

# Study on the Development of Healing Programs for North Korean Refugees Using Classical Narratives

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## Abstract

This research designs a program to improve the perspective of North Korean refugees using a literary therapy methodology, focusing on the fact that the experiences of defection and migration endured by North Korean refugees are similar to the hardships and the success of heroes in classical literature. Among Korean classics, there are folktales such as *My Own Fortune*, novels such as *The Story of Hong Kiltong*, and myths on founding of nations such as the *Myth of Chumong*, which all deal with oppression and limitations of the past location, and escape, migration and success, and such plots exist in all genres. In the process of the heroes reaching success, the oppression and limitations of their past locations act as inevitable deprivations that allow them to further mature, from which the protagonists gain astonishing abilities and develop into heroes. In light of such syntax of heroic narratives, the past experiences of North Korean refugees can very well become the basis for future success. However, for the refugees, their experiences of defection and migration are remembered only as hardships. They also tend to be pessimistic toward their lives. I consider such aspects to be central in the vicious cycle in which their inadaptability and their mental health affect each other negatively. In order to improve their perspective and help them gain more confidence in their lives, I hypothesize that a humanities-based approach can be an excellent methodology and attempt to detail such a program. The healing program for North Korean refugees using classical heroic narratives that this research proposes is a humanities-based one that induces the subjects to go beyond remembering their past only as series of hardships and to perceive it as a foundation for success. By using the power of narratives, which is the unit of human thought, memory of an arduous past can be relieved, and by applying the success stories

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of heroes to the refugees' lives, the refugees can receive guidance in the concrete development of their lives. These are the main aspects of such program, which involve reading of classical literature and creative activities that articulate their lives.

**Ke ywords** : North Korean refugees, literary therapy, defection trauma, Korean folktales, classical heroic narratives

## 1. North Korean Refugees' Severe Inability to Adapt to South Korean Society

The inability of North Korean refugees to adapt to life in South Korea is quite serious. According to data from the Ministry of Unification (2013), as of August 2012, out of around total 26,000 North Korean refugees, 26 had committed suicide, 51 had emigrated, and 796 were missing. Among those reported missing, it appeared that some did not have definite place of residence, some had gone abroad and some were imprisoned, among other circumstances. It is also possible that some had even gone back to the North. As such, 'defecting from South Korea' whereby North Korean refugees who had entered South Korea eventually leave the South, is continuing to increase (Lee et al. 2003). The material support and job training rendered by the South Korean government have not guaranteed happiness for these refugees, and the relative poverty faced by North Korean refugees in South Korean society is consistently being inherited to following generations.

The inability of North Korean refugees to adapt to life in South Korea is directly correlated with their mental health. More than 30% of North Korean refugees suffer from depression, showing symptoms of somatization and anxiety.<sup>1)</sup>The process of preparing to escape from the North, actually escaping and adapting to South Korea are psychologically and mentally challenging, and is quite similar to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Kim 2014), in that such hardships have reached levels that interfere with daily life. The sequence of being oppressed and limited in North Korea, preparing to escape the North, actually defecting, entering

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1) Kim, Seog-Ju, et al. 2011; Kim, Mee-Ryoung 2005; Kim, Eun-Kyoung 2009.

a third country and then adapting to a new settlement have led to continuous stress and mental oppression. Such stress and oppression can be referred to as defection trauma. The serious issue is that existing misfortunes faced by North Korean refugees combine with their past suffering to lead to deterioration of their defection trauma, and this internal pain, in turn, worsens their inability to adapt to South Korean life. The inadaptability and mental health of North Korean refugees negatively affect one another, and in this regard, a fundamental measure that can break this vicious cycle is very in need.

However, the existing refugees support system is not resulting in long-term satisfaction, lacks counselors specializing in refugees, and is unclear about the most appropriate method of healing.<sup>2)</sup> One researcher has pointed out that there is neither enough awareness of their mental health nor consideration of their particular socio-cultural characteristics (Woo 2014).

A humanities-based approach, such as philosophy that looks into the life trajectory, history, daily life and human relationships of a person, can be an excellent way of dealing with the complex issues that refugees face. With this in mind, this study designed a humanities-based method of healing, the presumption of which is that classical heroic narratives may be able to replace the refugees' defection trauma with heroic development, using the fact that various contextual elements and life scenes in Korean classical narratives similar to contents of defection trauma can be found in such narratives and that stories about oppression and limitation of living in a particular location in the past, and about escape, migration and success exist in all genres.

A humanities-based approach to healing North Korean refugees had already been attempted in various ways. There was a study on language adjustment within humanities therapy, and discussion on healing based on oral activities with the aim

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2) With the ongoing severity of inadaptability and mental health issues of North Korean refugees, the Ministry of Unification in 2014 designated 'support for mental health of North Korean refugees' as top priority in its settlement support policies. This is a shift on the part of the Ministry towards more fundamental and long-term alternatives, in light of the fact that although the government had rendered various forms of support during the past decade to help the refugees settle in South Korea, they were ineffective. Against the backdrop of such social need, this study seeks to apply a humanities-based methodology that contemplates on and searches the inner workings of people by targeting real problems faced by North Korean refugees, as a way of fundamentally healing them.

of resolving bitterness. Also, a program using a literary therapeutic methodology had been attempted. There were discussions on the results of programs focusing on peculiarities of when programs were applied to ordinary people, and also attempts to relate the defection trauma to the participants' response to particular works of literature. The aforementioned studies confirmed that oral folktales could be used to diagnose the minds of North Korean refugee adolescents, and proposals were made on the potential of using oral folktales and literary therapy to improve literacy, which will, in turn, improve the refugees' ability to adjust to South Korean society.<sup>3)</sup>

This study is different from previous achievements made in regard to literary therapy of North Korean refugees, in that it discusses literary therapy based on works of literature that are similar to the life trajectory of the refugees. Other existing studies performed literary therapy based on stories of basic narratives that had already been chosen through other previous research, whereas for this study, groups of works were selected based on characteristics of refugees as understood from direct contact with them at literary therapy sessions. Such an approach can be considered as a new literary therapeutic method that relates directly to the actual challenges faced by North Korean refugees – namely, their escape and migration.

## 2. Challenges faced by North Korean Refugees and Their Wounds

Woo Jong Min (2014) points out that measures to support North Korean refugees, up until now, had lacked awareness about their mental health and did not fully consider their socio-cultural characteristics (Woo 2014). In fact, it was difficult to explain a lot of the issues faced by North Korean refugees using the modern psychiatric framework. According to Ahn Hyun-Nie (2011), under the

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3) The following papers focus on division and related process of healing from a humanities perspective: Kang 2014; Kim, Jong-Gon 2014; Kim, Jong-Kun 2013a; Kim, Jong-Kun 2013b; Kim, Jong-Kun 2011; Na 2011; Na 2012; Park 2011; Park 2015; Park 2014; Park 2013; Jung 2015.

