speaks as a woman because of various social, cultural, psychological, and aesthetic reasons, can be found in life and literature anywhere in the world. A historical comparison would be an interesting subject for study.
female voice within the text regardless of his or her actual sex.

Koryŏ sokyo that take the form of "speaking as a woman" include "Kasiri," "Tongdong," "Sŏgyŏng pyŏlgok," "Sangjŏga," and "Manjŏnch'ün Pyŏlsa." That these works are written in female voices can be seen through the following typically feminine details. In "Tongdong," the speaker refers to her listener as "noksa-num." In "Sŏgyŏng Pyŏlgok," the speaker says she will leave her loom and follow her beloved. The speaker of "Sangjŏga" is pounding rice. The above-mentioned works are very feminine in diction, imagery, and attitude of the speakers.

Let us think about the feminine identity, femininity, and the content of the feminine sentiments shown by "speaking as a woman," by analyzing the actual texts. The female speaker of "Sangjŏga" is excluded from this section as she is a rather exceptional case.

"Kasiri," "Tongdong," and "Sŏgyŏng Pyŏlgok" are similar in that they are all songs of abandoned women. The fact that the female speaker has been abandoned is clearly shown in the text.26

24 "Noksa," literally meaning "recorder," was a low-ranking official in Silla, Koryŏ and Chosŏn. "Num" is an honorific in this case.

25 The Korean word "num" has been consistently translated into "beloved" within this paper, except for when it is used as an honorific address in conjunction with another word.

26 The following excerpts of Koryŏ folk songs were originally quoted in Korean without page number from Han'guk Kodaek Kaya edited by Hwang Pae-kang (Saemunsa, 1986). All excerpts have been adapted into modern English by the translator, based on the original text and modern Korean interpretation by the author. The following works have been consulted for the interpretation of the Koryŏ sokyo Yŏyu Ch'ŏngu by Yang Ju-dong (Ulyu Munhwasa, 1947), [Saer Gochan] Koryŏ Kayaŏ Osok Yŏngu by Pak Byung-chae (Kukhak Charyovon, 1994), Komnyopp by Hong Ki-mun (Kungnap Munhak Yaesulsŏnjik Ch'ulpanea, 1959), and papers by Professors Seo Jae-kuk and Nam
"Will you leave / Will you abandon me and leave" ("Kasiri")
"For what reason has Noksa-nun forgotten me" ("Tongdong," April section)
"There is no one to take me after you have plucked me"
("Tongdong," October section)
"If you love me, I will follow you in tears" ("Sŏkyŏng Pyŏlgok")

In "Kasiri," the female speaker wants to beg her beloved to stay, but is worried that she might upset him and that he will leave forever. The speaker of "Tongdong" does not know why her beloved has forgotten her, and the speaker of "Sŏgyŏng Pyŏlgok" is saying that she will give up everything to follow her beloved only if he loves her. The parting of the lovers seems to have been caused by the beloved's betrayal, rather than because the female speaker did something wrong. However, it is significant that the speaker concentrates not on the betrayal but only in that she has been abandoned. In fact, the speaker sees herself as an "object" abandoned by the subject, or the beloved. The speaker's view of herself shows that she considers herself as an "other" and an "object."

This sort of self-view sometimes manifests itself as the speaker comparing herself to an inanimate object. The speaker of "Tongdong" compares herself to a comb that has been discarded after use (June section), a fruit cut by a knife (October section), and wooden chopsticks left on a tray to be used by a superior (December section), while the speaker of "Sŏgyŏng Pyŏlgok" sees herself as a plucked flower.27 These speakers identify themselves with inanimate objects,

Kwang-wu

27 A passage in "Sŏgyŏng Pyŏlgok" describes the new woman in the beloved's life as
possessions of others, foodstuff, and tools.

The speaker does not see herself as an independent subject, but as someone else's object. She accepts herself as an "other." This "otherness" is produced by the speaker regarding someone other than herself as the subject of the discourse, and unconditionally accepting the rules of that subject to reduce her into an object. The self-identity of the female speakers of the aforementioned three works can be summarized as "otherness." ²⁸

What kind of person is the "beloved" of the poems? He can abandon and return to the speaker whenever he wants. He may become even more distant if the speaker begs for him to stay ("Kasiri"). He can easily leave a weeping speaker to initiate another relationship with a different woman ("Sŏgyŏng Pyŏlgok"). The beloved is compared to a lamp lit on high and a spring flower blooming in March ("Tongdong"). He is described as an enlightening presence, attractive in person ("Tongdong"). He exists for himself, and is an independent being who acts according to his own thoughts and emotions. He is a free, superior being.

