

# “Cranes” by Hwang Sunwon

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## **Abstract**

This project looks at the literature and translation history of Korean literature, and how the social and political movements has made Korean literature what it is today. It also explores the difficulties in translating between two closely related cultures. I translated Hwang Sunwon’s short story “Cranes” from Korean to Chinese in hope of creating a platform of amendment between the two culture and nation that is experiencing struggles because of political and economical tension.

## **Keywords**

Hwang Sunwon, Cranes, Korean Literature, Chinese

## **Translator’s Introduction**

Korea as a vassal state of China before Japanese colonization was required to use Hanja (Chinese scripts) in any sort of writings and documents. While Hangul (Korean scripts) was created in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, it was not commonly known or studied until 19<sup>th</sup> century. Hanja was still commonly used in public until 20<sup>th</sup> century, when a reactionary movement was brought about to recover and restore the Korean national identity. Hence, a lot of literatures written in Korea were not actually in Hangul but Chinese and Japanese script. During the reactionary movement in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Korea “compromised more than two-thirds of the extended literature” so as to embody the Korean national identity (Lee, 18).

The cultural and language relation of Korea-Chinese-Japanese is complicated enough on its own, but that is not where it ends. Soon after the liberation of colonization by Japanese, they had the Korean War which separated Korea into North and South. Communist Russia supported the North, while capitalist America supported the South. As if “recovering national sovereignty” from colonization was not enough, they now have to “double their effort to carry out one more task” of defining their political and social standpoint (Kim, 4-5). The “double consciousness” of Koreans as an aftermath of colonization and internal war has created a crisis in their national identity, making it difficult for people to reject both the physical colonist (Japan) ideology and the cultural colonist (Japan and USA) ideology (Tyson, 403) . The literature of Korea at that time reflected the

difficult situation of the struggle with identity and how Koreans deal with it. Even till today, literatures about the war and colonization is still continuously being written. Korean writers recognize the fact that “the war has not yet ended”, and neither has the struggle of the social and cultural identity among Koreans ended (Kim, 307). The short story I translated is exactly a story of such struggles.

The short story “Cranes” is written by a famous Korean writer, Hwang Sunwon. He was born in 1915 while Korea was under Japanese Colonial rule. He has his first publication of his poem as a middle school student. Hwang Sunwon observed the suffering of ordinary people of Korea as the country went through colonialism, war, dictatorship, industrialisation, and etc. Despite his experiences and observations, his writings focuses on the spirit of Korean people, and love and goodness in the most unlikely situations (Digital Library of Korean Literature).

While Hwang Sunwon has a lot of publications in poems and novels, he is most famous for his short fictions. He is also particularly known for his insistence on writing in Korean instead of Japanese, which was the expectation in the Japanese-colonized Korea. His best-known stories in modern Korean literature includes “Cranes” (1953) and “Rain Shower” (1959).

“Cranes” was originally published in a Korean literary journal [신천지] (Shincheonji). It talks about two childhood friends. Seongsam and Dokjae, who grew up together in a farm village near the border of Thirty-Eighth Parallel, but unfortunately ended up in different ends of ideologies--democratic South and communist North. The story describes their interaction and emotion as they met again prisoner and peace police. They reminisce on their childhood memory as they walk on the road near the 38th Parallel Demilitarized Zone.

“Cranes” was translated into English by two different translators (Peter H. Lee, David R. McCann) and into Chinese once in the 70s (Ning Ning Chen). Korean Literature was yet to be widely translated into other languages. Translation of literatures holds the purpose of introducing the literature and culture to people abroad to appreciate, and yet the literature and translation scene of South Korea falls short at less than 50 years while the history of literature translation of Chinese and Japanese exceed a hundred (Lee, 4). The small amount of translated Korean literature available in the market does not give enough impact for the audiences to want more, and the lack of interested causes even less translation to be made, turning it into a negative cycle. I find it necessary to escape from the cycle and allow audiences from outside Korea to know more about Korean culture and history.

With all the social-political issues we are facing in 2018, people has been paying more attention to Korea, both North and South. Thinking of the relationship of North Korea with South Korea and other countries in recent years, I believe that it is necessary to look at the story “Cranes” again and possibly shine new lights onto the text. I decided to translate this text from Korean into Chinese because of the close cultural and social history they have with each other. I hope this text can become a way of amendment between two culture and nations that has been neighbours since a long time ago, just like how Seongsam and Dokjae did in the short story.