DSM-IV criteria on post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), North Korean refugees are deemed not to have PTSD and that they don't seem to have difficulties in living their daily lives, at which Ahn attempts to approach their psychological issues using a special concept of 'complex trauma' (Ahn 2011). In short, North Korean refugees are in need of not just material and career development support, but also other types of measures to help improve their quality of life. New healing methods that relate directly to their real concerns and go beyond existing measures are much needed.

North Korean refugees had lived on the other side of the system. Under the pervasive divisionist ideology, it is clear that they are placed in even more of a difficult situation compared to other multicultural groups and seen as outsiders and a special social group. They basically share the same language, history and blood with South Koreans, however, the prolonged division, experience of war, ideological divide, psychological exclusion and the fact that they had to stay in a third country for a long time on their way to South Korea all lead to psychological and physical instability. Furthermore, the assumed familiarity due to the fact that they are of the same ethnicity with South Koreans turn their hopes into deep frustration, so the inability to adapt to South Korea becomes yet another cause of their defection trauma. Thus, the mental health of North Korean refugees must be approached from the standpoint of such socio-cultural factors, within the context of their escape and migration, and in line with their life trajectory.

During the process of defecting from North Korea, the refugees had to live under exploitative wages, fear of extradition, prostitution and other forms of physical and psychological hardships. In fear of their safety and due to ensuing mental difficulties, they had no other choice but to decide to go to South Korea, however, their life in the South did not guarantee happiness, but rather led them to helplessness and social isolation. The more serious problem is that their past wounds combine with their present-day stress to act as painful memories that still haunt them today.

So this study started from the fact that the process of defection and migration to South Korea is remembered only in a painful way.

So when I was in elementary school, I used to think often that I wanted to go back to North Korea. Actually, a lot, until I met Uncle. In the beginning, you don't really realize it, but later you do. What does this mean, what is this, why am I being treated like this. In the beginning, you don't know, but later you do. And the more I knew, the more difficult it was for me... **'Why do I have to live like this, when did I start living like this, why am I living like this.'** I was young, and the thought just wouldn't go away. When I was young, it was really difficult. (From an in-depth interview with a male adolescent North Korean refugee)

At that time, things were really difficult and hard, and then everything overlaps and it's really frustrating. Frustrating. **Who made us like this? (Laughs)** It's so absurd. I would go on with my life, and at one point, ask myself, why am I here. I never even dreamed that I would be living like this. Just because I'm a North Korean refugee. There's a label stuck to me that says I am a refugee. People look at me differently, and I think, why am I living here. Come to think of it, I didn't actually want this. This is not the life I wanted. I wasn't the one who chose to be born there. I came out into the world, and it was North Korea. And I came because of my parents. And then I get angry that I was forced to go through things that I didn't have to go through. I'm mad at my situation, and I don't have anywhere I can relieve myself. And so I get angry. I went through it all, and maybe I became more mature as a result, but I didn't have to go through all this, did I? Why did this have to happen. And now I have a weak heart. Saying that I matured because of everything is annoying. I went through all that, at a time when I should have been just enjoying myself with my friends. Saying I am who I am because I overcame everything is also annoying... I hate it. Why have I become like this. (From literary therapy session of a female North Korean refugee in her 20's)

(Remembering the day she sang the national anthem at Hanawon) Oh, how many people do you think there are in this world whose national anthem changes? Why do we have to sing a different national anthem? Isn't national anthem something that is chosen just once? That day, I cried my heart out.

'Oh my, it's a different national anthem, it's a different country,' I thought. I was

very sad that day. We went through all that. There were so many emotions, but we couldn't express them all. They are all buried inside, and this feeling is also just buried in me. (From an in-depth interview with a female refugee in her 60's)

The above excerpts come from stories told by North Korean refugees who participated in a humanities-based healing program. There was an adolescent male, a woman in her 20's and other in her 60's, and they were living relatively better compared to some other refugees. The adolescent achieved good grades in high school, and the woman in her 20's had developed a career and was active at her job. The woman in her 60's, based on her wisdom and experience, had adeptly adapted to South Korea. However, when they started to talk about their inner emotions, they expressed remorse about their identity as a refugee and their difficult lives. They all expressed negative feelings in regard to their lives, thinking 'Why did I have to go through all this.'

The reason why North Korean refugees prefer emigrating to South Korea is because South Koreans share the same ethnicity and because unlike the North, the South is a land of freedom and hope. Through a variety of routes, they come to know about the astonishing economic development of the South, and with inflated hopes, they come to South Korea. However, near-death experiences and the various hardships they endure are not made worthwhile by their lives in the South. That is why their past memory of their hardships strongly remain and combine with the difficulties they face in the South to forge into a single defection trauma that permeates throughout their lives.

In the process of deciding to run from the North, actually escaping and then adapting to South Korean society, they go through a variety of vicissitudes, which are remembered only as 'suffering' and not motivation for life. For them, the experience of defecting from the North leads them to become labelled a 'refugee' and is thus remembered as a fateful ordeal that they did not choose to go through. Their adventures, hardships and ability to survive can actually be advantageous when living in such a tumultuous modern society, however, they only cause pessimism. This is an important reason as to why they are continuously unable to surmount their special form of trauma.

Judith Herman, in discussing trauma, said that at the core of wounds lie helplessness and isolation, and suggested, as an alternative, the process of establishing safety of the survivor, remembering, mourning, and linking with everyday life (Herman 2007). The reason why North Korean refugees are pessimistic in remembering the past is because they are facing a situation in which they are unable to go through the process of remembering and mourning. Therefore, the present problems of refugees can be interpreted as emanating from their inability to properly remember the past and mourn, which in turn makes linking with everyday life difficult and immerse them once again in helplessness and isolation.

### 3. Classical Heroic Narratives Similar to Lifestories of North Korean Refugees

The impending issue of refugees is the unhappiness that they feel now, resulting from their big decision to defect and migrate to South Korea. For them, the present unhappiness persists as a tragedy with no end, intertwining with their past suffering forcing them to become pessimistic about their lives and destiny. Upon listening to the lifestories of refugees, one can only feel pity at their past experience, however, one can also find incomparable ability to survive and wisdom.

Among Korean classical narratives, there are many stories in which the experiences of heroes, similar to those of North Korean refugees, later transform into a foundation for them to become heroes. In all genres, ranging from folktales to myths and classical novels, there are stories portraying the oppression and limitations felt when living in a certain place in the past, and also the escape, migration and then success. The oppression and limitations of that location in the past act as necessary and inevitable deprivation that drive them to succeed, and as a result, the protagonists become heroes with astonishing abilities.

