

Female Utopia in Classic Novels of the Joseon Dynasty: Imagination about Female Places*

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Abstract

This paper explores the imagination of female places in the classic novels of the Joseon Dynasty, focusing on *Parkssiyeon*, *Sukeyeongnangjaejeon*, and *Chwimisamseonrok*. The three works illuminate female places—Pihwadang, Okyeondong, and the palace of Chwimi—in opposition to the patriarchal order and norms. These three places provide an escape from the fear of war and the vertical order of patriarchy. In these places, women have ownership rights and can act autonomously. By focusing on this fact, the present study aims to examine how women's life is depicted in the three works, and the implications of the women's spaces in them. Through this, it aims to take a closer look at the lives of women in the Joseon Dynasty, and the female places that they may have been dreaming of.

Key words

Classic Joseon Dynasty novels, female space and place, *Parkssiyeon*, *Sukeyeongnangjaejeon*, *Chwimisamseonrok*

Introduction

In human life, space is not just a material basis or foundation for life. Space not only mediates the self and the world but also functions as a place of communication. Certain spaces act as a form that expresses a way of life of the self and reveals a perception of the world (Kim, 2011, p. 1). This perception of space has been mentioned in discussions of space by Ricardo Gulion, E. C. Relph, and O. F. Bollnow. Ricardo Gulion said, "The space of existence determines the nature of existence" (Gulion, 1975, p. 12), and Relph perceived space as a "living world in which human existence exists." (Relph, 2005, p. 303). Bollnow said, "Man

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is defined through his relation to the space surrounding him, and space becomes the form of expressing the way of life of man” (Bollnow, 2011, p. 23). This type of sociological analysis and consideration of space can be effectively applied to the analysis of space in the novel. This is because the space placed in a narrative is formed based on the space of life shared by the artist and the reader, and is revealed in a similar way or through imagination beyond reality.

Based on this perspective, this study examines the spatial imagination depicted in the classic novels of the Joseon Dynasty, including *Parkssiyeon*, *Sukseongnangjaejeon*, and *Chwimisamseonrok*, which were popular among women.¹ The Joseon Dynasty, in which classical novels were enjoyed, was an era in which the state’s operations were based on the principles of Confucian ideology and patriarchal influence and lifestyle were reflected in the spatial arrangements of houses. Under this influence, the lives of women and men in the Joseon Dynasty were distinguished through divisions in and out of space. Unlike men’s lives in a space that could communicate with the outside world, Sarangchae, women’s lives were confined within various disciplines and under surveillance systems, restricted to a closed space called Anchae or “boudoir.” Women’s dreams and imaginations about space that responds to social and cultural regulations can be identified through the boudoir culture enjoyed in that space, especially in novels where the boudoir was enjoyed. Therefore, this study focuses on these three popular literary works.

In consideration of this, this study aims to examine the female space among the various spaces depicted in the novels of the Joseon Dynasty and extract its common aspects and meaning. Here, “female space” refers to a space where women’s lives are carried out, called Anchae and the boudoir in houses of the Joseon Dynasty. Men are usually refused access here, and only the women’s culture exists. The study goes beyond female spaces and focuses on female places, where women can express their voices independently. According to Yi-Fu Tuan, a place is a space that is valued based on the experience of an individual or group in that space (Tuan, 2005, p. 20). Recalling the concept of Tuan’s place, women’s place refers to a space where women become a subject of space and give value to it. In addition,

¹ Three works have various different versions. The texts that I studied in this paper are *Bag-ssi-yeon* (Kim, 1995), *Syu-gyeong-nang-ja-yeon-i-la* (Kim, Choi, Lee, Lee, & Seo, 2014), and *Chwi-mi-sam-syeon-nog* (Jangseogak in The Academy of Korean Studies, D7B-91). These works were written in an ancient Korean. They are translated into modern Korean from original novels and then into English in this study. Unless otherwise specified, all translations of extracts from the three novels are by the author. For later quotations from these works, only the name title and page number are given in parentheses.

it is space from which males are excluded, which means a space where women can stand as a subject of the space away from the norms of reality.

Understanding Female Space and Places in Korean Classical Novels

In this paper, three works from the Joseon Dynasty that highlighted female places are examined. Although the three novels are of different types and are set in different periods, all three question the lives of women under the feudal system and suggest a possibility of a female space beyond reality, escaping from the fetters of that reality. What the three works have in common is that they enable us to speculate about the breadth of imagination of women's lives and spaces in classic novels. In short, all three works deserve attention in that they reveal the problematic aspects of society marked by the patriarchy of the Joseon Dynasty through space. Accordingly, this paper focuses on the method of shaping female spaces and places commonly depicted in the three works, and clarifies their characteristics and meaning.