My approach to translation is in short, direct and fluent. I prefer a more source-oriented approach to translating as I believe authors has a particular image they want to create for the audiences to visualize, and it would be disrespectful to the authors if we alter the image. However as Lefevere has mentioned in his book *Translating Literature*, a translator should remember that the goal to translate a literature is ultimately to “make the original accessible to the audiences” and to mediate between the audiences and the text (Lefevere, 19). The translated text would have no meaning if it is not understood by the target audiences. Therefore as I am translating the text, I try to stay true to the author’s diction but make sure that the sequences of the sentences flows. I also receive help from Professor Jin Y. Park from American University as my Korean text reference and from Professor Cynthia Xie from Simon Fraser University as my Chinese translation reviewer.

While translating the short story, one of the biggest decision I have to make is the names of the two main characters. Korean names follow Chinese scripts, but use Korean pronunciation. The names of the two main characters are 성삼 (Seongsam) and 덕재 (Dokjae). These Korean characters corresponds to multiples Chinese characters as Hangul indicates only the pronunciation of the word but not the meaning.

Each of the characters has different meaning, and in both Korean and Chinese culture, choosing the right name for a person is very important because it will affect his/her life. After listing out all the possibilities, I decided to use 成参 (Chengshen) and 德宰 (Dezai) as their names. I chose these names based on two points: Korean sounding and meaning. Although Korean names uses Chinese characters, their names are usually easily identifiable through the choice and combination of words. There are combinations that would sound more like Chinese names like 德才, but I decided against it in order to create a more foreignized feeling to the text.

As for the meaning, I choose it according to their personality and growth in the short story. 成参 grew to understand 德宰 more and created a very strong bond with him in the difficult journey of leading him to death. 参 could mean ginseng in both Chinese and Korean. Ginseng takes a long time to grow and when it is fully grown, it is very beneficial to those who consume it. They also naturally grow deep in the mountain where it is difficult to reach. 成参 is like a ginseng that grew up in difficult situations, but when he matures, he becomes beneficial, even life-saving to his friend.

德宰 is a easier decision to make as his name aligns with his virtue and his position. His character is hard-working and filial, and he values virtue and his family over anything. 德 is the only word that corresponds to 덕; it means good virtue, which perfectly describes his personality as a hard working farmer and a filial son to his father. 宰 could mean an official as a noun, or govern/rule as a verb. The name 德宰 holds the meaning that he governs himself with good virtue.

Another decision I had to make is the form of the text. Korean texts do not need to have a subject if the subject is already mentioned in a previous sentence in the paragraph or is generally understood by the audiences. In Chinese text however, a subject is generally needed for a complete sentence. I made the decision to add in the subjects where they are necessary but does not exist in the original text for the purpose of fluency.

Original version:

나무에서 미끄러져 떨어졌다. 엉덩이에 밤송이가 찔렸다. 그러나 그냥 달렸다.

Chinese version:

**成参**吓得脚滑了一下，从树上掉到满是栗子壳的地上。**他**屁股上刺满了栗子壳，可为了逃跑，也管不了那么多。

English Version:

Seongsam slipped and fell to the ground. He got chestnut burrs all over his bottom, but he kept on running.

The bolded Chinese characters are the subject of the sentences, which does not exist in the original Korean text as it is already mentioned and understood in the previous sentences. These subjects are needed in Chinese sentences for them to

make sense and for readers to understand and read the text smoothly without backtracking.

In terms of text form, I also had to add appropriate punctuations into the sentences or separated long sentences. Korean texts allow a sentence to go on and on without much punctuations as they have many different conjunctions to combine sentences together.

Original Version:

그러나 다음 순간, 바로 옆 풀숲에서 펄럭 단정학 한 마리가 날개를  
펴자 땅에 내려앉았던 자기네 학도 긴 목을 뽑아 한번 울음을 울더니  
그대로 공중에 날아올라, 두 소년의 머리 위에 동그라미를 그리며  
저쪽 멀리로 날아가 버리는 것이었다.

Chinese Version:

就在这一刻，另一只鹤从旁边的草丛里拍着翅膀准备飞向天空。他  
们的鹤伸长脖子叫了一声，便向着天空飞翔。它在两个男孩的头上  
转了几圈，然后向着远方飞去。

English Version:

But the next moment, as another crane from a nearby bush fluttered its  
wings, the boys' crane stretched its long neck, gave out a whoop, and  
disappeared into the sky.

As the example above, the original Korean text has one sentence with two commas to pause the readers, and the bolded Korean characters are conjunctions that link sentences together. If I stick to the form of the original text, it might be difficult for the readers to follow. Therefore, I separate the one long sentence in the original Korean version into three sentences in Chinese translation. I managed to keep the sequences of the sentences in attempt to reserve as much of the original as I can without obscuring Chinese readers' experience.