The following is the story of a refugee woman talking about her escape and migration. The lifestory of migrating from home to a new settlement as told by the female North Korean refugee B starts from her life in North Korea. As can



be seen from this oral tale, she relocated from the North to the South in order to fulfill her dream of success.

First, she was told of a story about overcoming poverty, and then she herself detailed what kind of difficulties she had faced in order to overcome her poverty. The story started off with her feeling of discouragement. Reminiscing the insults she had suffered because she was poor, she said:

It was when I was in first grade, when I was seven I think. Until I was six, until when I had just turned seven, we were really well off. Then we were robbed. If you were really poor and then you become rich, it might be okay, but do you know what happens when you were well off and then you become poor? You're bullied in school. (Laughs) Even if you do well in school, that's how kids are in the North. If you used to provide everything the teachers asked for, but then you can't... well, that's the way it goes. The teachers and the kids all treat you badly. So I came to learn the taste of money when I was just seven. (Laughs)<sup>4)</sup>

She said that her maternal grandparents were well off but were robbed around ten times<sup>5)</sup> and became poor.<sup>6)</sup> She was aware that she had lived with her mother's family whose riches she also benefited from<sup>7)</sup> but due to the family circumstances,

4) From recording of second session on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2013. There was an exploration of responses the subject showed toward literary works he/she related well with, out of about 16 narratives. The excerpt was from when she was listening to *The Tiger's Eyebrows*.

5) The time she was seven years-old would have been around the end of 1990's. In light of the fact that she said her maternal grandfather was a member of the Communist Party, it seems likely that poor people had frequently robbed the house of her wealth family.

6) "Our house was robbed about ten times. I'm not exaggerating. Ten times. My uncles all wore Swiss-made watches. Those watches, even our TV were all taken. (Laughs) We grew a lot of potatoes there, and they even took all the potatoes in the storage shack. So in just a matter of days, our family became poor. So we became poor... It was when I was in first grade, when I was seven I think. Until I was six, until when I had just turned seven, we were really well off. When we were robbed." (From recording of second session on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2013. There was an exploration of responses the subject showed toward literary works she related well with, out of about 16 narratives. The excerpt was from when she was listening to *The Tiger's Eyebrows*.)

7) In regard to her grandparents' wealth, she had vivid memories. "We lived in Yangkantong, and everyone knew us." "The standalone house there was ours. Probably the only one. (Laughs) I think it was built during the colonial times. We had five rooms." "I was raised in my grandma's house, and I had everything I wanted. We were well off, and then..." She acknowledged that she benefited from her grandparents' wealth. (From recording of second session on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2013. There was an exploration of responses the subject showed toward literary works she related well with, out of about 16 narratives. The excerpt was from when she was listening to *The Tiger's Eyebrows*.)

her life changed. She elaborated how she used to be able to satisfy requests from her teacher, but then later could not, and how she was scorned in school where “the teachers and the kids all treat you badly.” In her memory, the ordeal in relation to the transition “you were well off and then you become poor” that a seven year-old was forced to go through took place within her basic life space, which was her school. Also, she expressed that she came to know the “taste of money,” which was an expression that showed her awareness of the power money held.

Then she confessed that ideological complications barred her path. It seems that in North Korea, a person goes onto the next level of schooling after completing fourth year of elementary school. If a student is able to enter a top school, then he or she can move on directly to university.<sup>8)</sup> “I studied to get into that school, but I couldn’t go, even though I had good grades.” She narrated her memory as follows:

The country was divided. He didn’t come to the South. He disappeared in the middle, and that’s a problem in the North. It’s an ideological issue. So I couldn’t go, so I didn’t feel like studying any more. So I thought, what the heck, even if I study, it won’t be any use in society. I should just earn a lot of money and be able to have control over others. So I didn’t study and just learned money.<sup>9)</sup>

The fact that her paternal grandfather, who was originally from the South, had disappeared during the Korean War became an issue of ideology and thus a barrier, and she lost all incentive to study. She decided that studying was of no use in society and that she needed to become a powerful wealthy person who would be able to have control over others. From this point onwards, she started to live a life committed to earning money.

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8) “After you finish 4<sup>th</sup> grade, you go onto middle school in the North. There are normal high schools and there are the top high schools. If you go to the top high schools, you don’t have to take the KSAT like you do here to go to university.” (From recording of second session on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2013. There was an exploration of responses the subject showed toward literary works she related well with, out of about 16 narratives. The excerpt was from when she was listening to *The Tiger’s Eyebrows*.)

9) (From recording of second session on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2013. There was an exploration of responses the subject showed toward literary works she related well with, out of about 16 narratives. The excerpt was from when she was listening to *The Tiger’s Eyebrows*.)

In what direction her resolution led towards could be seen in detail from her portrayal of how she overcame her poverty. Due to tightening of belts in her family, her mother, as the eldest daughter, started selling things “that everyone tried to convince us against.”<sup>10)</sup> Her mother led the way as a seller of goods, and she helped with errands. Eventually, household finances started to improve. Although they were left with a criminal record, her family was able to stand up again thanks to their effort.<sup>11)</sup>

She believed it was impossible to earn money through normal means – only through illegal means, to attain “the best.”<sup>12)</sup> However, unlike what she had expected, her mother was unable to provide prolonged stability. “Mother earned a lot of money and supported our family. But she was caught once, and everything was taken away.” She detailed how her mother was under surveillance, caught several times and had to pay a lot in order to prevent imprisonment, leading then once again to impoverishment. She said that the reason why she had to start selling goods herself instead of just helping was because her mother could not continue her work.<sup>13)</sup>

She described how after that she used to carry a bag of around 25kg and travel for a week, avoiding the surveillance network, to sell metal. Three would form

10) She said, “Then we started selling things that everyone tried to convince us against. (Laughs)” It seems likely that they sold something that was banned at that time in North Korea.

11) “We did everything. So my mother ended up with a criminal record. So that’s how it all happened.” (From recording of second session on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2013. There was an exploration of responses the subject showed toward literary works she related well with, out of about 16 narratives. The excerpt was from when she was listening to *The Tiger’s Eyebrows*.)