This study examines the female spaces in *Parkssijeon*, *Sukyeongnangjaejeon*, and *Chwimisamseonrok*. The three novels are of different types;² however, as novels read by female readers around the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries,³ all contain a female space beyond war and patriarchy, each with its unique places where women are the subject. *Parkssijeon* has been presumed that it was read limitedly by female readers of noble families (Jang, 1994); *Sukyeongnangjaejeon* and *Chwimisamseonrok* are also regarded as works that were commonly read by female readers. Furthermore, there are about 100 extant editions of *Parkssijeon* and 140 extant editions of *Sukyeongnangjaejeon*. About five editions of *Chwimisamseonrok* have been identified; however, they were distributed for lending. It is worth noting that the female pla-

² The three novel types are female heroic, romantic, and family but the "female space" appears repeatedly in all of them. This paper focuses on female spaces as all three works were enjoyed by female readers.

³ These three novels were distributed with manuscripts that were written by readers in Joseon Dynasty. During that process, readers either remade or omitted stories. Thus, it's hard to presume exact written date. *Chwimisamseonrok* is presumed to date from during the 18th and 19th centuries (So, 1995, p. 172). *Sukyeongnangjaejeon* is also thought to have been created and enjoyed around the same time (Kim, 1999, p. 7). There are different views on when *Parkssijeon* appeared. Some presume that it was written before 1895 (Kim, 1964, p. 48); some presume that it appeared in the late nineteenth century (Lee, 1983, p. 13); and some presume that it dates from before the late seventeenth century (Jang, 1994, p. 97). Considering these views, it can be assumed that the work was established and distributed before the nineteenth century.

ces in the three popular literary works enjoyed by female readers play an important role in narrative development.

The presentation method and the meanings of the female places in the three works are different. *Parkssiyeon* depicts Pihwadang as a battlefield that reverses the history of humiliating defeat and presents a subversive reason for boudoir space beyond everydayness. *Sukyeongnangjae* depicts a space, Okyeondong that deviates from the patriarchal norm and order to which Joseon women were subjected. Finally, *Chwimisamseonrok* depicts a space, the Chwimi Palace, where women's solidarity is possible and where they can avoid male violence. Furthermore, these spaces have many similarities. Prepared by imagination and beyond the order of reality, they are utopian and function as a space that compensates for what is lacking in reality. They ultimately illustrate the lives of women in the Joseon Dynasty. Focusing on this, this paper emphasizes the unique characteristics of the female spaces presented in each of the three works as well as the common method of representing a female space, and clarifies these characteristics and their meanings.

Research on female space has been conducted through a discussion on women's problems in the modern colonial period, a study based on feminist or anthropological perspectives and literary research. In the discussion of women's problems in the modern colonial period, the fact that women's private space in that period, which was their home, was divided into a maternal space and a domestic labor space during this period was noted. The maternal space in which the logic of a good wife and a wise mother worked was considered to have contributed to their formation as the "mother of the nation." Furthermore, the domestic labor space was considered to be related to the absolute poverty of colonial women, and to have reflected the power relations of empire/colony and male/female (Tae, 2004). On the other hand, from the feminist point of view, there was an exploration of the environmental constraints imposed on women and their spatial culture. As a result, the following fact was extracted: Houses and workplaces were separated in the process of industrialization, and in this space allocation in the city, women often perceived a space as constrained by focusing on home or house (Shin, 1996). Meanwhile, from anthropological point perspective, there was a complaint that women felt that there isn't any space even at their home, which is a realm of privacy, and anxious (Kim, 2019).

Literary research has also analyzed the characteristics of female spaces in stories. Looking at the analysis of female space, especially female places in the classic novels that are subject of this paper, we can find discussions focused on *Chwimisamseonrok* (Han, 2009; Han, 2011; Koo, 2004, 2007, 2012; Park, 2012), on

Sassinamjeonggi and *Changseongamuirok* (Tak, 2006), on *Sukyeongnangjaejon* (Kim, 2011, 2018; Seo, 2014; Kang, 2020), and *Parkssijeon* (Jo, 2004). This paper aims to focus on the spaces of *Chwimisamseonrok*, *Sukyeongnangjaejon*, and *Parkssijeon*. First, in the case of *Chwimisamseonrok*, which focuses on the palace of Chwimi, it was revealed to be a “refuge from the problematic reality of unjustly suppressing one’s desire” (So, 1995, p. 183), a “sanctuary for female characters” (Koo, 2007, p. 219), a “space for healing wounds caused by a conflict between father and daughter and husband and wife” (Park, 2012, p. 85), and an “unworldly own space” that is free from the pain of reality (Han, 2009, p. 149). On the other hand, in the case of *Sukyeongnangjaejon*, research has been mainly carried out on Okyeondong in this work, and it was analyzed as “liberated space” where women’s subjective voices can be expressed (Kim, 2011, p. 302), “women’s subjective place and utopia” showing women’s deviation and desire to escape from the patriarchy (Seo, 2014, p. 194), or a “reading heterotopia” that exists in the reality of readers (Kang, 2020, p. 81). In *Parkssijeon*, Piwhadang was represented as “a sort of ecological space with an automatic defense system from war”. (Jo, 2004, p. 290).