After my first translation draft, I asked Professor Xie to review it for me. She gave me some really useful feedbacks in both grammar and fluency of the text. One of the suggestion she gave me was to read my translation out loud in order to refine my sentences that are grammatically correct but phonetically awkward. I take the suggestion and read it out loud to myself and my cousin. I ended up

making quite some changes to the translation in what we both believe to sound and look better.

Korean literature is still a minority in the world of literature with very little translations. Just like how Seongsam met again with Dokjae and gained new understanding of each other, I hope that people will start approaching Korean literature and culture with the vision of understanding and accepting difference.

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## 鹤

作者：黄顺元

在北纬38度线上，一个村庄躺卧在晴朗的秋日高空之下。

在被遗弃的屋子里，只剩下一个个白色的葫芦，或是被风吹得到处滚动，或是挨个地靠在墙边。

偶然经过的老人会把香烟熄灭，然后转身离去。小孩也会绕路避开村子。他们的脸上都挂着恐惧与不安。

村子里头并没有多少战争动乱的痕迹，可是，成参还是对这个他从小长大的地方感到陌生。

成参在村子里悠逛着，最后在后山的栗子树下停住了脚步，然后慢慢地爬上去了。他好像依稀地听到从前的那个驼背老爷爷对着他叫喊：你这调皮鬼又来爬我的栗子树啦！

那个驼背老爷爷好像也离世了。在村子里碰头的几个老人中也没有见到他。成参靠着栗子树，抬头看着秋日的蓝天。成熟的栗子也不用摇就掉下来了。

一个双手被绑着的青年在农房改建的警察所前站着。他好像是第一次来到这个村子。可当成参上前去细看时却是吓了一跳。这青年竟然是他的儿时玩伴，德宰。

成参走过去问把德宰从天泰带到这里来的警员，这到底是怎么一回事。原来德宰是农民同盟保卫院的其中一个领头人。他在自己家里躲着，但被找到并赶出来了。成参点了一支香烟，叼在嘴里坐在地上听着。

德宰要由一个青年治安队员护送到清段。

成参口中的香烟抽完后，又接着点了一支，并站了起来。

**【这小子由我来带吧。】**

德宰别过头去，看着远方，就是不向成参的方向看。

他们随后就离开了东部的郊区。

成参又吸了几口香烟，可却是味同爵蜡。即便如此，他还是继续吸着。一个想法突然出现在他的脑袋里：德宰那小子应该也想要吸一口吧。以前，他们会一起躲在大人们看不到的墙角边抽南瓜叶香烟。可是现在，成参就是想要给他一口烟也不行。

成参和德宰小时候有一次要一起去偷驼背老爷爷的栗子。那一次刚好轮到成参爬树。他正在爬的时候，被驼背老爷爷发现了，并向他大喊。成参吓得脚下一滑，从树上掉到满是栗子壳的地上。他屁股上刺满了栗子壳，可为了逃跑，也管不了那么多。他们一直逃到驼背老爷爷追不到的地方才停下来。那时候，成参也终于流下疼痛的眼泪。德宰从他的后裤袋子里抓了一把捡的栗子，塞进了成参的手里。。。