12) “Tongch’im doesn’t work. Tongch’im is selling potatoes, one by one. You can’t earn enough like that. Metals bring in the most. (Laughs) Mother also earned money. I didn’t sell that much. Just a little in the beginning. Then I started to really get into it, at around third year of middle school. I completely gave up studying then and started selling things. Mother went to China to sell metal and came back with money. In the very beginning, it was just a few thousand won in Chinese money. Seven or eight thousand won was a lot of money. ... We kept going, and it became tens of thousands of won, in Chinese notes. Just imagine. North Koreans didn’t have tens of thousands of won. But we had several tens of thousands in Chinese bills. You can’t imagine what it was like.” (From recording of second session on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2013. There was an exploration of responses the subject showed toward literary works she related well with, out of about 16 narratives. The excerpt was from when she was listening to *The Tiger’s Eyebrows*.)

13) “Our business become bigger in scale, and then mother was caught again. So all of our money went out the window again. She was caught in action. People said that she may have to spend a long time in prison this time, so she quit and I took her place.” (From recording of second session on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2013. There was an exploration of responses the subject showed toward literary works she related well with, out of about 16 narratives. The excerpt was from when she was listening to *The Tiger’s Eyebrows*.)

one team, avoid being caught, fight against hunger and travel with heavy baggage,<sup>14)</sup> and her family was eventually able to find stability.<sup>15)</sup> Through her effort, she was able to once again buy back the household items<sup>16)</sup> the family had to sell off whenever her mother was caught. Although her parents were alive, she was the one who in fact had to be the breadwinner. She elaborated how she had to endure it all, resting only about one week a year. Her suffering was fundamentally the result of her poverty, but underneath this fact lies another fact that her mother's illegal selling of goods led to yet another crisis.<sup>17)</sup>

In the midst of her literary therapy session, she often expressed longing to be successful, and it seemed to be because she felt that to survive in society, she had to become successful.

Power, of course. That's what came to my mind. I don't know why. In this society, you become powerful by knowing things, and I thought, with that kind of power, I can also become powerful or rich. That's what kept coming into my mind. There are lots of movies like that these days, aren't there? People with no money end up in prison for decades without any reason. I thought, I have to become rich. Knowing is power. I have to have a lot. That's all I think about. Is that strange?<sup>18)</sup>

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14) "We used to walk, and sometimes we had to climb over mountains to avoid being caught. We worked in a team. There were three of us in one team. I travelled with some women. I wanted to save more money, so I used to pack and take all my food with me. (Laughs) I would pack rice balls, and eat them on my way there and back. It was okay to do that in winter. Not during summer. Then the money would come to my mother." (From recording of second session on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2013. There was an exploration of responses the subject showed toward literary works she related well with, out of about 16 narratives. The excerpt was from when she was listening to *The Tiger's Eyebrows*.)

15) "That continued. Mother just sat at home and earned a little, just enough to buy some food. I was the one who went out to earn money. It was always like that. I became the breadwinner (laughs) when I was just a girl. Both my parents were alive, but I became the breadwinner at that young age. Maybe being a girl, there was that sense of responsibility. There was no time for me to sit and rest. If I got some time off, it was maybe one week a year." (From recording of second session on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2013. There was an exploration of responses the subject showed toward literary works she related well with, out of about 16 narratives. The excerpt was from when she was listening to *The Tiger's Eyebrows*.)

16) "When mother got caught, we sold everything that could bring in money. We even sold (laughs) my father's rain boots." (From recording of second session on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2013. There was an exploration of responses the subject showed toward literary works she related well with, out of about 16 narratives. The excerpt was from when she was listening to *The Tiger's Eyebrows*.)

17) It is evident through the above material, that she was not critical of her mother's illegal activities but rather thought highly of her mother's skills. She may be constructing her lifeworld based on her love for her mother, thus eliminating any kind of criticism.

18) From recording of fifth session on 17<sup>th</sup> February 2013. Finalizing all the literary therapy activities up until that time.

Even before, I thought, you have to have a lot of money. Unconditionally. If I'm to survive, I have to have a lot. Doing what I did, I realized that to survive and not die in this society, I had to have something. More than others. Not just some, but a lot. Enough for me to stand out. It's like that in the movies and in television dramas. That's all I thought because that's all I saw.<sup>19)</sup>

As such, she felt that in order to survive in this society, she had to have something. She explained that that something could be knowledge, power or wealth. As can be seen from her expression, "to survive and not die," she believed that if she did not attain these things, then she wouldn't be able to survive in society. It can also be seen that she was still unable to free herself from these thoughts when she admitted that her beliefs only reaffirm themselves through movies and soap operas.

Not only did she want to survive, she frequently expressed that she wanted to become someone at the top. It seemed that the anger stemmed from her helplessness manifested in the form of strong ambitions. Her determination and effort may have allowed her to maintain her livelihood, however, because her ambition to succeed had not been fulfilled, she started to dream of escaping North Korea.

I'm a bit crazy. This woman is different. Because modern civilization is extremely developed, daughters of mother's friends get married really well. Mother traded with the Chinese, and there were dishes – stainless steel dishes as they are known in the North. You know them, don't you? Well, they buy those from department stores in China and take them when they get married. They are considered the best in the North. Yeah. Mother became really worried. What should I do about you, she said. I'm a bit crazy. I told her I'm not the type of a person who'd stay in North Korea anyway, so don't worry. She then said, are you crazy? Where are you going to go? I said Canada. She hit me on the back of my head and said I'm mad. I left around three months later. But I didn't make it to Canada but came to South Korea instead.<sup>20)</sup>

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19) From recording of fifth session on 17<sup>th</sup> February 2013. Finalizing all the literary therapy activities up until that time.

Being able to buy high-end household items when getting married seemed to have been a symbol of high-quality life for this mother and daughter. When the mother told her concerns about the impossibility of achieving this, she told her not to worry since she wasn't a person "who'd stay in North Korea," and told her mother her determination to leave home. When hopes of success in the North became dim, she left her worried mother behind and sought to head towards another world where she hoped to fulfill her dream of success.

After many turns and twists, she ended up entering South Korea<sup>21)</sup>, only to realize that life in the South was not satisfactory either. A while ago, she came back to us, saying she wanted literary therapeutic help once again, and told us of her difficulties in studying her major. She even said she might enter a two-year college to learn a skill. She also showed symptoms of somatization due to endless loneliness, and said she missed her mother back in the North.<sup>22)</sup>

Outline of Lifestory 'Migrating from Home to a New Settlement'	Narrative Structure of Lifestory
<p>I was scorned by my teachers and schoolmates because I was poor. I found out that I won't be able to attend a good school due to my paternal grandfather's ideology. I left school. I made up my mind to become rich and powerful.</p> <p>With the good salesmanship skills I learned from my mother, I started to earn money. As the breadwinner of my family, I was able to alleviate our poverty somewhat, but could not fulfill my dreams.</p> <p>I then left home and entered South Korea. I wanted to become successful in the South. I managed to enter a good university and am now living a relatively more stable life. I still dream of financial success and it is not easy.</p>	<p>→</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>① At my birthplace, I was scorned at for being poor.</li> <li>② My hopes were dashed because of the environment around me.</li> <li>③ I tried to become more successful through anti-social ways.</li> <li>④ I was partially successful but my social position did not change.</li> <li>⑤ In order to fulfill my dreams, I left for another world.</li> <li>⑥ My living standard at my new settlement is satisfactory but I still want to become financially successful.</li> </ol>

20) From recording of the fourth session on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2013. The excerpt was from when she was listening to *My Own Fortune* during the process of a literary therapy session proposing some important elements of 16 story narratives of literary works.

