

JUNIOR CONFERENCE PANEL 2: CONTEMPORARY KOREAN LITERATURE

Blurred Lines: A Postmodernist Conception of Korean Literature Through Oh Soo-yeon's *I Am Food***

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Abstract

One contemporary movement of importance to literary scholars is the postmodern movement. Western literature has, in fact, contributed much literature uncharacteristic of—in varying degrees—previously established conventions of literary work, which has partly served as an impetus for postmodern literature. Following this new wave of literature are theories that try to make sense of this new wave, though most have failed to capture an essence applicable to the majority of the works. One of the prevailing theories by Chris Snipp-Walmsley has come close to determining such an essence through deemphasizing specific characteristics

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and referring to general trends. The theory states that postmodernism offers a moment of tension: a temporary, provisional, and always precarious middle ground that we can occupy so as to see things differently. In the realm of world literature, specifically eastern literature, the theory remains to be explored. Recent additions to Korean literature, for example, have been showing a characteristically postmodern trend. For this reason, as an attempt to introduce this theory to Korean literature, this paper sought to include the idea of Chris Snipp-Walmsley as a framework to literary analysis of possible postmodern Korean literature, of specific interest being Oh Soo-yeon's *I Am Food*. This paper does so by adopting the idea of Chris Snipp-Walmsley as a theoretical lens, and through exploring the concept of 'eating' in Korea starting from lexicologist definitions of the concept towards a phenomenologist expansion of discourse on the concept. The undertakings presented in this paper showed that Oh Soo-yeon speaks of the concept of 'eating' in multiple levels, each presenting a unique postmodernist angle arguably unique to Korean (or at least Eastern) literature, through an arguably postmodern literary style. Oh Soo-yeon's *I Am Food* then, could be considered as a testament to the postmodernist movement in Korean literature.

Modernism was an aesthetic movement brought about by both a radical shift in consciousness and a violent transformation of social conditions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This transition was abrupt, violent, and pivotal at all levels of society. Political and economic power that had previously provided the primary mode of social control and community, had been displaced by Enlightenment humanism, which posited the idea of a fully conscious, rational, and universal self. One of the immediate effects of the industrial revolution had been a process of urbanization whereby small cottage industries and rural areas were swallowed up by the new, encroaching cities, and the sense of belonging to a community, of sharing a common social bond, was strained as individuals were shocked into anonymity, swallowed by the masses swarming through the cities. This sense of shock was reflected by Wordsworth in book VII of his epic poem "The Prelude":

How often, in the overwhelming streets,
Have I gone forward with the crowd and said
Unto myself, "The face of every one
That passes by me is a mystery...

A similar theme is investigated in Edgar Allan Poe's story "The Man of the Crowd", in which a convalescent who whiles away his hours observing the crowd is stricken by the appearance of a strange, sinister man whom he follows for hours. The man spends all his time wandering through the crowds, becoming nervous and agitated when they thin. Despite his constant scrutiny, the convalescent returns none the wiser, taking some slight relief that some things are better not known.

This movement can be seen in Korean literature, as well. In Cho Se-hui's *A Dwarf Launches a Little Ball* (2002), the sharp conflict between the socio-political thrust in Korea and tradition was exposed, wherein those who work harder are asked to sacrifice and suffer even more (Cho, 2002). In Yi Mun-yol's unpublished work *Winter that Year*, translated by An Sonjae (n.d.), there was a sharp realization from the main character that life is not a rosy field, extending the tension between tradition and changes brought by modernity into an existentialist discussion (Yi, 2014). In the story, all ideals and traditions questioned by similar patterns of modernity to that of Korea's, people's views on human freedom are challenged in so many levels. The modern condition is represented as one of alienation, of being constantly bombarded with noise, information, and hazard. The sense of purpose and continuity that had previously held sway through deep-rooted tradition and culture was ruptured and fragmented. Modernism then, both in the West and the East, was an artistic attempt to capture this sense of fragmentation and alienation.

This new 'realism' was one of experiment and innovation; genre distinctions were collapsed and challenged as poetry became more prosaic while prose became poetic; minimalism was favored rather than excess; fleeting, ephemeral impressions rejecting the 'God's eye' stability that had dominated the 'classic realism' of the Victorian period, were preferred. Yet this was by no means celebratory. Literary magnates Wordsworth, Poe, Cho Se-hui, and Yi Mun-yol reveal that the fragmentary nature of modernity is always painful. Modernism is a literature of mourning, forever lamenting the profound and tragic loss of the golden age of unity and

belonging. Truth and beauty are still visible in the art of modernism, but only through the shifting surfaces of the shattered fragments shored against our ruin (Snipp-Walmsley, 2006).