If the female speaker is an objectified, dependent being, the beloved is an independent and free being. The speaker is low while the beloved is high. The speaker is inferior while the beloved is superior. The speaker is the "other" while the beloved is the subject. This sort of relationship between the speaker and the beloved runs through the texts of the three works.

What is the speaker's attitude and character? The attitude of the

---

²⁸ Simone de Beauvoir was the one who theorized the status of women through the concept of "otherness." Refer to The Second Sex.
speakers of the various poems can be summarized as follows: begging ("Kasuri" and "Sŏgyŏng Pyŏlgok"), waiting ("Kasuri" and "Tongdong"), resentment and resignation ("Sŏgyŏng Pyŏlgok"), and self-pity ("Kasuri" and "Tongdong"). The phrase "how am I supposed to live when you leave me," and the speaker seeing herself as a discarded comb or a cut fruit shows deep self-pity. Also, the speaker of "Sŏgyŏng Pyŏlgok" shows a passivity and a lack of initiative in blaming the boatman in the passages, "did you take out your ship without knowing how wide Taedong river is?" and "did you put your bride on the boat without knowing her lewdness?" The speaker shows softness and tenderness as well, but these characteristics are double-edged. The female speaker may be as tender as can be towards her beloved, but strong and steadfast when waiting for his return. The tenderness and strength of a woman in love form two sides of the same coin.

The various attitudes and characteristics of the female speakers discussed above can be thought of as different expressions of women's "otherness." "Kasuri," "Tongdong," and "Sŏgyŏng Pyŏlgok," the central works of "speaking as a woman," sing of the speaker's self-consciousness and sentiments as an "other" who cannot become the subject of her own discourse. The beauty in these works are

29 Korean literature and culture contains phenomena that may be termed the "aesthetics of missing the point," where one knowingly misses the point to aim at a special aesthetic effect. However, "Sŏgyŏng Pyŏlgok" is different from the "aesthetics of missing the point."

30 There is controversy about the interpretation of the second passage, but I will take the reading given above.

31 "Maryŏnch'un Pyŏlsa" is a combination of several songs, and is difficult to interpret in a uniform manner. It has been left out of this paper due to the difficulty.
generally of the pathetic and sorrowful kind, which may be termed "aesthetics of sorrow." The aesthetics of sorrow is a sadistic sort of beauty accompanied by self-pity. The tender and sorrowful voice, and original imagery such as the "discarded comb" or the "chopsticks on the tray" are only possible because the speaker is a woman. The feminine tone, imagery and expressions are part of a feminine language or dialect coming from uniquely feminine experiences. The aforementioned works are extremely valuable in that they realize a feminine aesthetic and language. However, one must not overlook women's "otherness" that lies in the background.

The speakers of "Kasin," "Tongdong," and "Sogyöng Pyölgok" are young women in love whose relationships seem to be all-consuming. It is true that they express one side of the so-called "feminine characteristics," in that they believe love to be the only absolute value and cling to it desperately. However, they are not representative women of the Koryö dynasty, nor do they show the everyday lives of such women.  

---

in interpreting the setting and diction, despite the progress made in its interpretation by Professor Song Hyun-kyöng ("Manjönych'un Pyölsa'nu Kuyo," Koryö Shudae's On'yoa Munhak (Hyöngsil Chulpansa, 1975)) However, I believe the female speaker of "Manjönych'un Pyölsa" is not that different from those of the other poems treated here.