21) Female refugee B had a tendency not to utter a word about the process of escaping from the North and her experience in a third country.

22) This is from a conversation with female refugee B, who voluntarily expressed her thoughts (May 2013) before the second literary therapy session started. It is an excerpt from recordings that have not yet been processed and thus in principle cannot be used as basis for this paper. Further details will be elaborated later.

The narrative of her lifestory can be summarized as ‘I acted anti-socially in a world that scorned me for being poor, but then realized that was not a fundamental solution. I moved to another world and became more successful.’ The challenge she faces now is that fulfilling her dreams in the other world is also difficult. The folktale *The Three Brothers Who Became Successful With a Millstone, a Drum and a Trumpet*<sup>23)</sup> has a narrative structure that is similar to that of the refugee’s lifestory.

Outline of Folktale	Narrative Structure of Lifestory
<p>① A poor single father lived raising three sons.</p> <p>② They could not overcome their poverty,</p> <p>③ So the entire family scattered and survived by begging.</p> <p>④ One day, the eldest son said to his father that they couldn’t continue living like this and that father should teach each of them a way to make a living. However, the father replied that he would tell them before he died. Just before the father died, he gave his eldest son a millstone, his second son a drum and his youngest son a trumpet, and said they can make a living out of those objects.</p> <p>⑤ The three brothers, on their way back from their father’s burial, scattered and went their ways.</p> <p>⑥ The eldest son startled a goblin with the grinding sound of his millstone, acquired the goblin’s magic club, became rich and took on a wife. The second son met a tiger who danced to the beating of his drums, earned money and also got married. The youngest son threatened the daughter of an aristocrat who was running wild and reaped riches. And so all three sons became rich.</p>	<p>① At my birthplace, I was scorned at for being poor.</p> <p>② My hopes were dashed because of the environment around me.</p> <p>③ I tried to become more successful through anti-social ways.</p> <p>④ I was partially successful but my social position did not change.</p> <p>⑤ In order to fulfill my dreams, I left for another world.</p> <p>⑥ My living standard at my new settlement is satisfactory but I will want to become financially successful.</p>

23) According to the *Literary Therapy Narrative Dictionary*, this folktale was compiled in two versions in *The Outline of Korean Oral Literature*. It was also included in the state-sponsored school textbook under the previous curriculum policy. The plot of this folktale was based on the *Literary Therapy Narrative Dictionary*.

This folktale is a work of literature in which three brothers, who were raised by a poor single father and sustained by begging, left home upon the death of their father, were eventually able to become successful using one's own means and lived a prosperous life.

The part about the poor single father and his three sons being unable to escape from poverty matches ① and ② in the lifestory narrative, and begging to survive, ③. The first son telling his father they couldn't continue living like this is commensurate to ④, and the part about the three brothers leaving home upon the death of their father is similar to ⑤. The narrative paragraph ⑥ in the lifestory narrative and the ending of the folktale are also similar. The fact that the female refugee B's living standard at the new settlement was satisfactory and that she wanted to become financially successful are also analogous to the conclusion of the folktale where all three brothers become wealthy.

The brothers using mundane objects given to them by their father in his deathbed to become successful can also be considered to be similar to the life of female refugee B because what the father had actually given the three brothers were not just objects per se, but wisdom and competence attained from their lives as beggars. Likewise, the female refugee was able to survive the process of defecting from North Korea based on the strength she had gained while persevering the dangerous job of selling banned goods. Although young, she was responsible for the livelihood of her family, from which she learned to be responsible and independent, thereby forming the basis for her present life. Also, the characteristics of the female refugee, who had mastered the skill of salesmanship from her mother and hoped to use it in the future to run her own business also relate to the part where the three brothers used a millstone, a drum and a trumpet to accumulate wealth. By following a route similar to the process the protagonists of the folkstory went through to use their mundane objects to reap wealth, the refugee's hopes and dreams might even become realized.

Under the premise that her lifestory of 'Migrating from Home to a New Settlement' is similar to the narrative structure of *The Three Brothers Who Became Successful With a Millstone, a Drum and a Trumpet*, then the *Myth of Chumong*<sup>24)</sup> and *The Story of Hong Kiltong*<sup>25)</sup> can also be considered to be



comparable to her life, in the sense that the two works of literature show structures similar to that of the lifestory of female refugee B, up to narrative paragraph of her lifestory.

First of all, narrative paragraph ① of the refugee's lifestory, 'At my birthplace, I was scorned at for being poor,' is analogous to the part where Chumong is said to be of low birth in *The Story of Chumong* and also to Kiltong being born after a blue dragon appeared in Süngsang's dream in *The Story of Hong Kiltong*. Both Chumong and Kiltong, due to their low social status could not avoid being scorned at. If the parts describing how their births were special, how they were born with extraordinary capabilities, and how, as a result, they could not bear to be scorned

24) The following outline is a summary of the founding myth of Kokuryō, as told by *History of Three Kingdoms, Memorabilia of Three Kingdoms* and *Story of King Tongmyōng* (Institute of Humanities for Unification 2012).

① Hapaek's daughter Yuhwa married Haemosu without the consent of her father, was thrown out of the house and ended up in River Upal. King Kūmwā took pity on her and allowed her to stay at the queen's palace. Yuhwa was impregnated by a light and gave birth to Chumong. Chumong was exceptional in archery. ② Taeso, the son of King Kūmwā, plotted against Chumong, and made him into a stable boy. ③ Chumong, as his mother told him, made a strong fast horse into a weak one, at which the King gave the horse to Chumong. ④ Chumong parted with his mother, and with companions including Oi, Mari and Hyōppu, left the castle of Puyō. (④-1. Taeso's men chased after them, but with the help from heavens, Chumong and his group were able to cross the river safely.) ⑤ Chumong and his group arrived in Cholponpuyō. ⑥ Chumong established a nation called Kokuryō. (⑥-1. Later, his son arrived from Puyō and Chumong handed his throne to his son.)