These previous studies reveal to some extent the characteristics of the female space in classic novels such as *Parkssijeon*, *Sukyeongnangjaejon*, and *Chwimisamseonrok*. They are imagined as a refuge from the war or the norm. Why were these female spaces that deviated from the norm or order of the time depicted in the three works distributed by transcription around the eighteenth-nineteenth century? What are the common characteristics of “the female space” that encompass the distinct characteristics of spaces in each work? What is the social and cultural meaning of the female space depicted in the classical novels of the Joseon Dynasty? This study began from such questions.

In order to answer these questions, this study focuses on how women’s life is depicted in the three works, and the implications of the female places. Furthermore, by examining the commonalities of the female places that are presented in all three works, it looks more closely at the imagination of female places that women of the time may have dreamt of. Previous studies focused on uncovering the distinct characteristics of female spaces depicted in individual works, but this study covers the common characteristics of “the female space” presented in each work. This space is not just a place of escape and self-protection from the war or the norms of reality; it is a place where women have ownership rights and can act independently. To understand the characteristics of this space, this study first organizes the characteristics of the female space depicted in each work. Then, it examines “the female space” as described in the late Joseon Dynasty novels.

Female Image and Female Places Depicted in Joseon Dynasty Classical Novels

Pihwadang, Overturing the Image of Boudoir

Parkssiyeon is a work that shows the heroism of Lady Park who defeated the Manchurian troops against the backdrop of the Qing invasion of Joseon. The first half of this work depicts the conflict between Lady Park, who has an ugly appearance, and her husband, Lee Si-baek, and Lady Park's divine acts. The second half describes Lady Park's heroic story, as she actively responds to the Qing invasion of Joseon. Here, Pihwadang is presented as a space where her divine and heroism is highlighted. Actually Pihwadang is a place where Lady Park establishes by asking her father-in-law to escape her bad treatment by the family due to her ugly appearance. But, ironically, her divine and heroic characteristics manifest in here.

Before her transformation, Lady Park's is described as having a face like a mossy old stone, a mouth and nose that touch each other, eyes so small, a mouth big enough to hold two fists, a forehead like a grasshopper, and messy hair. Because of this grotesque appearance, all family members except her father-in-law, that is, her husband Lee Si-baek, her mother-in-law, and the servants, look down on her and treat her coldly. Accordingly, Lady Park asks her father-in-law to build a side room (夾室) in the back yard and then plants trees to create a space where she can avoid trouble.

At the time, Lady Park asked Gyehwa to plant trees around the side room in the back yard. Green soil was filled in the east, red soil in the south, white soil in the west, and black soil in the north. Red clay was filled in the center and the trees were watered often, so they grew thickly. [...] Lady Park's father-in-law wanted to see it. So he followed Gyehwa and entered the side room in the back yard. There was a dense growth of trees. The trees stretched all over, as if a dragon and a tiger were facing head and tail, and the branches and leaves were also in harmony with each other, becoming a snake and a colorful animal. As he stood up, the atmosphere was solemn and filled with fog, with unpredictable changes. (*Bag-si-jeon*, 1995, p. 164-166)

As shown in the quotation above, Lady Park changes the space of the side room in the backyard in her own way. Soil is laid to match the five traditional Korean

colors; thick trees seem to be a dragon, tiger, snake, and other animals that are solemnly escorting the space. And clouds and fog that surround trees create protean views. A new harmonized yet mysterious world spreads deep in the boudoir. In addition, Lady Park calls this place Pihwadang (被禍堂) meaning “the place where one can avoid trouble that comes at an unfortunate time.”

Pihwadang is a space beyond the boudoir, a separate independent space created in the back yard. Lady Park’s achievements are not just about solving problems within the family, but about solving the problems of the state in this place. As a result, Pihwadang is transformed into a space that is open to the country and the world, not a closed space hidden in the boudoir. Lady Park actively takes the lead in solving national problems and crises, foreseeing the barbarian invasion and helping the king evacuate to Namhansanseong, as well as implementing measures to defeat the soldiers from the North who have invaded Joseon. Moreover, Pihwadang transforms into a space where thunder and lightning vibrate, the trees around instantly transform into armored soldiers, and branches and leaves become spears and swords, defeating a group of enemies by surrounding them. In this way, the meaning of Pihwadang extends to the world “outside” the house, that is, a public space that solves the problems of the country by moving beyond the private realm of the house, although it is located “inside” the house. It does not simply act as a place to escape cynicism and poor treatment at home, but as a place to escape trouble from future national disasters and crises. This is a refuge for families and women, and a battlefield to defeat the generals from the North.