32. Because of this factor, there are some who interpret the authors of Koryö sokyo as kusaeng. Refer to "Koryö Sok'yotsu Hyangyu Gyech'unggwa Gwö Songgyökk" in Koryö Shudae's On'yoa Munhak by Ch'oe Dong-won (Saemunsa, 1982) and Han'guk Juksae'eo Smunhaksa Yongu by Jöng Sang-kyun (Hareum Munhwasa, 1986). It is admittedly difficult to decide whether or not the authors of "Kasin," "Tongdong," and "Sogyöng Pyölgok" are kusaeng. The authors of "Sangyoga," "Chönggwajöng-gok" and "Sanghwajömi" are clearly not kusaeng. On the other hand, the opinion that Koryö sokyo are simply folk songs is problematic as well, since the women portrayed in them show a considerable distance from the reality of everyday life.
"Sangjöga" is a work that takes the form of "speaking as a woman," yet is very different from the other poems discussed above. The content and form of this poem is very simple. The poem, which speaks of pounding rice to cook a homely meal for her parents, then eating whatever is left over, expresses the sentiments of a lower-class woman who puts her parents first even while living in poverty. The tone of "Sangjöga" is quite different from other Koryo sokyo with female speakers. It was probably chosen as a song to be represented in the sogak33 books of the royal court because it conforms to the demands of the patriarchal system, showing a woman's filial piety and exemplary behavior in everyday life. But this song was not part of the mainstream music played in the royal court of the Koryo dynasty, nor does it seem likely that it was a popular song. The importance of "Sangjöga" lies in that it represents the concept of nurturing and an attitude of self-sacrifice. Nurturing and self-sacrifice are beautiful humanistic values. They have been praised for a long time, particularly as wifely virtues to be educated and even coerced unto women through various rules and traditions, ultimately to be internalized by the women themselves. Though these values are important, if they are considered as a characteristic peculiar to women or a virtue that only women must uphold, it serves to strengthen the "otherness" of women. It cannot be denied that such feminine characteristics and values, despite their nobility, functioned as justifications for oppressing women. Historically speaking, the feminine attitude of nurturing and self-sacrifice were yet another expression of women's "otherness."

33 The term 'sogak' can be interpreted as secular (popular) music, or folk music
We have examined the Koryo sokyo which took the form of "speaking as a woman." These works express the self-identity of the speakers as women, their feminine attitudes and characteristics. The poems are presumably those that were chosen and transmitted by the royal court as folk song lyrics, therefore it is likely that they are specialized representatives of the various feminine expressions of that time. But as well known, these works came to be criticized as describing an undesirably passionate love between the sexes in the Choson dynasty, showing that even this much feminine expression was ultimately oppressed and silenced within the later period.

If the femininity expressed within the Koryo sokyo are merely the aesthetic expressions of "otherness," how we understand and evaluate it becomes important. Under the patriarchal system, the realistic needs and concerns of men come to decide the identity of women and femininity. Under the patriarchy, women are the "other" to the men, and the femininity as realized within literary texts cannot escape from the trap of "otherness." The identity of women or their feminine characteristics as prescribed by the patriarchal society is ultimately empty, having excluded women's status as independent subjects. Women's identities and characteristics have the potential for endless variety, and there is no such thing as a femininity that can be defined by a few fixed values. But it is nevertheless true that women assume the femininity demanded by the patriarchy and live as an "other," losing herself.

On the other hand, even if women have existed as "others," not all the characteristics that have been considered feminine are negative. Concepts such as softness, waiting, and nurturing are positive values that are antitheses of the so-called "male" concepts, domination and
competition. They are methods of relating to living beings. When forming a meaningful relationship with any living creature, we must learn how to be soft, to wait, and to nurture. These are positive characteristics that mainly women have developed throughout history. But just because these characteristics are valuable, they should not make one overlook or misinterpret their oppressive aspects towards women. Only when "otherness" is denied, then the concepts of softness, waiting, and nurturing can recover their true value.

For women, rejecting their own "otherness" is to refuse their own objectification, and for men, it is no longer regarding women as the "other." Rejecting the patriarchal ideology that imagines women as the "other" does not mean that women should suddenly turn masculine. The positive values that have been historically developed by women should be considered human values that go beyond gender. Rejecting "otherness" and assuming subjectivity does not mean you make someone else into the "other." Only when nobody is rejected as the "other," can feminine values and feminine aesthetics have true value.

