

National and International Representatives of Korean Literary Canons

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Among the many challenges the Republic of Korea had to face after liberation from the Japanese and the Korean War, the idea of a Korean nation had to be restituted and its components re-evaluated. Building a canon of literary texts in Korean was one of the main tasks. However, it is unclear to what extent the canon of Korean texts in translation had a similar role in the process of presenting the Republic of Korea to the outside world and building a national image.

In order to assess the relevance of these translations, I first survey the main strategies employed after the Korean War to promote Korean literature in translation (UNESCO support, national programs, and personal initiatives). Then I analyze the representativeness of the corpus of Korean literature translated into English between 1950 and 2000 in comparison to the source country (Republic of Korea) literary canon and target-country expectations, in this case expectations in the United States.

To do so, I will compare a) the authors who were most often translated into English in that period (either in separate volumes or in anthologies), with b) the authors selected for the *Who is Who in Korean Literature* prepared by the Korean Literature Translation Institute and the authors included in the syllabus for Korean Language and Literature in Secondary Education in Korea, and with c) the authors in the syllabi of Korean Studies literature courses in American higher education.

The comparison will highlight the role of certain translators in the exportation of specific authors and genres, the formal and thematic properties of international canonization, and certain differences between source culture and target culture expectations of a Korean literary canon.