Lady Park stays in Pihwadang without revealing herself to the outside world, and resolves everything, ranging from family affairs to national affairs. In addition, her voice is conveyed to the public world through her husband, Lee Si-baek, or her servant Gye-hwa, and is translated into real action. Although this is pointed out as a limitation of the female consciousness of this work, the paradoxical meaning of the space called Pihwadang can be verified.⁴ In other words, through Lady Park, who had no choice but to express her voice in Pihwadang, we can speculate the realistic constraints of women of her time who had difficulty escaping from the boudoir. In addition, with this fact in mind, Pihwadang assumes a meaning as a

⁴ A previous analysis concluded that the female consciousness of *Parkssiyeon* has a limit. Because Lady Park’s activities did not escape the internal space, Pihwadang and her willingness to participate in society was indirectly realized through her husband, Lee Si-baek. (Kwak, 2000, pp. 142-143) However, I think Lady Park’s not leaving the Pihwadang is a reflection of the reality of women under patriarchal rule.

door through which women can actively express their intentions by moving beyond the many bridles placed on women.

Parkssiyeon, set in the context of the Manchu invasion, establishes Pihwadang as a refuge to avoid the devastation caused by the war as well as a space where women were allowed to appear in the public realm. This work seeks to overturn the historical fact of the defeat as well as the boudoir space that is the female residence under patriarchy. Pihwadang is a space giving protection from the war and the sexual violence women endure during war (Jo, 2004, p. 290). However, it is not depicted only as a space for passively protecting the body from violence; rather, it is embodied as a battlefield where women actively fight in solidarity against hostile forces, as well as a female place that sees the outside from the inside and propagates the private into the public. In this regard, Pihwadang is not a private, intimate boudoir; it is an exit for women to enter the public world, overcoming spatial constraints.

Okyeondong and Jukrimdong, Deviating from the Norm and Regulation

Sukyeongnangjae is a novel about Lady Sukyeong, a fairy, and her husband Seongun, who used to be an official in heaven but exiled to earth and reborn as a human. The novel narrates about their love and marriage, the death and rebirth of the Lady because of slander by her maid, and their ascension to heaven. Lady Sukyeong is banished from heaven and stays Okyeondong, a place where the gods live, and Seongun is reborn in Andong. They are united in Okyeondong, live with Seongun's parents with their children. After many years, Seongun leaves for *gwageo* (the highest-level state examination to recruit government officials), and her maid who was jealous of the Lady takes the chance and defames the Lady that she had an affair with a man. The Lady is persecuted harshly by her father-in-law, resentful, and commits suicide. Seongun comes back from *gwageo*, and buries her body in a pond in Okyeondong. Yet, she is reborn in Jukrimdong, and later ascends to heaven with Seongun and their children.

As the story narrates, the flow of the narrative is developed according to Lady Sukyeong's route, such as Okyeondong—Andong (in-law's house)—Okyeondong and Jukrimdong—heaven. The novel depicts their love, which has gone beyond the norms and what is allowed in the first half, and the second half narrates the death and rebirth of the Lady who commit suicide after a slander. Okyeondong and Jukrimdong are important spaces in both narrations; they are closely connected with the life of the Lady as is born as a human and resurrected.

Okyeondong is formed as space where all kinds of natural things harmonize (Kim, 2018, p. 110).

“Seongun whipped his horse to reach Lady Sunkyeong faster. The sunset was setting over the hill, but Okyeondong was still very far away. After crossing tens of kilometers, he was finally able to see the vast scenery; numerous mountain peaks and valleys were around like a painting, and green willows covered the entrance to Okyeondong. Nightingales were flying all around as if gold sheets were fluttering in the air, butterflies in search of flowers flew around the spring breeze and enjoyed the spring sunlight. The scent of flowers was subtle, and parrots and peacocks strolled around.” (*Syu-gyeong-nang-ja-jyeon-i-la*, 2014, p. 76)

Okyeondong is a distant place, tens of kilometers away from a real space called Andong. Such distance implies that this is an “other” space, isolated from the reality of Andong. This place is described as a space where there are numerous mountain peaks and valleys, like a painting, willows and trees cover the entrance to Okyeondong, there are butterflies are looking for flowers, and nightingales, parrots, and peacocks are flying all around. The harmonious natural landscape, reminiscent of a landscape painting, gives a liveliness to the image of Okyeondong. This spatial atmosphere naturally leads to the relationship between Seongun and Lady Sukeyeong. Here, both man and woman secure a time of romantic love without being bound by earthly norms called “Deadline for meetings set by heaven (Cheonjeong-gihan)” or “six great rituals in the Confucian society (Yungnye)” according to the order of the Great Jade Emperor. As such, free encounters and ties between man and woman can occur at Okyeondong, transcending the order and norms of heaven and earth.

However, unlike harmonious and free spatial atmospheres, this space is not open to everyone. Only those selected by the Lady can enter, and only after relying on the power of heaven or passing the Lady’s test. Baeksanggun, Seongun’s father, who has no way of knowing the whereabouts of Seongun who left for Okyeondong, attempts to find traces of Seongun; however, Baeksanggun never finds him. Selected by the Lady, Seongun arrives in Okyeondong only after receiving help from heaven and is allowed to stay in Okyeondong after passing the Lady’s test. As such, Okyeondong seems accessible but private, both a real space on earth and a paradoxical space in the heavenly world that is different from the human world.

