

## BOOK REVIEW

***Han Kūt: Critical Art and Writing by Korean Canadian Women.*** The Korean Canadian Women's Anthology Collective. Toronto, Canada: Inanna Publications and Education, 2007. ix + 248 pages; illustrations, photographs, ISBN 978-0-9736709-8-1; \$29.95 (paper).

Using a clever word play on the Korean word for "Korean" as the title of their anthology, the editors of *Han Kūt* showcase a collection of thirty-five narratives and visual art pieces to redefine the "Korean Canadian Woman" (1). As the editors state in their introduction, they intend to contribute to the limited cultural knowledge of Korean women in Canada, explore discourses of Korean nationalism and Canadian multiculturalism, and complicate our understanding of the experiences of being a Korean Canadian woman (5). In so doing the editors attempt the critical and challenging project of linking the personal and the political.

Organized under five umbrella themes, the myriad of narratives and art included in *Han Kūt* emphasize how the "Korean Canadian woman" is fragmented by larger national and social discourses but is purposefully reconfigured with agency, clarity, and creativity at the personal level. Contributors engage with the often dualistic discourses of being Korean and Canadian but, as Helen Kang shows in her *kimchee* recipe, these can be reconfigured to savour contradictions. Others challenge how racialization, gendering, and sexualization of women's bodies are complicated by dualisms within national narratives. Hijin Park examines how the story of Ji-Won Park racializes Asian women and Native men while constructing national discourses of Canadian compassion, whereas Sylvia Yu Chao revisits the issue of Korean Comfort Women and the continued struggle for an official apology from Japan.

Further complicating issues of sexuality are found in Suzy Yim's photographs of gender performativity, which she ruptures with the hybrid parts of her queer, Korean, and Canadian identities. For Lim, these fragmented parts of herself are emphatically embraced when she states "No one aspect of my identity can solely define me, nor can the collective of individual identities; it is the intersection of all my identities that speaks my experience" (128). These ruptures can also be experienced and complicated in a transnational context, as Young-Hwa Hong finds in gender expectations of *Kirogi* families and women who become rooted in national (Korean and Canadian) discourses of motherhood, culture, and heterosexuality.

The common thread that weaves together *Han Kūt's* various styles, perspectives, and experiences is the articulation of personal struggle and resistance against a static definition of the "Korean Canadian Woman." Just as the editors reconfigure "Korea" in the title of their anthology, the contributors redefine what it means to *be* a Korean Canadian woman. Presented with grace and grit, these women reveal how the Korean Canadian woman is complicated, contested, and, negotiated within national discourses, thereby

affirming how the personal is always political. *Han Kŭt* achieves many of the ambitious goals set out by the editors but, more importantly, it is a foundational text that will spark critical dialogues on misrepresentations and re-representations of Korean Canadian women in the current global context. For educators, scholars, and those wanting to critically engage with contemporary politics of representation, identity, sexuality, feminism, anti-racism, transnationalism, and critical multiculturalism in Canada, *Han Kŭt* is a must read.

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