25) The following outline is a summary of *The Story of Hong Kiltong (Complete 36 Volumes)*. (Kim, Il Ryōl 1996, 74-181)

① Hong Süngsang dreamt a blue dragon coming into his mouth and lay with his female servant, Ch'unsōm, who later gave birth to Hong Kiltong. He mastered the classics and books on military strategy, and had special abilities. ② Kiltong could not bear the reality of being treated inhumanely, being a bastard who was not even allowed to call his father 'father' and his brothers 'brother.' Hong Süng Sang felt sorry for Kiltong but nonetheless scolded him harshly. (②-1. When Kiltong expressed his wish to leave home, his father allowed him to call his father 'father' and made him promise he would come back soon. Kiltong bid farewell to the Lord and his mother who fussed over him, and left home.) ③ Kiltong, after departing, found and entered a den of robbers. Kiltong enticed the robbers and became their leader. He successfully led the robbing of Haein Temple, at which the robbers rejoiced and followed Kiltong. Kiltong named his group the Hwalpintang, and swept the entire nation. (③-1. The King tried to catch the leader of the Hwalpintang but couldn't. Kiltong said that his life's dream was to become the highest official in charge of military affairs. The King agreed to appoint Kiltong to his cabinet, at which Kiltong stopped his robbing activities.) ④ Hong Kiltong requested audience with the King and bid farewell, saying he would leave Chosōn. (④-1. He also requested 3,000 sōks of rice stalks.) ⑤ Hong Kiltong, leading an army of 3,000 men arrived at a place called Sōngto. ⑥ There, he built a palace and ruled. Three years later, he had so many weapons and an army so large there was no one who could challenge him. (⑥-1. At Mangtang Mountain, Kiltong defeated monsters who had kidnapped some girls, and saved the girls. The parents of one girl gave their daughter to Kiltong as his wife. ⑥-2. Kiltong, upon hearing the death of his father, went back to his home village, met his mother, conciliated with the wife of Lord Hong and his brothers, and moved his father's grave to his island. ⑥-3. Hong Kiltong then fought and won against the neighboring Yuldokuk, and became the king of that country. ⑥-4. When he was 72 years of age, he abdicated from his throne, dedicated himself to the righteous path and went to the heavens.)

at are interpreted to mean that they were born with great ambitions and capabilities, then those parts can indeed match narrative paragraph ①.

Chumong was turned into a stableboy due to a plot of King Kūmwa's son. Kiltong was treated inhumanely and was unable to use the family name because he was a bastard. Such circumstances are the same as narrative paragraph ② in the refugee's lifestory, 'My hopes were dashed because of the environment around me.' Chumong's act of deceiving King Kūmwa to attain a strong horse and Kiltong's sweeping of the entire Chosŏn leading a group of robbers are similar to her lifestory's narrative paragraph ③, 'I tried to become more successful through anti-social ways.'

Furthermore, the fact that Chumong's friends accompanied him when he decided to leave Puyŏ, and Kiltong's rise as the leader of the robbers also relate to the female refugee acting as the breadwinner of her family, even if it meant she had to illegally sell goods. These parts are commensurate to narrative paragraph ④, 'I was partially successful but my social position did not change.'

Chumong deciding to leave home and escaping to Puyŏ, and Kiltong refusing the post offered by the King and leaving for Sŏngto are similar to the refugee's defection from North Korea and migration to South Korea to realize her goal of a successful career. They are commensurate to narrative paragraph ⑤ 'In order to fulfill my dreams, I left for another world.'

The circumstances that led the three people to search for a new world resemble one another, however, from the point of narrative paragraph ⑥, there is a divergence from the *The Story of Chumong* and *The Story of Hong Kiltong*. Chumong founded his own nation called Kokuryŏ, and Kiltong also accomplished a great deal, ruling the new world and conquering the neighboring Yultokuk. Becoming the king of a new world means that the person has settled down in the new world not on the periphery but as the central figure, which means a great deal for people who have to adjust to their new settlement.

In particular, Kiltong took on the role of a savior by defeating monsters to save the young women, which symbolized that the hopes of the masses and the protagonist's hopes were realized by becoming one and the same thing. This kind of assimilated hope is important because it contains narrative significance of one

becoming a hero. Furthermore, the parts where Chumong handed down his throne to his descendent who had come to him from Puyō and the part where Kiltong abdicated his throne to follow the righteous path and later went to the heavens are also important.

The female refugee also hoped to become someone of high ranking, but did not consider becoming a hero like Chumong or Kiltong. Also, just as the two protagonists eventually gave up their throne, she also will have to come to realize that her life cannot be fulfilled only by material desires. Considering her obsession over material capacities, the process of the protagonists becoming heroes may hold the key to rendering therapeutic effects.

However, one discrepancy with *The Story of Hong Kiltong* is that Kiltong eventually reconciled with his father with whom he had been at odds with. He also left after being allowed the family name. Also, he was offered a high-ranking position by the king and was able to leave Chōsun with the help from the king, and these parts are also different. Although his wishes had been fulfilled, Kiltong continued to strive for more, seeking larger goals and venturing out towards even a bigger world (from home to nation to another nation). This is also different from the refugee's lifestory.

In short, the narrative of the refugee's lifestory resembles the structure of *The Three Brothers Who Became Successful With a Millstone, a Drum and a Trumpet*, *Myth of Chumong* and *The Story of Hong Kiltong*, in the sense that she also could not be satisfied with the existing reality, decided to leave for a new world and succeeded. However, the fact that Chumong and Kiltong became heroes and leaders in a new world do not yet have any correspondence in the lifestory of the refugee, which in turn means that such an aspect may become a goal she can aim for and a way for her to become successful.<sup>26)</sup>

Mythologist Joseph Campbell asserted that a heroic myth is a story of a person

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26) This discrepancy can also potentially play a role in healing the female refugee challenged with the issue of adjusting to the new world. It will be a serious problem if her migration lifestory continues without her dreams being realized but instead with her having to constantly try to escape due to dashed hopes. Because her transition from schoolwork, to selling goods and then to defection from the North could very well have been a way for her to avoid reality, there has to be more affirmation in regard to her bigger dreams and hopes. If she continues to deviate from reality, she cannot be guaranteed success in South Korea, leading her migration to a new settlement to become detrimental.

being born and going through great suffering as a rite of passage, through which he grows into a worthy human. He then departs from the world, attains power and control, and then returns (Campbell 1999). The past experience of North Korean refugees, according to such syntax of a heroic narrative, can become the foundation for their success. In literature, the process of becoming a hero can be understood as the stage where helplessness, social isolation and loss of hope, which are central aspects of defection trauma, are overcome. In other words, the narrative of a hero can act as a guide telling the refugees various ways they can surmount the difficulties that they face at the moment.