In addition, Okyeondong is a space only for the Lady and her maid where they can stay, and speak and act independently, overcoming the patriarchal order. Okyeondong is an independent space where only the Lady and her maid exist, and neither the order of the heavenly world nor that of the earthly world exists. The Lady becomes the owner and expresses her voice here. Although it is a statement and an act through the medium of dream, the Lady appears in a dream of Seongun's to inform him that they are a match made in heaven, and supports the family's financially by providing medicine, a painting of her face, and a pair of golden dolls (Keumdongja), thereby for the most part taking the leading role in the relationship with Seongun. The Lady constantly communicates her intentions to Seongun, who makes decisions accordingly and puts them into practice.

Such characteristics of Okyeondong are in stark contrast to those of Dongbyuldang, which was prepared by the husband's family in Andong. The Lady, who had formed a relationship with Seongun in Okyeondong, comes to Andong, her in-laws' house, and stays at Dongbyuldang. Here, her voice is not fully communicated to her in-laws. Andong is a space where the rules of the six great rituals in Confucian society and "fidelity" operate. Women's comments and actions are subject to patriarchal regulation. Accordingly, while her husband has left home to sit the state examination, the Lady is falsely charged with infidelity, and is not able to actively assert her innocence. Unable to prove her innocence, she focuses on lamenting and complaining of false charges, and eventually solves the problem by taking the extreme decision to kill herself (Kim, 2018, p. 139).

However, the narrative does not end here. It provides an opportunity for new life by bringing the Lady back to life after she commits suicide. In the edition of *Sukyeongnangjaejeon* explored in this paper, the Lady is reborn in a space near Okyeondong called Jukrimdong and forms her own space. Further, in this space, she refuses to support the parents-in-law and forms a family centered on herself, her husband, and her children. Jukrimdong is also depicted as a fairyland, different from the human world. It is in harmony with nature, like Okyeondong, and access is allowed only to selected beings. Despite the fact that Seongun, who is invited to Jukrimdong, asks that his parents live together with them as he is concerned about leaving them alone, the Lady stays at Jukrimdong and rejects Seongun's request, as they belong to different worlds. The Lady stays at Jukrimdong without encountering the parents-in-law and ascends to heaven with her child and her husband, Seongun.

In the Joseon Dynasty, sex, love, marriage, and family were ruled by Confucian principles, and women's lives were subject to institutions. Women were assigned

the roles of daughters, wives, daughters-in-law, and mothers, with the duty of a daughter-in-law to support her parents-in-law especially emphasized. In most classical novels, a daughter-in-law's virtuous conduct is summarized as "Hyobonggugo(孝奉舅姑)" which means dutifully supporting parents-in-law. However, in this work, the Lady shows an unprecedented characteristic as she denies the norms and rules laid down for daughters-in-law that is, supporting the parents-in-law, by choosing a separate space to live.

In this respect, Okyeondong and Jukrimdong are established as a space in which women themselves can be established as a subject of space, freed from the various taboos or oppressions that the society of the time demanded of women. Here, women's words and actions could be free, and they could escape from a life bound by the patriarchal system and ideology. In this regard, it can be said that Okyeondong and Jukrimdong secure the identity of the space, deviating from the patriarchal order. Accordingly, previous studies have recognized such space as a "women's liberation space" (Kim, 2011, p. 294). However, in addition, this is a space, created and owned by the Lady herself, where she has a subjective voice. Okyeondong and Jukrimdong are infinitely accessible; however, they are private in the sense that only beings chosen by the Lady can enter. Unlike Dongbyeoldang, the right to entertain others in Okyeondong and Jukrimdong belongs solely to the Lady. In this respect, these places are the Lady's independent space, free from the constraints and restraints of reality.

Chwimi Palace, Escaping from Masculine Violence

Chwimisamseonrok is a novel that tells the story of the three princesses who stayed in Chwimi Palace, that is, Emperor Kwangmu and the three princesses who were the children of Empress Kwak. The first half of the work contains the narrative of the marriage of Princess Muyang and Yangsong, which Emperor Kwangmu imposes by force. In the second half, a series of events that the three princesses, Muyang, Kwando, and Yeoeup, experience while staying in the Chwimi Palace, are depicted. Emperor Kwangmu chooses Yangsong, who plays the board game Baduk well, as a spouse for his eldest daughter, Muyang, and Yangsong accepts this by hiding his existing marriage with Mrs. Heo. After discovering Mrs. Heo's existence after the marriage, Muyang tries to restore her status as a lawful wife, and expresses dissatisfaction by disallowing any approach from Yangsong other than fulfilling the duty of a wife. Muyang gives birth to a child and maintains a good relationship with Mrs. Heo. However, as Yangsong's fiendishness worsens after her

father-in-law dies, she asks Emperor Kwangmu if she can live in seclusion at the Chwimi Palace. Princess Kwando and Yeoeup both suffered from the violence by their husband, so they understand Muyang's problem and support her request to stay in the Chwimi Palace with them. Emperor Kwangmu allows the princesses to live in the Chwimi Palace. Furthermore, he designates it as a place where Muyang, Kwando, and Yeoeup can relax, free from any obligations; that is, the princesses can stay there together, and entry to anyone else is restricted.