Amidst this modernist era, a new wave of literature seemed to be emerging alongside an increasing distinction of a new period. Although some scholars have argued that it is more accurate to say that this new wave of literature more accurately captures a new attitude, previous scholars have also argued for a base period for this new wave of literature, which became prevalent from the 1970's onwards. From this point in time, the characteristics of intertextuality, metafiction, maximalism, and hyperreality have invaded Andrew Bennett's concept of 'imagination,' which was originally seen as an aberrant function of the mind, imagination was subservient to the powers of reason and order, and Jeremy Hawthorn's concept of 'gaze,' which was originally seen as a straightforward attention to literature through interpersonal looking (Lindas, 2013). First, intertextuality is about connections between texts, including the various ways in which one text references another (or many others) ("Postmodern Literature Characteristics," 2016). This has been exemplified in such works as Jorge Luis Borges' "The Library of Babel," which depicts intertextuality through the idea that everything has already been written—and that there's not some "big meaning" (Surhone, Timplendon, & Marseken, 2010). Second, metafiction's effect is a story within a story, making obvious references to storytelling conventions—but what they have in common is that they call attention to the processes of writing and reading (Surhone, Timplendon, & Marseken, 2010). This

can be seen in John Barth's *Lost in the Funhouse*, which embraces the idea of writing stories *about* stories, instead of getting bogged down in a quest for what's authentic or real (1978). Third, maximalism goes against the grain by embracing excess, and it does not stick to traditional ideas about plotting and narrative structure, which means authors are more likely to take diversions and explore other themes and subplots (Barth, 1978). An example is Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*, presenting numerous settings, characters, and voices, and themes (2001). Fourth, there is the concept of hyperreality as originally presented by Guy Debord, which posits that all that once was directly lived has become mere representation, as employed in William Gibson's *Neuromancer* (2011).

However, how exactly these postmodern literary characteristics permeated in literature remains unknown. In fact, the enumeration of such characteristics proved to be insufficient in encapsulating the attitude within the new period for literature. Furthermore, these characteristics, or even postmodernism in general, remain to be explored in Eastern literature, specifically Korean literature, which has been showing analogous trends to that of the Western postmodern movement.

For this reason, this paper seeks to extend the postmodern literary discourse to Korean literature. Specifically, this will be done through Oh Soo-yeon's *I Am Food*. Before doing so however, a working framework that encapsulates a postmodernist essence needs to be established. Upon doing so, a discussion on postmodernism in Korean literature may be undertaken.

Theoretical Framework

Previous theses have been the result of attempting to capture an essence for the concept of postmodernism. Hassan characterized these efforts as an impulse of negation and unmasking, a celebration of silence and otherness that was always present, though always repressed, within Western culture; he considered the movement as an anti-formal anarchism (Snipp-Walmsley, 2006, p. 407). It follows therefore, that he conceives of an idea of postmodernism that is an impulse to decenter, to create ontological and epistemological doubts as we accept and become intimate with chaos. He added that postmodernism occurs alongside a sort of immanence, meaning to say that humankind has a strong tendency to imaginatively create and appropriate all of reality to itself (Snipp-Walmsley, 2006, p. 407). Another attempt to digest postmodernism into a single idea is Baudrillard's extension of the concept of hyperreality, wherein he argued that there's nothing original left to say and no story that has not been told (Snipp-Walmsley, 2006, p. 408). Fukuyama's take on postmodernism was that capitalism and liberalism have triumphed (Snipp-Walmsley, 2006, p. 408). Finally, Rorty posited that postmodernism was all about deconstructing correspondence theories of truth, and advocated instead a new era of neo-pragmatism and the abandonment of all truth claims (Snipp-Walmsley, 2006, p. 411).