Against this backdrop, this research, based on the migration-related narratives of heroes that have been a part of the Korean people, designed a healing program targeting North Korean refugees. The aim was a literary therapy program that would lead the refugees to understand classical narratives of heroes in a way that they not remember their past simply as ‘hardship’ but as a ‘foundation for success,’ and be able to apply this idea to their life.

The reason classical narratives of the Korean people were used is because, since the past, the Korean people had prioritized a settled life. Also, because Korea is not a multi-ethnic country, many Koreans have an underlying sense of pity for foreigners and nomadic people. In fact, these tendencies also aggravate the challenges North Korean refugees face.

On the other hand, the heroes of classical narratives that this research focused on articulated lifestories in which the hero, after escaping from the previous location, become more successful. Thus they could render special effects in relation to the pessimistic stance North Korean refugees have of their lives. The success that the heroes of classical narratives, which form the mental roots of Koreans, attained through migration could act as a huge motivation for them to overcome their pessimism as outsiders. Furthermore, because these classics contain deep philosophical insights articulated by laymen into wisdom and life that are universal to humanity, they could also render learning effects in the field of humanities. It is also expected that these works can improve other issues such as literary, which some refugees express difficulty with.

#### 4. Healing Programs Using Literary Therapy Methodology

In narratology and cognitive science, the basic form of mental activity is considered to be narratives. Because everything humans experience are remembered in the form of narratives, understanding them thus becomes a process of understanding humans that react to reality as well as the substance of their conflicts and dilemmas. Moreover, narratives act as a guide for those who are facing predicaments. Michael Toolan, a narratologist, argued that people make, understand and preserve narratives in order to better understand him or herself and the surrounding world.<sup>27)</sup> From this standpoint, literary activity of people can be seen as an expression of determination of life. It is this power of narratives that literary therapy uses in healing.

The main mechanism of literary therapy can be explained by the relationship between the narrative within oneself and the narrative of a work of literature. Through the action of reading or creating a work of literature, the narrative of oneself is able to communicate with the literary narrative, during which the vulnerable self-narrative improves. The basic perspective of literary therapy is that humans fundamentally have storytelling instincts within them and that literature's fundamental role is therapeutic. Therefore, analyzing literature is also the process of analyzing a person in search of a problem, and through creating a new work, a person can lead a healthy life.

Humans immerse themselves in narratives of literature beyond the mere text, and experience the process of one's self-narrative and literary narrative either collide or integrate.<sup>28)</sup> Here, the stage when therapy actually takes place – in other

27) In narratology and cognitive science, the basic form of mental activity is considered to be narratives. Narratologist Michael Toolan argued that all human activities, from the moment of waking up until falling asleep at night, and even dreaming, are seen, set and explained as narratives (Toolan 1993). Cognitive scientist Mark Turner, who studies the process of information processing in human minds, said that narratives are the basic form of human mental activity, and that the core of cognitive science was in the literary mind (Turner 1996). The ability to understand narratives is the ability of cognition, and also the ability to comprehend oneself and the world. In cognitive science, it is argued that when the abilities to understand narratives and to communicate are further developed, the contents of mental activity will more mature. Furthermore, the ability to perceive the reality around oneself will also improve.

28) Jeong Un-Chae described the narrative ability as the ability to analyze a given text and construct a narrative, and the narrative access ability as the ability to construct a narrative that is hard for the self-narrative to accept. He argued that improving narrative access ability was the process of literary therapy, and that one can reach the level of therapy when he or she had gone through the collision and

words, in regard to whether or not the self-narrative and the literary narrative have integrated or not – is only possible when the level of resonance<sup>29)</sup> is reached after having understood the literary narrative. This implies that in-depth understanding of the literary narrative is very likely to be related to maturity of the self-narrative of a person. In short, the literary narratives of classical literature, which raise fundamental and universal questions of humans and contain insights into their solution, can be used indices that show the level of human maturity.

This study designed a literary therapy program that induced participants to understand and become immersed in classics involving success stories of heroes who had migrated and to apply the heroes' success stories to their own lives. Writing activity was also planned as a way of inducing immersion and application to life, and this was because of unique features that were found in previous literary therapy programs. In a previous program involving a female North Korean refugee, I found that the refugee delved deeply into a heroic narrative about escaping from a previous location, migrating to a new settlement and leading a successful life, from which she reminisced her own experience and then related her experience with the work of literature. She also realized that accommodating the hero narrative as it is and applying it to her own life was not an easy task.

At this point, the female refugee, upon encountering a variety of different stories, remembered *My Own Fortune* particularly well, and expressed discomfort at the fact that the third daughter in the story, after having been chased away from home, came back to save her father after she had become successful. She was reminded of her parents back in the North, and said she felt uncomfortable about the part when the third daughter, during the process of bringing her father home, threw a 100-day feast for beggars, and also about social obligation of caring for one's elderly parents. She was, in fact, immersing herself into the lives of successful heroes who had started to live their own lives, in another place, away

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thus integration between the literary narrative and the self-narrative. In the end, the point where literary narrative collides with self-narrative becomes an important basis for diagnosis (Jeong 2010).

29) Jeong Un-Chae argued that the changes in the self-narrative come from sympathy and deep emotion, and referred to such sympathy and deep emotion that fundamentally enable the self-narrative to change as the phenomenon of resonance of a narrative. Memory about a literary narrative and re-creation become possible through this phenomenon of resonance of a narrative (Jeong 2012).

from their parents, and contemplating on the story in light of her own life, and focusing on the part the daughter reconciled with one's parents

Female refugee B: Well. I wonder why the father chased his daughter away.  
(Laughs)

Researcher: Why do you think the father chased his daughter away?

Female refugee B: Well, people talk about one's own fortune. If the father is rich and the mother also, and they meet each other, get married and have children, then it's their luck isn't it? (Laughs) That's what they say, but why did the father chase her away? I thought, he chased her away, but then after becoming rich, why did she bring her parents to live with her, when they had thrown her out the house? Because they're her parents? That's what came to my mind. Of course, children are supposed to look after their parents when they get old but I'm rather coolheaded. (Laughs)[...] Even with just with one month of feasting, word would have spread far and wide, but why for a hundred days? That would have been a lot of spending. Lots of money going out and nothing coming in. It's not that I'm shocked – I just think it's foolish. [...] A hundred days is far too long. More than three months. Her purse must've become empty. How much do you need to earn so that there's always enough? Maybe if we stack 50,000 won bills a meter high from here to Kyunggi Province? [...] She's really kind. It's not as if I'm really impacted by it, just a bit annoyed. It doesn't make me happy. I don't really have happy memories about my father. It's not really touching either. I can't relate to it. She could have just lived well on her own. She could have ignored everything and just got on with her life.