成参把手里的香烟丢掉。他决定在押送德宰的途中不能再抽烟了。

他们走到一个山头上。在还没解放时，成参搬家去北纬38度线的南边以前，他常常和德宰一起在这里收割饲料。这个路口是必经之路。

成参突然怒气冲冲地对着德宰大喊。

**【你这小子，那时候杀了多少人？】**

德宰这才瞥了他一眼，却又赶快地移开了视线。

**【你这小子，到底杀了多少人呐？】**

德宰再一次转头瞪着成参。这一次，他没有移开视线。他死死地瞪着成参，连嘴角也抽了起来。

**【对呀。你杀人的时候也是这个样子的吧？】**

这小子！虽然是这样说，可成参的心里却像是多了一道光。就好像有什么重担被放了下来。

**【你不是农民同盟保卫院的领头人吗？为什么没有逃跑？是不是有什么秘密任务？】**

德宰没有开口。

**【快点说。你的任务到底是什么？】**

德宰一言不发地走着。只看他的脸就知道他一定藏着什么没说。成参想要好好地看一下德宰的脸，可是他一直低着头走。

成参的手放在了腰间的手枪上，

**【现在找借口也没用了。反正你也要被枪毙了。所以，还是快点把你知道的说出来吧。】**

德宰这才望向成参。

**【我没在找借口。我是最穷农户的孩子，也是最勤奋的。他们是看上这个才让我当院长的。因为我死了也没什么大不了。反正我只是一个除了翻土种地以外，就什么都不会的人。】**

他停了一下，

**【我父亲现在还在家里躺着呢。已经有一年半了。】**



德宰的母亲早就不在了，只剩下他们父子俩。他的父亲是个贫穷但勤奋的农民，就只是为了德宰继续生活。

七年前，他的腰终于撑不住了。他的脸上也长满了老年斑。

【结婚了吗？】

过了一会，

【哦，结了。】

【和谁？】

【小豆丁】

什么？和小豆丁？这挺有趣的嘛。那个矮矮胖胖的，不知天高只知地厚的小豆丁，是世界变了吧。以前德宰和他常常去逗她玩，还把她弄哭了不少回。现在，德宰竟然和她结婚了。

【那你有几个孩子了？】

【第一个要在这个冬天出生了。】

成参把快要放出来的笑声硬硬地压了下去。当他听到德宰说他的第一个孩子要在冬天出生时，他却忍不住去想象小豆丁挺着大肚子坐着的样子。不过他意识到，这不是开玩笑的时候。

【无论如何，你没逃跑这事还是挺奇怪的，不是吗？】

【我有试过逃跑的。他们说，南方打上来的时候，被抓到的人都死定了。十七到四十岁的男人都被强制转移至北方。能逃的话，就是让我背着父亲我也会逃。可父亲说不可以。农民怎么可以在收成的季节离开长满农作物的土地呢。父亲的一生都用在这片农地上，他只相信我去打理。我也想陪他到最后，用我的手把他的双眼合上。何况，我们这些农民除了种地以外什么都不会。。。】

去年六月份的时候，成参离开村子避难去了。前一个晚上，他才告诉他的父亲避难这一事。他的父亲也说了同样的话：农民离开了农地能去哪里呢？结果成参自己一个人走了。他在陌生的南边小路上走着，脑袋里年老的双亲和年幼的孩子绕着农地闲逛的画面一直挥之不去。可幸的是，他们还好好地活着。

他们越过了山头。这次，轮到成参别着头不看德宰。秋日的阳光照射在他的额头上。这天看来是一个收割的好日子。

到了山脚时，成参慢慢地停下脚步。

他看见远处的一群鹤，像是一群穿着白衣的老人，驼着背，静静地站着。那里就是38线非武装缓冲地带。以前住在那里的人都已经不在。可是，那群白鹤还在。

成参和德宰才十二岁那年的一天，他们瞒着大人们在这里弄了一个套索，捉住了一只鹤。那是一只丹顶鹤。他们用草绳把它的翅膀绑住，每天都来看它。有时轻轻地抚摸它颈上的羽毛，有时骑在它背上。有一天，他们听见村里的大人小声地说，有谁从首尔来了，要去射鹤。说是得到了总督的许可，为了要弄什么标本而来的。他们俩马上向着山脚飞奔而去。要听大人的话什么的，现在都被抛诸脑后。他们只是想着，不能让他们的鹤被杀掉。他们马不停蹄地跑到山脚下，喘着气，赶快解开绑着它翅膀的绳子。可是，它才走了两步就停下来了，可能是被绑得太久了。他们两个一起把鹤抱起，想要帮它飞起来。突然，他们听到一声枪响。鹤拍了几下翅膀就掉了下来，像是被击中了。就在这一刻，另一只鹤从旁边的草丛里拍着翅膀准备飞向天空。他们的鹤伸长脖子叫了一声，便向着天空飞翔。它在两个男孩的头上转了几圈，然后向着远方飞去。成参和德宰一直看着，直到他们的鹤消失在蓝天之中。。。

【欸，我们去赶一次鹤吧。】

成参突然向着德宰说。

德宰困惑地看着他，不懂他在说什么。

【我会用这绳子做一个套索，你去把鹤赶过来。】

成参已经把绑着德宰的绳子解了，并爬进了草丛去。

德宰的脸上瞬间没了血色。不用多久，你就会被枪毙了。一颗子弹随时都可以从成参的方向射过来。

在不远处，成参转过头来看着他。

【喂，你还站在那里做什么？快去赶鹤呀。】

德宰这才听懂他的话。他赶快爬到草丛里。

那时候，有两只丹顶鹤挥动着他们的大翅膀，自由自在的在秋日的高空中飞翔。



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