3. Allegorizing Woman

The female identity within a number of poems with female speakers are actually a specialized form of expressing the male sexual identity. In such cases, the female identities do not have meaning in themselves, but rather serve as allegories of the specific male identities in question. In fact, the woman portrayed within the text is no more than an allegory of the male poet. The man compares himself to a woman and mimics the voice of a woman. This sort of speaking will be called "allegorizing woman."
The real subject of "allegorizing woman" is a man. There were cases within "speaking as a woman" where the actual subjects were men, but in those cases, the poet psychologically identified himself with a specific woman. He became the woman, at least within the text, and fully assumed her voice. On the other hand, the poet of "allegorizing woman" does not become the woman in the text, but remains himself. He merely compares himself to women, mimicking their voice.

Why would a male poet compare himself to a woman and mimic her voice? When a man assumes the voice of a woman, he makes himself into an "other," or becomes conscious of his own "otherness." A man may be the subject in the male/female relationship, but he in turn can become the "other" of someone else who is superior to himself. In king/vassal, God/man, and master/slave relationships, the vassal/man/slave is the "other" of the king/God/master. When a man wants to show his own weak, dependent "otherness" in relation to a vastly superior subject, he mimics the characteristics of the woman, the "other" that he is most familiar with. What he mimics is of course, feminine characteristics as prescribed by the male.

The readers of "allegorizing woman" will sense, vaguely or strongly, that the speaker seems to be a woman, but really is not. The degree of recognition will differ from work to work, and also according to the reader. The reason for such recognition is because although the male poet mimics a feminine voice, he leaves clues to the fact that he is not a real woman. These clues may be unconscious or sometimes intentional markers left by the author. These markers are variously shown in the poetic setting, imagery, and diction.
The best known examples of "allegorizing woman" is Ch'ungshinyŏnju jisa. It is often said that if a person reads Ch'ungshinyŏnju jisa with no information on the author, he or she is led to think that the author is a woman. I disagree with this opinion. Even without information on the author, a close reading of the texts reveals that they are not love songs of women, but rather songs of loyalty by men.

Let us take "Sa-miin-gok" as an example. The beloved of the female speaker is compared to the "North Star." The female speaker also tells the beloved to "hang the moonlight high to light the world, making all places as bright as day." The aforementioned expressions make it easy to read that the beloved is the king and the feminine voice of the speaker is a specialized expression of a male voice. Although diction related to sewing and the women's quarters abound.

34 Ch'ungshinyŏnju jisa is a poetic genre commonly translated as "hymn of constancy," where a loyal vassal sings of his constant loyalty to his king.

35 Professor Kim Yŏl-gyu attempted a psychoanalytic reading of Ch'ungshinyŏnju jisa for the first time in "Yŏsŏng'ŏsul'ui Munhakdŭl," chapter 6 of Hae'guk Munhaksŏ (Tangudang, 1983). Prof. Kim's writing was not only very interesting, it was of great help to me in organizing my thoughts. However, after citing "Chŏnggwajŏng-gok" as an example of Ch'ungshinyŏnju jisa, Prof. Kim went on to say that "If the author hides that he is a man and his beloved the king, the song could very well be read as a weak-willed woman begging in tears for her beloved's return after abandonment." I disagree on this point. Even without previous information on the author and the beloved, songs of this sort including "Chŏnggwajŏng-gok" show within their texts that it is a male writer speaking of his king. The two works cited by Prof. Kim are no exception. That others aspire towards the beloved shows that the relationship between the speaker and the beloved cannot be a 1:1 relationship. The beloved is obviously not a common man.

36 "Sa-miin-gok", which can be translated as 'Mindful of my Seemly Lord,' is a hymn of constancy written in 1585-9 by Ch'ŏng Ch'yŏl.
in the poem, the sophisticated Sino-Korean words and Chinese expressions make it clear that the language of the text is male rather than female. Such texts of "allegorizing woman" usually leave some sort of marker that the woman of the text is in fact an allegory of the male author.

One Koryo sokyo that takes the form of "allegorizing woman" is "Chonggwajong-gok," a well-known Chungshinyojuisa written by Chong So. The poem takes the form of an abandoned woman begging her beloved to love her again. As the speaker directly addresses the beloved as "nim," it is clear that the speaker is presented as female. The attitude of verbally lowering oneself and raising the other, diction of supplication and appeal, tears and lamentation, and absolute dependency on the beloved, are all so-called feminine characteristics. The beloved is a vastly superior being compared to the speaker, being free and independent, while the speaker is an inferior and dependent being.