However, just like the literary characteristics that were previously outlined, these attempts at a catch-all idea for postmodernism—Hassan's decentralization and immanence,

Baudrillard's hyperreality, Fukuyama's late capitalism, and Rorty's neo-pragmatism—remain to be further consolidated by Snipp-Walmsley. Through analyses of previous ideas on postmodernism, he was able to point out that there never was a transcendental, objective viewpoint; our only access to knowledge is through already existing discursive frameworks; they could no longer guarantee a truth (or even the existence of truth), and should therefore be relegated to the order of edifying and enlightened conversation. Postmodernism then, is driven, both in theory and aesthetic practice, by an ontological uncertainty and epistemological skepticism brought about by collapsing Kant's distinctions between the faculties of pure reason, practical reasoning, and aesthetic judgment. Furthermore, postmodernism attacks the idea of a stable, autonomous being and the possibility of grounding our knowledge in certainty and truth. Finally, he calls for the equality and justice of all language games, which are the rules and conventions that frame a particular discourse. In sum, postmodernism functions best not as a philosophy or an aesthetic movement, but as a principle of critical vigilance: a means of opening up the contradictions in the master narratives and power discourses (Snipp-Walmsley, 2006, p. 408-409).

This main point by Snipp-Walmsley arguably most accurately captures an essence of postmodernism. These ideas by Snipp-Walmsley then, will be used for this paper as both the theoretical framework and essence of postmodernism.

Postmodernism in *I Am Food*

The course of modern Korean history can be summed up through the events of Japanese colonization, military dictatorship, and conflict between the North and the South. Consequently, borrowing Hawthorn's concept of 'gaze,' Koreans naturally limited their artistic gaze to the Korean peninsula.

However, this was challenged by writers such as Oh Soo-yeon, whose writing, neither beautiful nor gentle, and confounding to those critics accustomed to flowery prose, nonetheless had its own style. Through *I Am Food*, one can say that her way of unfolding her story may have resembled that of an unskilled writer, when it was in fact, the product of a deliberate attempt to encompass a new critical approach.

I Am Food's setting occurs in the space of a country within Asia, although the country could not clearly be specified. However, it can be said with certainty that the narrator is Korean. The nationalities of the characters Damo and Murat are unclear, although it can be speculated that they are foreigners to the country. This can be seen from the fact the stay within a dormitory, while the narrator seems to be the landlord.

Oh Soo-yeon then, does not deem important the exact name of the country or the national identity of the characters. Borrowing Bennett's concept of 'imagination,' Oh Soo-yeon's imagination is no longer bound by such factors as life within Korea or problems facing the Korean people. Rather, the imagination and the territory of Korean literature, which have previously been solidly confined to the domain of the Korean

people and state, have been expanded. The 'gaze' has transcended national and racial confines, and has obtained a global contemporaneity that searches for and carries out international fellowship.

However, this analysis does not suffice in extracting the postmodern from the novel. Specificities remain to be surfaced: How has the imagination and territory of Korean literature expanded? How exactly are global contemporaneity and international fellowship exemplified in the novel? For this, it is reasonable to turn to Snipp-Walmsley's notions.

Snipp-Walmsley mentioned that postmodernism is best a principle of critical vigilance, one in which there is equality and justice of all localized games, which are the rules and conventions that frame a particular discourse. This then, shall be observed in the discussion of *I Am Food* through a discourse on the novel's central concept of 'eating,' starting from the essentialist Korean definition of the concept, toward a more elaborate, phenomenological Korean analysis of the concept.

Essentialist View of 'Eating'

In one level, an essentialist Korean definition of eating would be to ingest food, especially that of a piece of bread, or soup from a plate, and raw fish. However, another level takes the concept of 'eating' as being degraded (i.e., rust eating iron) or to consume something (i.e., these travels are eating into my pocket) (Minjungseorim, 1986).

This second level take on 'eating' is interesting, as the essentialist Korean definition also explicitly attributes this to a

being, even a person (i.e., something is eating him). Through this attribution, one could infer that an individual could be 'eaten' whether it be through degradation or an active occurrence of someone eating that individual, and that an individual could be 'eating' someone else, through a sort of consumption of that someone else.

Phenomenological Discourse on 'Eating'

The second level take of 'eating' as applied to individuals is interesting, as Oh Soo-yeon, through *I Am Food*, seems to deem important the act of living itself. And living is eating, and that eating is at the forefront of life's issues. The difference among people in the novel manifests itself as the issue with eating. The symbol of this is the figure of the eating-demon-possessed "god." This god is the face of glory, a monster who has devoured his own body save for his head, because there was nothing else to eat, protecting the temple by swallowing any and all demons (Oh, 2006). It is formidable and ravenous, and has an insatiable appetite. It protects the temple with its mouth that is open like a cave.

Eating can also be read as a kind of metaphor; an act of fulfilling one's desires can be interpreted as the general act of eating. However, the novel also puts effort into showing that a tension that goes against this fulfillment of desires is present. The novel seems to be centered more on Damo than Murat. The novel scrupulously explores Damo's hatred of food, which asserts that the act of eating is ultimately an act of hurting others and taking away lives. There is a sort of belief that ends up hurting others. Damo's hatred of food hurts the narrator; the narrator must continually suffer because of Damo.