The Chwimi Palace, the residence of the three princesses, is established by the Emperor as a space only for them, with a strict guard that prevents his sons-in-law from trespassing. The princesses hang a sign bearing the Emperor's orders (Danseocheolgwon) to ensure no one comes in without the Emperor's order, and secure their own space, disconnected from the outside.

The scenery was the most magnificent in the country: Incomparable mountain, clear and beautiful autumn scenery, mountain peaks that were second only to the landscape, wonderful waterfalls, the fragrance of beautiful flowers and plants that enfolds nose, and weird animals. The three princesses became accustomed to walking in it, enjoying the scenery, and washing the ribbons on the *gat* (traditional Korean hat) in the waterfall. They sat in a continuous flower garden and read poems about chrysanthemums. They ate food of sea and land and played lyres and pipes. They tasted the fragrant fruit and the strange tea and put a chrysanthemum bud on their heads. They called court ladies, paired up to play pipes and write poems (*Chwi-mi-sam-syeon-nog* 2nd volume, p. 7).

The Chwimi Palace is filled with beautiful flowers and plants and exquisite scenery. The princesses gather here to eat fragrant fruits, drink tea, become one with nature, and enjoy freedom by escaping from the restraint of reality. The image of the princesses who write and play lyres and flutes pipes in the beautiful natural scenery of the Chwimi Palace differs from the image outside. If the space outside the Chwimi Palace is a place where artificial elements of norms, order, and violence act, the space inside the Chwimi Palace is drawn as a space filled with nature, freedom, and communication in harmony with all kinds of natural objects.

Before entering the Chwimi Palace, the princesses had to suffer from their husbands' tyranny. Emperor Kwangmu establishes Muyang Palace as a place where the Muyang couple can stay together near the in-laws' house, and splendidly decorates it with silk. He sends hundreds of court ladies and maids to guard the Palace.

However, this is a space filled with women's duties, such as Yangsong's violence and lies, serving the parents-in-law and relatives. It is not a space for Princess Muyang to rest. The space where Yangsong's violence is most obvious is the bedroom of the ex-wife, Mrs. Heo, where upside-down tables and general messiness clearly confirm this. Princess Yeoeup's palace is also a space where conflict with her husband, Eumpung, occurs frequently. Eventually, she dies here. Although these spaces are actually given to women, they are more exposed to the power and violence of men rather than safety of women because spaces have been assigned under the vertical order of patriarchy.

After entering the Chwimi Palace, their lives are filled with freedom and peace, free from male power and order. Men are not allowed here. Despite their husbands' clever plans and raids to attack the Chwimi Palace, they are never able to enter.⁵ In this way, Chwimi Palace is established as a space where only women achieve cohesion and harmony by being free from their husbands' violence. Here, women indulge in freedom through horizontal relationships and communication. In this respect, Chwimi Palace is a place only for women, free from male violence, and the three princesses' secluded life in the Chwimi Palace can be regarded as a "Free escape to freed space" (Lim, 2006, p. 368).

Chwimisamseonrok compares between the Chwimi Palace and other spaces, and foregrounds a confrontation and conflict between a man and a woman centered on a married couple. The world outside the Chwimi Palace filled with order, norms, and violence, and contrasts with the world inside the Chwimi Palace filled with peace, harmony, and freedom they represent the vertical order centered on the male patriarchy and the horizontal relationship of women, respectively. Through this, the Chwimi Palace is meant as a space where women can promote their solidarity by being free from male violence. A description of the Chwimi Palace as "a space where one can recognize the subjective self by protecting oneself from the tyranny of the male-centered unilateral ruling ideology that oppresses women, and pursue the freedom of human equality" (Koo, 2004, p. 39) in previous studies is in the same context.

Among the previous studies, that of Park (2012) in particular carefully analyzes

⁵ Park Eunjung (Park, 2012, pp. 114–115) describes the Chwimi Palace as not a completely closed or exclusive space but a space that "can emit internal energy through the boundary of a half-open space and change the masculine external space." However, this space keeps the princesses safe from the threat of invasion by husbands, through strict security, and it is a space for them to enjoy freedom from their husbands' violence. It is clearly disconnected from the outside world.

the functions and significance of the Chwimi Palace in *Chwimisamseonrok* as a space that heals women who have been hurt by father-daughter or marital conflicts, that is, “a space that produces energy of healing through forgiveness and reconciliation achieved through horizontal solidarity of women” (Park, 2012, p. 114). Furthermore, Park explains that the Chwimi Palace is not a utopia but rather a space similar to Foucault’s heterotopia and emphasizes that “it is a space that drives to move to another arrangement by disturbing and unsettling the fixed arrangement, rather than rushing forward toward huge power” (Park, 2012, p. 116). Park’s spatial analysis is clearly valid and this present study agrees with Park’s analysis; however, the present study focuses on the fact that the Chwimi Palace is a space only for women who have prepared to escape the discord with and violence of their husbands, conspiring to create an independent space for women that unfolds in the fictional imagination.