But there are part of this poem that are difficult to categorize as feminine characteristics or situations. A passage shows that someone has purposely slandered the speaker to the beloved, who now avoids the speaker because of it. The speaker cries of the injustice and her innocence. Slander and explanations are not common occurrences in everyday relationships between the sexes. The setting of this poem shows that the speaker is in competition with many others to gain the favor of the beloved. In other words, the setting does not show a relationship between common lovers. The diction does not sound like that of a woman, and Sino-Korean phrases such as "chonwoehyosung" are difficult to regard as part of a uniquely feminine language.

As we have examined, "Chonggwajong-gok" attempts to express a
feminine aesthetic through a female speaker. However, the feminine identity realized within the text shows that the speaker is a literary tool for a man, who regards her as an "other," to effectively express his own identity.

"Isanggok" is a work similar to "Chŏnggwajŏng-gok." Although there is difficulty in its interpretation due to many ambiguous passages, this poem is also a song of explication, a claim of innocence and a supplication for a return of love. The speaker is somewhere dangerous and isolated, and it is described as a terrifying "yŏlmyŏnggul." The speaker also regards herself as someone "who will die soon and fall in Hell." It is difficult to think that the setting and the speaker's view of herself is something commonly found in a relationship between lovers. It reads much more like a song of someone who is isolated from society because of some sort of transgression, and it therefore becomes much more likely that the actual voice behind that of the female speaker is that of a man. The Chinese diction is clearly part of a male language, antithetical to the pure Korean of "Tongdong" or "Sŏkyŏng Pyŏlgok." The poetic situation, the speaker's view of herself and diction allows one to presume that "Isanggok" is another work where the author's identity as an "other" is allegorized through a female voice. However, this is

37 The interpretation of the word "yŏlmyŏnggul" is controversial, read by some as a "fearful road" (Yang Ju-dong, Hong Ki-mun and Pak Byŏng-chae), and a "road at dawn" by others. But considering the words "Byuk'ryuk" and "mugan" (Hell), the former definition seems more plausible.

38 I believe "Isanggok" is written by a male poet. There is controversy over whether "Isanggok" is a folk song or a creative effort by a specific poet. Prof. Chang Hyo-hyon has argued that the author of "Isanggok" is Chi'ae Hong-ch'ŏl from the source, Pyŏngnaesŏnsaenggup (Chang Hyo-hyon, "Isanggok: Saengsŏng'e Gwanhan Goch'al,"
merely a presumption, and further study is needed

4. Masquerading as a Woman

In some works with female speakers, the feminine identity established within the text is a falsehood. In such poems, the feminine identities shows inconsistency, and is accompanied by cracks and ruptures within the text, revealing a male voice hidden within the female voice. These cases will be called "masquerading as a woman."

The subject of "masquerading as a woman" is a man. The subject of "allegorizing woman" was also a man, but in that case, the male poet chose feminine identity as an allegory to express his own "otherness." He did not attempt to hide his true gender, but merely mimicked the female voice in his allegorizing process by psychologically identifying with the female speaker. On the other hand, the subject of "masquerading as a woman" hides his male status to pretend to be a woman. He objectifies the woman within the text for an aesthetic effect, reducing the woman to a sexual object by using the text as a locus for sexual satisfaction.

The form of "masquerading as a woman" is most often used in sasol sijo, a good example being "Kanbam’e chago gan gũ nom amado mod ijōra."39 The speaker of this sasol sijo is definitely a woman. The speaker makes very open references to sexual intercourse

---

Kugōkugunhahak vol 92, Kugōkugunhahhakoe, 1984) Prof Pak No-jun has argued that the work is a folk song in view of its diction, progression and form in "Isanggokgwu Yulilsōnggũ Munjae," Koryō Kayōš Ŭng (Saemursa, 1990)

39 Akhaksŏbyŏng This so is number 106 in Han'guk Sijo Daeajŏn (I, II) edited by Pak Ùl-su (Asia Munhwasa, 1992)
by comparing her lover to a roofer, a boatman, and a mole. She also calls herself someone "who has experienced countless men." Is the owner of this voice a real woman? The answer will differ according to the historical, social, or cultural situation, or the form of discourse. However, as this act of speaking is not private, but is a form of public discourse called a literary text. In a patriarchal society, it is not an easy thing for a woman to speak of herself in such a manner within public discourse, nor is it natural. Also, during the late Chosŏn dynasty when chastity was considered paramount for women, even a kisaeng would have found it difficult to brag of her sexual prowess within public domain. This becomes especially important when one considers that sasŏl sijo was mainly considered the domain of men. In fact, the author of this sijo is Yi Jong-bo (1693-1766), a male poet. Apart from this work, there are quite a few number of sasŏl sijo with female speakers that are known to be by male authors, or presumed to be such. Such work have the common characteristic that they trivialize women's sexuality.