Ironically, Damo's interior of respecting all lives and not hurting others leads him to neglect the considerateness of the narrator, who wants to feed Damo even a little. It also causes her to suffer.

This metaphor of eating is also seen in the discussion of children who have inherited sexually transmitted diseases from their parents, upon mentioning that the "kids aren't at fault . . . because the parents have been possessed by a demon of appetite" (Oh, 2006, p. 51). At first glance, it would seem that judgment is being passed on to the parents, who have been too permissive of their appetites. However, the passage may be seen in a different light when read in conjunction with the continuing discussion, which read, "Why do you think they get those diseases? Cause they're sexually promiscuous? Not at all! It's because they are forbidden to have any sex. You're bound to do it anyway, yet they keep handing you all these bans, saying you can't do this, you can't do that, you know? All sexual taboos are nothing more than verbal tricks to justify societal oppression" (Oh, 2006, p. 53). A power play is put to the fore; the discussion critiques the constraints imposed by those from an older epoch, constraints that resemble a conservatism that leads to no avail. This is also seen in the lines, "Just like you can't live without eating, you can't live without doing it, right? Everyone wants to do it, and should. But those [in power] monopolize it under the pretext of ethics and morality" (Oh, 2006, p. 53). Further describing this orchestration of constraints, the discussion raises the question, "Why do people forget promises that they suggested first? And then, to make things worse, in place of apologies they give excuses that make no sense" (Oh, 2006, p. 63). Clearly, this

discussion suggests that “there can’t be any absolute standards of right and wrong when it comes to that in the first place” (Oh, 2006, p. 55). The imposed constraints seem to bring about a stagnation, a repression of the emerging times, as shown in the lines, “Time heals? Although the winter’s almost over, there’s no sign of spring at all” (Oh, 2006, p. 43). This is not suggestive of an ultimate fixity however. Just as the narrator is scared of anyone who may “stare at the plates,” a mere consciousness of the imposed constraints may ascertain change (Oh, 2006, p. 23).

Both the god symbol, which accounts for differences in people, and the metaphor of eating as tensions between people or peoples, converge in the principle stating that what people eat is the very identity that defines them. This principle is furthered in the novel through the contrast between the vegetarian and the carnivore, which shows that matters of living is not so simple. Damo has a sharp, difficult personality although he is a vegetarian, and Murat, while carnivorous, displays an easygoing, rather than aggressive, temperament. Furthermore, Damo is sometimes closer to being a hater of food than a vegetarian. Also, these two characters do not meet in the story. Perhaps, there may even be no reason for them to meet because what they eat is different.

Eventually, the narrator has eaten Murat and Damo, and the narrator becomes food as well. She wants to be eaten by others. It is also the narrator’s struggle to escape the pain of eating. In the eat-and-be-eaten world where eating leads to trouble regardless of whether one considers it joy or suffering, the narrator attempts to flee from that suffering by becoming food herself. This is exemplified in the lines, “Why must Damo,

who does his best to plan and prepare for his future, be so mocked by perverse misfortune? Who is responsible for this unjust situation, where the more you exert yourself, the worse your results get?” (Oh, 2006, p. 67). And by becoming food, she able to open herself to others, which was justified in the lines, “As I did for Damo, I open wide the door to my kitchen for Murat... as I ate and I have become food, food, food” (Oh, 2006, p. 108).

At this point, the phenomenological discussion builds up on an identity in conjunction with eating. This can also be extended to social issues of any scale. In the novel, particularly, through a metaphor of a recorder, the prevailing issues at the international level during the time of the book’s publication have been discussed through the concept of eating. Specifically, written in 2006 the novel shows that amidst the widespread politically motivated and criminal violence in Iraq, Palestinians have been targeted more than other minorities because of resentment of the privileges Palestinians received during Saddam Hussein’s rule, and suspicions that they are supporting the insurgency. As a result of these unfortunate events, the security of the approximately 34,000 Palestinian refugees in Iraq has drastically deteriorated since the fall of the Saddam Hussein government in April 2003. Also, militant groups, mostly Shi’a, have targeted this predominantly Sunni minority community, attacking their communal buildings, committing several dozen murders, and threatening harm unless they immediately leave Iraq (Human Rights Watch, 2006, p. 1). The novel, then, recorded tragic voices of frightened Palestinian and Iraqi masses from the very corner of the Middle East. In the face of terrorism and in the midst of