However, this work does not conclude with the princesses spending the rest of their lives at the Chwimi Palace. After the disturbance of the husbands’ trespassing, the princesses return to their in-laws’ houses. However, recalling the form of Chwimi Palace as a space outside the patriarchal order and system, such a consequence may have been an inevitable choice for readers—writers who transcribed and rewrote the novel, and also readers of the novel—of the work, themselves could not resist the harsh patriarchal order. Thus, in spite of the conservative and passive ending of the work, it has great significance in that the horizontal solidarity and reconciliation of women achieved in the female space, which would never be possible in the patriarchal reality, become the spatial imagination, which it is impossible to achieve in reality.

Imagination and the Desire for Female Place

This chapter will examine the form of the space depicted in the three works in relation to the perception of the life-space of females. The perception of spaces and imagination about spaces for women that women of the time shared through the enjoyment of novels can be pointed out through the similarities among the female spaces in the three works.

First, all three are independent places prepared to meet women’s needs or choices. Although Pihwadang, Okyeondong, Jukrimdong, and the Chwimi Palace have different names, female characters secure their own place through a request for space from their fathers-in-law or fathers, or by their own choice. In this self-provided space, female characters are separated from the outside world, freed

from war, violence, and norms, and gain freedom and rest. These spaces compensate for the constraints and lack of such spaces in the real world.

External beings cannot intrude, only those selected by women can enter. The fact that women are the ones who open and close the doors to allow and control access clearly shows that this space is owned by women. The female characters decorate each space in their own ways and are not subject to external eyes or disciplinary restrictions. Furthermore, here, women who can have their own space actively express themselves and fight against wars, norms, and violence.

These spaces are clearly separate from the outside world; however, the women are not isolated and are free to go outside. In addition, female characters bond with other women or heal each other's wounds in their residence. Further, they share their love with the people they invite or actively communicate with by expressing their intentions. In this regard, Pihwadang, Okyeondong, Jukrimdong, and the Chwimi Palace are open spaces for communication. Freedom is visualized through the harmony of all kinds of natural objects and a view ornamented by beautiful flowers, plants, and trees. Such a description of a heavenly world and fairyland also indicates that the spaces are an illusion.

In the Joseon Dynasty, which was governed by Confucian patriarchal principles, space was arranged according to the gender order and internal and external principles. Unlike men, who freely communicated with the outer space, women's lives were centered around the boudoir. In addition, the separation of space inside and outside both divide and constrain the lives of men and women beyond simple spatial separation. Restricting women to the interior spaces to show invisibility reflects a solid male-centered order in space.

This separation of institutionalized space distinguished women from men and at the same time functioned as an institutional device to capture women's lives in the eye and gaze of men.⁶ The female spaces were under the surveillance of a gatekeeper, and access was not free. In such a situation, woman could not come out. Of course, the spatial distinction and restraint were disguised in the name of protecting them from outside threats. In fact, however, women's lives were regulated and their actions were placed under strict control and surveillance. There was no autonomy in their lives.

Such spatial arrangements and characteristics are found in the spatial form that

⁶ The structure of Korean traditional houses has a distinctive structural, cultural, and social character in the character and division of the space. It is closely related to family, social institutions, and order and traditional customs (Kim, Seong, Yi, & Choi, 1989, p. 75).

the novels explored earlier. The boudoir where Lady Park stayed in *Parkssijeon*, Dongbyuldang where Lady Sukyeong resided in *Sukyeongnangjaejon*, and the in-laws' house where the princesses lived in *Chwimisamseonrok* are all spaces obsessed with patriarchal discipline and order, or marked with violence. Here, Lady Park is persecuted for her ugly appearance, Lady Sukyeong is criticized and severely punished according to the rule of fidelity, and the princesses of Emperor Kwangmu suffer from their husbands' violence. The princesses also had to suffer from their parents-in-law's support of their husbands' violence, as well as the violence itself. The space of the in-laws' house in these novels symbolically shows that women were placed in the vertical order and discipline of patriarchy, which was never safe for women.

However, the novels do not merely portray the world of experience. They also provide a separate place for women to rest, by overthrowing the existing space. This reflects women's desire for space, which was intended as an escape from the space of the empirical reality. In all three novels, female characters have their own rooms or spaces that are created as a female space for women, by women. Pihwadang looks out from the inside and moves toward the public world, and Okyeondong and the Chwimi Palace overcome the norms of patriarchy and male violence. They are independent spaces for women who are free from the restrictions and constraints of reality. This reflects women's desires for a "place" to escape the spatial constraints of the real world or to compensate for the lack of a place of their own. In this regard, these spaces are depicted as places of solidarity and unity, where women become subjects and freely express their voices without male gaze or intervention.