A Koryŏ sokyo that takes the form of "masquerading as a woman" is "Ssanghwajŏm," which had been naively accepted in the past as the work of a woman. The sexual discourse within "Ssanghwajŏm" had been read as reflecting the open sexual culture of the Koryŏ women. However, the sexual discourse of "Ssanghwajŏm" is quite different from that expressed within different Koryŏ sokyo.40

"Ssanghwajŏm" is composed of four stanzas, and it is thought that

40 Prof Kim Dae-heng says that within Koryŏ sokyo, "there are some poems like 'Ssanghwajŏm' that express the enjoyment between men and women, but most speak of unchanging love and yearning." (Kim Dae-heng, "Kojŏn Soga," Han'guk Munhak Kan'gŏn (Kilbud, 1994 p 194)
there are two speakers. The form is a simple one where similar conversations between the two repeats in the four stanzas. Let us call the speakers 'Woman 1' and 'Woman 2' for convenience sake. Woman 1 shows an inconsistent sexual attitude. By her worrying over what others will say about a man holding her wrist, one can see that she is not free from the patriarchal sexual discourse that oppresses female sexuality. However, the fact that Woman 1 reveals that the man not only held her wrist but that they slept together contradicts her previous attitude. Her revealing that she has slept with problematic sexual partners such as a Moslem, a Buddhist monk, a dragon in the well, and an owner of a drinking establishment further contradicts her initial attitude. Woman 1 revealing her experience with such "undesirables" is difficult to understand. Her voice towards Woman 2 is also significant. Whereas she uses honorific diction in the beginning, she then goes on to speaks in a more commonplace language.

Woman 2, when she hears that Woman 1 has had her wrist held by various men, repeats that "I would go there to sleep as well." Not only is she bold enough to directly express her sexual desire, she does not seem at all to be restricted by patriarchal sexual discourse.

The voice of Woman 1 is fragmented, while that of Woman 2 is overly bold. Could these female voices of literary texts be that of real women?

The Koryŏ dynasty, when compared with the Chosŏn dynasty, is said to have been a period of relative leniency toward women.

---

41 The poem takes the form of two women having a conversation. Some read the last phrase as the voice of a third woman, but there seems to be no reason for doing so.
However, it is important to remember that it was only comparatively lenient, and that it was still a patriarchal society. Women of Koryŏ could only go outdoors after covering their faces with a long black veil called mongsu. In the case of upper class women, they would so rarely step outside their homes that even their own siblings were unable to see them unless they lived in the same house. Also, all sexual relations outside of marriage were regarded as adultery. There was a sexual double standard in enforcing the punishment for adultery. For example, a relation between a master and a female slave was not considered adultery, while that between a mistress and a male slave was punishable by death. A man could kill his wife and correspondent at the scene of the crime, but if a woman killed her husband and his correspondent, she was punished for murder. When a woman was found guilt of adultery, not only was she divorced from her husband, she would become registered as a lewd woman and was sold as a slave. These were the facts of life for a woman of Koryŏ. The reign of Ch'ungnyŏr-wang when "Sanghwa'om" was written is said to have been quite decadent, but it is difficult to think that the general sexual attitudes of women would have changed drastically. When one considers the above-mentioned social limitations placed on the women of Koryŏ, the female speakers of "Sanghwa'om"

42 Refer to Kwŏn Sun-hyŏng's "T'asi Saengggakhan'un Koryŏ Yŏsŏngui Jiru," Yŏsŏnggwon Sahoe vol 9 (Ch'angjaggwa P'pyŏngsa, 1998) This work is my source for any generalizations about the status of Koryŏ women.

43 That is, written up in the 'Chanyŏn' an official document where women of the yangban class who had behaved lewdly or was married more than three times were registered.