war, “a simple craving for food can be reason enough to hurt and kill other beings” (Oh, 2006, p. 45). Innocent people have been forced into the madness of violent social conflict, and the novel questions this by asking the same thing twice all throughout, “are you saying I have to eat whatever you’ve made for me, no matter how much pain I might be in later?” As for the aggressors, the novel questions the extent of their humanity by stating in a sort of irony, “to be able to eat them with absolutely no feelings of guilt—how liberating!” (Oh, 2006, p. 47). The aggressors are in fact called monsters, who are “about to eat people held in its front paws. Those people had the very same expression on their faces... They seemed to be feeling pain and ecstasy at the same time” (Oh, 2006, p. 75). As if to show the gravity of the inhumane occurrences, Oh Sooyeon employs the narrator of the story to amplify the gravity of the situation innocent people are put in, “I’d like to have my head crushed in while in a confused daze. I’d like to be eaten agreeably without resistance. I’d rather be the eaten than the eater. I’d like to become food” (Oh, 2006, p. 77). Finally, through the narrator, the situation seems to extend existentialist sentiments into that of hopelessness, even to the point of being sorry for being alive, “I also want to discharge sacredly the weight in my heart, which I dragged with me when I left home... I want to be forgiven for staying alive all this time without being eaten by anyone... I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I’m sorry for being alive” (Oh, 2006, p. 83).

“It. Is. Too. Much” (Oh, 2006, p. 83). Clearly, the novel appeals to the victims of and calls attention to life issues and social issues. The narrator’s “head feels like exploding from worrying about what to eat and how to prepare it.” Damo

“says it even hurts to swallow” (Oh, 2006, p. 21). And with all of the people who are being done wrong, there is a need for discussion of these issues at least, if not action to uphold what is believed to be right during these times, as suggested by the lines, “the first thing that come into his mind is that it was a living creature up until the very moment it came on the table” and “wasting food is exactly like slaughtering living beings” (Oh, 2006, p. 27). So, the novel might as well have been ended with a statement already mentioned in the beginning of the novel so as to immediately present its point, “He surveys the table while holding the chopsticks as if to say that there is nothing worth eating on it... what clearer evidence than these dishes of food touched by no one, do you need to see that something is awfully wrong?” (Oh, 2006, p. 31).

The aforementioned kitchen calls for its further discussion. The Kitchen is a closed, private and fantastic rite of passage. Remaining in the pain within the labyrinth, rather than escaping heroically from this labyrinth, may be the honest ethics of a modern rite of passage. The narrator “was utterly committed to cooking like someone reborn; [she] used to hate stepping into the kitchen more than death itself” (Oh, 2006, p. 35). The rite of passage is, at its core, an attempt to establish an order that applies not only to new members but also to an entire group. The rite of passage atones for and rebels against, the violence of the world. The rite of passage of those stationed in the kitchen will not be complete until no more die from starvation, unless the chain of life, where in order to survive one must eat another’s flesh, comes to an end.

Postmodernism in Korean Literature

In sum, Oh Soo-yeon's *I Am Food* demonstrates in a roundabout way how to overcome the difficulties of human life through the process of self-deliverance. Through the narrator's dissociation of herself from the category of the standard ethnicity, the novel has shown that the ultimate destination of this dissociation is global fellowship. Devoid of such public and collective elements, the novel is an "antisocial" one that rejects the concept of community itself rather than establishes communal order. Furthermore, the narrator's decisive difference between her rite of passage and a traditional one is that the objective of hers is not a "return (aversion)" to traditional community but a "rebellion" against the violence of the given world. Instead of focusing on the conflicts between occupying forces and a dictator, or between the U. S. and Palestine, Oh Soo-yeon locates her ultimate interest in how individual lives are destroyed within these conflicts. Oh Soo-yeon demonstrates how many conflicts of interest, as well as how much hypocrisy exists within these international associations and humanitarian organizations even as they herald peace, and how fragile these associations and organizations are. The tragic stories of those who have no choice but let externally imposed situations run their lives, who cannot take the agency of their own lives, and who are not assured of the smallest degree of humaneness, speak directly to our minds and hearts.