I explained to her that in the story *My Own Fortune*, the heroic deed accomplished by the third daughter was that she was able to accept the relationship of being in conflict with her self-legitimacy and thereby learn to live in coexistence. She was the type of person who took on the parents who had once neglected her and could open a feast for beggars so that many could eat, which

was why she was able to become rich by accidentally finding gold. I told her that becoming a very wealthy person and also being generous to others were all part of her ‘own fortune’ as mentioned by the third daughter. Then the female refugee B said, “It’s destiny. Ever since I was young, I just gave. I never really got anything, so I don’t know what it feels like.” She said that she had never been given back for all that she had given others, whether it be in relation to the arduous family survival back in the North or to personal relationships in the South. It had always been like that. She then compared the third daughter to herself and explained the circumstances that led her to leave home.

Female Refugee B: (Using hand gesture) This (heart) is wide. I’m a bit crazy. This woman is quite different.

She recalled leaving home without a word, and compared herself with the third daughter. She expressed that she was “crazy,” but that the third daughter was “cool.” It seemed that she was trying to say she thought the third daughter’s generosity was cool but that it would have been difficult for her to bear.

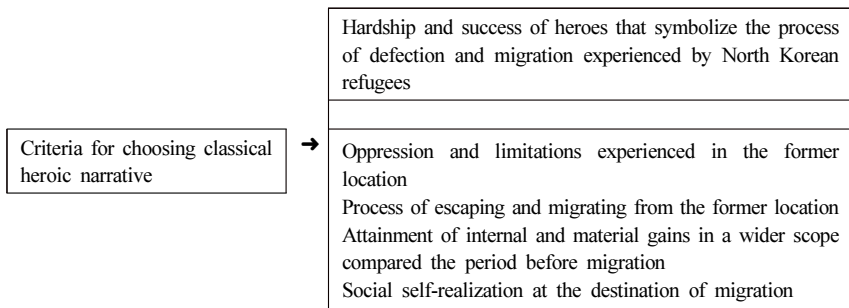
As such, the female refugee showed a unique response to the heroic narrative *My Own Fortune*. In response to the first part of the story about being oppressed and feeling limitations of the former location, escaping and then migrating to another settlement, she projected her own experience and became immersed in the story. However, in response to the latter half about becoming rich and then bringing her parents to live with her, she showed dissatisfaction. In regard to this sort of response, I made the diagnosis that she had a vague and romanticized expectations towards her parents, but once she found a negative aspect, she would reject them for being bad parents. It was an offspring-narrative. The ensuing present-day issue was guilt. Her offspring narrative was that her happiness could only be guaranteed by rejecting her bad parents who were unable to protect her when she was young from the frightening world. According to this narrative, she could only become happy by ignoring her family who would have a hard time without her. The problem was that the feeling of guilt was constantly triggered in this process. In fact, she even showed her discomfort at *My Own Fortune* in



the form of somatization, which was a manifestation of her guilt. It was expressed as nightmares in which she would eat her sibling or through conflicts with people around her. As a method of healing such guilt, I came to realize that the oral novel, *The Story of Simch'ong*, could be an alternative literary narrative, in that it showed a more similar therapeutic narrative development befitting to her needs, that it had more elaborate scenes than folktales, and that the protagonist accommodated her parents after she had risen to much higher levels than the third daughter of the folktale.

In fact, discomfort with stories in which heroes succeed, strive to live in harmony with others in particular and thereby reach legitimate self-realization has been found among other North Korean refugees as well. They seemed to eliminate from their memories scenes depicting success in *My Own Fortune* and *The Brother and Sister Who Became the Sun and the Moon*, and tended not to accept literary historical interpretation of those work.<sup>30)</sup>

Though the refugees found it difficult to internalize the stories as heroic narratives, such difficulty may actually open possibilities in the sense that such passionate reactions are noteworthy. The refugees showed that they were not taking in the narratives superficially but were applying them to their lives and thinking in those terms. It would then be possible to plan a literary therapy program focusing on that particular point they felt uncomfortable and on stimulating deep understanding and emotion about the road to success.



30) Interpretation of such reactions of North Korean refugees have been published in an article on literary therapy, and the above is also a citation from another one of my papers (Park 2014).

The above criteria were used in selecting literature that contained hardships and success of heroes, which could symbolize the defection and migration experiences of North Korean refugees. *My Own Fortune*, *The Brother and the Sister Who Became the Sun and the Moon*, *The Story of Hong Kiltong*, *Myth of Chumong* and *The Story of Simch'ōng* are some examples of those works. After selecting the heroic narratives, they were abridged into shorter versions according to the aforementioned criteria, and then major scenes from the stories that could be relevant to the process of the refugees' defection and migration were chosen. These scenes were then structured so that they could be used in the programs.

Understanding of heroic narratives is improved by the participants reading many different stories with a similar structure. They are then allowed to freely express their sentiments and induced to become immersed in the stories. Various ways can be used to induce immersion – for example, by expressing a particularly memorable scene by drawing or using body expressions, or by playing games such as finding similarities and differences among the stories or memorizing the plot.

Furthermore, this kind of program can strengthen immersion into and internalization of the stories and thereby facilitate their application to real life through methods such as 'recreating' the classical heroic narratives. Such narrative creation activities is only possible based on complete understanding of existing narratives, so they are effective ways of deepening understanding of the narratives. Constructing a narrative entails imagining and filling in the world and the objects as experienced by the protagonist in the story, as well as his or her thoughts and projections into the future, so such recreation inevitably leads to immersion into and internalization of heroic narratives. It is also an effective way for North Korean refugees to apply the outline of heroic narratives to their lives, and such 'mythology on defection from North Korea' that they create can effectively contribute to readjusting their past memory in a positive way and establishing a concrete path for their lives.

The literary therapy program is expected to be a time during which the stages of remembering, mourning and linking with everyday life are reached through the process of healing trauma, as Judith Herman had mentioned. It is a process of mutual communication, where one's own painful experience are understood

through the process of understanding the suffering endured by heroes. The participant also remembers the past and mourns by labelling one's situation as 'foundation for success' or 'ability to survive' just like a scene from a heroic narrative. Forging a sense of solidarity with the heroes in the stories makes this process more effective. By immersing oneself into the successful development of the heroes, the participants perform creative activities so that the syntax of the narratives can be internalized and applied to actual life. It is a process of recovering the energy that had once been lost due to trauma, surpassing the pessimism and attempting to reconnect with everyday life.

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