44 25th kung of Koryŏ (r 1274-1308)
seem even more unrealistic.

In view of such facts, the fragmented voice of Woman 1 and the overly bold voice of Woman 2 in "Ssanghwajöm" may be considered to be the actual voice of a man. If so, why would a man masquerade as a woman?

From a man's point of view, Woman 1 is a woman who does not resist the seduction of any man. A woman who shows absolutely no resistance can be attractive to men. Again from a male point of view, Woman 2 is an example of a lustful woman who actively expresses her own sexual desire. A lustful woman stimulates men in a different way. An unresisting woman and a lustful woman both function as sexual objects of men. Men project their sexual interest unto women, and feel satisfied through women who reflect their own desires. The female speakers of "Ssanghwajöm" have been chosen for projecting male desire. The male poet is expressing the image of the sort of woman he desires through masquerading as a woman.

The fragmentation of Woman 1's sexual attitude is primarily from the male poet assuming the voice of a woman. Related to this problem, we must consider the formative process of the poem as

45. According to Freud, "a woman's well-known powerlessness" is a great attraction. Refer to pg 140 of Han'guk Jungse Sominhaksu Yongu by Ch'oe Sang-gyun (Hanshin Munhwasa, 1986)

46. When analyzing saol sjo that uses overt sexual discourse, Prof Pak No-jun argues, "The use of a female speaker may be much more effective than the use of a male speaker. Transforming the speaker into a lewd woman who speaks and acts in a depraved and provocative manner will make first the author, then the largely male population of readers fall into a sort of sexual excitement. To achieve this effect, one needed a female speaker with a lewd tongue." (Pak No-jun, "Saol Sjowa Eroticism", Han'guk Siga Yongu vol 3 (Hanguk Siga Hakhoe, 1998 pg 366)
well. There are conflicting opinions as to the origin of "Ssanghwajom," some claiming that it is a folk song, some saying it is an adaptation of a folk song, and that it is an original work. The song is recorded in Chinese in 'Akji' of Koryo and the Sa-akpu of Min Sa-pyoong (1295-1359). Both versions record only a fragment of stanza 2, with slight variances. Although it is true that abridgements are unavoidable in translating a Korean song into Chinese, there are reasons to believe that the original form of the poem contained only the more careful voice of Woman 1, and that the voice of Woman 2 along with the bolder later words of Woman 1 were added later in the royal court. It could be thought that while the song was being transformed into music of the court, the voices which "masquerade as woman" were added, leading to the inconsistencies within the voice of Woman 1.

We have examined "Ssanghwajom" which takes the form of "masquerading as a woman." Considering the sexual attitudes within the text and the social situation of the time when the poem was written, it is most natural to think that the actual voice behind the female speakers is that of a man. The women of "Ssanghwajom" are projections of male sexual desire. The reality behind a female voice can be thus cleverly hidden. Therefore, equating the superficial speaker's gender and the gender of the actual author is an overly naive view, as the female voice can often serve as literary strategy of men.

---

47 Poets O Jam and Kim Won-haeng are often considered when trying to attribute "Ssanghwajom" as an original work. Documentation on these two poets are included in Koryo Book 71, Akji 2, Sogakpo. Some view O Jam as the adapter of the poem from a folk song, rather than its writer.
5. Conclusion

This paper has put forth that examining the poetry of female speakers and the aesthetics of femininity is an important project for literary study, and concentrated in particular on the female speakers of Koryŏ sokyo. The female speakers of Koryŏ sokyo can be divided into the following three categories: "speaking as a woman," "allegorizing woman," and "masquerading as a woman." We also looked at the characteristics of the feminine identity and sentiments expressed by the "speaking as a woman" form, and how male poets "allegorize woman" and "masquerade as a woman" for their own literary strategy.

As this paper concentrates only on the female speakers of Koryŏ sokyo, the model should be altered if poems of other genre are included as well. Especially, in the case of sŏsa hansi,48 there are quite a few works that have achieved an aesthetic effect where a female and male voice coexist harmoniously. A study of the various female voices in the different genres of Korean poetry is needed. I hope that from the issues raised in this paper, there will be more widespread discussion about the female speaker and her aesthetic values, her development, and overall meaning in literary history.

(Translated by Koeun Rha, M.A., S.N.U)

48 Narrative poems written in Chinese