As a result, the novel's language game and voice revive such concepts as human rights, freedom and equality, which, despite being addressed as general literary values for a long

time, lost their practical significance as specific expressions with contemporary significance. The matter of political correctness, which runs the danger of becoming a stiff slogan, actually manifests itself in her work more along the lines of ethics rather than politics. Furthermore, the political correctness in the novel begins from humanity's most instinctual cry— "No one should have to live like this"—and from a faith in fundamental human rights, before it comes from grandiose slogans or rationales. Ultimately, *I Am Food* made its appearance in the Korean literary scene as a work of fiction that posed questions on the human way to be, transcending nationality into the realm of global citizenship.

Korean Literature in Postmodernism

The complementarities of Korean literature with postmodernism as a concept are astounding. For one, the interactions of the characters in *I Am Food* show that the individual self, which establishes the primacy of reason and self-awareness over sensuous experience and material existence, becomes deconstructed into a subject who, by definition, is also subject (Snipp-Walmsley, 2006, p. 408). This subject is, of course, culturally determined and created by the various discourses of power and language games that flow through and from the culture. This also spreads across the realms of knowledge, insisting that we can never *really know* anything. This is also touched on by a short story written by Yeon-Su Kim entitled "New York Bakery," which questions the place in society of persons who have no roots in a particular society (Kim, 2012). All subject matters have been implicated

in some way in postmodernism's rejection of epistemological certainty and authority.

Another implication, skepticism, doubt, and paranoia are the tools of the trade for the postmodernist thinker who usually believes that agreement is always enforced, that truth is merely a coerced consensus, and everything is relative (Snipp-Walmsley, 2006, p. 408). Thus, we can move towards a more democratic mind-set only through a spirit of dissensus, a tolerance for difference, a move to the marginal, and through small, localized resistance. In other words, rather than forcing one's truth on someone, one should accept that they have their own story to tell. An almost perfect example of postmodernism is Oh Soo-yeon's *I Am Food*. Each of the characters expounds their philosophy, each engages in their own language game, each of them contributes to the spirit of heterogeneity and tolerance. It is an almost perfect example of theory in practice, marred only by the hecklers who refuse to participate and acknowledge the validity of that language game and, of course, by the occasional spectacles that seem to come to blows.

Needless to say, *I Am Food's* concern with global affairs coincides with postmodernism's concern about authority, power, and its repressive impulses lead to a focus on marginality. Promoting a politics of difference, focusing on identity politics of the marginal and repressed against the dominant, central discourses of power, postmodernism has had some considerable impact, particularly in the fields of post-colonialism, queer theory, and feminism (Snipp-Walmsley, 2006, p. 409). This is seen in Ch'oi Yun's *The Last of Hanako* for example, which reflected the change in the

social structure of Korea, as the right to travel is used as a landscape for discussion of the questioning of the abilities of the Korean woman, and how she is treated in society (Yun, 1994).

For postmodernists, this nostalgia for the one and all is misplaced idealism and sentiment. The loss of unity is not something to be mourned, but something to be celebrated. It is a declaration of independence, a way of acknowledging that everything has been tried, everything has been said. The tragic becomes farcical, because the search for, and belief in, Truth has been discarded. Thus, postmodernism's aesthetic is not only fractured and fragmented, it is *flat*. Opposing the surface or depth model of modernism, postmodern art denies the possibility of depth, offering a sweeping array of surfaces and superficiality in which the primary modes of representation are intertextuality, metafiction, maximalism, and hyperreality. Postmodernism has no controlling, linear narrative, no predetermined goal or point of course, and its refusal of internal, structural meaning legitimates all possible and potential meanings. Democratic, anti-elitist and subversive, postmodernism is a form of anti-art; it is a direct challenge to the authority of the expert, and claims to liberate creativity from the predetermined, central discourses of society (Snipp-Walmsley, 2006, p. 410).

Just as modernism was the art form which captured the experience of modernity, so postmodernism is the art form that captures, or reflects, the condition of postmodernity. Postmodernity, in this sense, is a cultural epoch which reflects the triumph of capitalism. The postmodern condition is read as

one in which the transition from the Industrial Age to the Information Age is complete. In this new epoch, the politics of space which led to wars for territory have been displaced by the politics of speed in which dominance is based upon whose weaponry is faster and whose information is disseminated fastest. Similarly, the self-knowing, rational subject essential to the modern condition is, according to postmodernism, a fallacy: we are all cultural constructions created by an invisible network of discourses which both position and subject us (Snipp-Walmsley, 2006, p. 410).

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his list a postmodernist take on Oh Soo-yeon's *I Am Food*. He aims to develop connections between dominant ideologies and Korean literary works.