As such, *Parkssijeon*, *Sukyeongnangjaejon*, and *Chwimisamseonrok* reflect the imagination of space that women of the time might have dreamed of. Pihwadang changes the space called Anchaek where women stayed and seeks a space from which it is possible to access the outside world. The fact that Lady Park could see the outside world while staying inside implies the overcoming of the national crisis and reorganization of the world as one that contains the wishes of women who dream of entering the public world from the boudoir space. Furthermore, Okyeondong and the Chwimi Palace, as spaces reserved for women who had escaped from the hardships of married life at their parents-in-law's house or from patriarchal rule, showed a female-centered space planning that is capable of horizontal solidarity and harmony. The desire for space of women who wanted to escape from the ideology and norms that constrained them is reflected in such a spatial form.

During the time of the Joseon Dynasty, women enjoyed poems and novels in boudoir spaces and formed their own culture. In particular, the reading and copying of novels was one of the important practices of boudoir culture. *Yeosaseoseo* by Jegong Chae and *Sasojeol* by Dukmoo Yi mention that women sold their hairpins and bracelets, or squandered their money, to borrow books, which reflects women's reading craze in the eighteenth century. At that time, Korean women read different kinds of works ranging from female education books, such as *Lesser Learning* and *Biographies of Exemplary Women*, and Chinese history books and novels such as *Sagi* to satisfy their intellectual curiosity and taste, to encyclopedias to expand their scholarly knowledge (Jo, 2005, pp. 43–52). Among these works, novels were cultural products that satisfied the desires and tastes of female readers in the boudoir spaces.

Parkssijeon, *Sukeyeongnangjaeon*, and *Chwimisamseonrok* were novels favored by female readers in the late Joseon Dynasty. Although it is unclear whether they all had the same type of readers, all focus on female figures and refer to issues faced by women who were marginalized under the patriarchy or by war. From this perspective, it is clear that women sympathized with the female characters in these works. The three novels portray the independent utopian spaces beyond the limitations of reality surrounding women.

This longing for space is deeply related to the novel readers' desire for a female place. As mentioned previously, Yi-Fu Tuan distinguished space from place and described space as more abstract than place. He considered that an abstract space transforms into a concrete place as experience dwells in space, and value is given (Tuan, 2005, pp. 19–20). Considering Yi-Fu Tuan's prescribed concept for place, in the novels, Pihwadang, Okyeondong, Jukrimdong, and the Chwimi Palace are female places where women can break free from patriarchal order and norms and achieve freedom, solidarity, and harmony. In addition, the subversive reason for the male-centered order is revealed through the planning of a place where women's conspiracy and solidarity are possible. It can be said that the voices of women, as "subalterns"⁷ who could not fully express their voices within the empirical

⁷ Antonio Gramsci used the term "subaltern" to encompass all the workers and peasants who were subordinate to the working class or denied access to their hegemony. Through this term, Morris and Spivak tried to address the problem of Indian women who could not express themselves in the patriarchal society (Morris & Spivak, 2010). Indian women and Joseon women are similar in that they did not have their own voices under the patriarchal system and had to sacrifice their own lives after their husband's death.

patriarchal norm of the real world, unfolded in the imaginary world of the novels.

Conclusion

This paper examined the imagination for female places in classical novels of the Joseon Dynasty, focusing on *Parkssiyeon*, *Sukyeongnangjae*, and *Chwimisamseonrok*. Its focus was on the characteristics of three spaces in the works: Pihwadang, Okyeondong, Jukrimdong, and the Chwimi Palace. These spaces were arranged and shaped in contrast to the external spaces surrounding them, and set as places where women's solidarity, harmony, and communication are possible. The three works highlight the places where the order and norms of war or patriarchy are established, as well as the contrasting imagined female places. These female places are depicted as an alternative space where women can escape the vertical order of patriarchy or the fear of war and death. Such spatial settings seem to be closely related to the perception of female readers who enjoyed the novels for their experiential reality space. If the former space is a copy of the empirical reality, the latter is a space in which the desire to escape from the patriarchal reality is projected.

The lives of women in the Joseon Dynasty were set within the patriarchal order. The spatial arrangement of Anchaе and Sarangchae, separated by inside and outside, clearly reflects the lives of women of the time. However, women did not remain in reality and dreamed of a new world through novels. Furthermore, the female places in the three novels are "Women's space that resists logic, and alternative space that guarantees women's freedom" (Morris, 1993, p. 33). They contain a serious search for the possibility of living away from the reality of patriarchy. Of course, it is hard to say that the women completely overcame the order of reality since the novels end with the women eventually returning to their in-law's houses and live their lives. However, it is noteworthy that the novels seek the possibility of a different life by providing a fantasy space that contrasts with reality. Fantasy "overturns and erodes cultural stability by dismantling the integrated structure and semantic action upon which social order depends" (Rosemary, 2003, p. 69) and in such a space setting, subversive reasons for dismantling the order of the patriarchal system and fantasy for space take root.

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