

Beyond Sentimentalism: Revisiting *Kim Ji-young, Born 1980* and the Affective Turn in Korean Feminist Literature

최정은 (Jeongon Choi), University of Oregon

This paper explores the evolving landscape of Korean feminist literature by examining Cho Namju's novel *Kim Jiyoung, Born 1982* (2016) as a pivotal text in the shift away from sentimentalism in the portrayal of gender issues. Departing from traditional modes of highlighting female suffering through emotional appeal, contemporary feminist literature in Korea embraces a new approach that eschews overt displays of emotion, viewing them as potentially limiting to feminist praxis. Through a close reading of *Kim Jiyoung, born 1982*, this paper investigates how the novel employs literary techniques to disrupt emotional identification with its protagonist and challenges the cultural work of sentimental literature in justifying social reality.

While previous scholarship has often focused on the sociopolitical resonance of *Kim Jiyoung, born 1982* with the #MeToo movement, this paper contends that the novel's political impact lies primarily in its innovative literary strategies. Specifically, the incorporation of sociological research, statistics, and the format of a social report serves to distance readers from emotional identification with the protagonist, Jiyoung, thereby prompting critical reflection on societal norms and structures.

Furthermore, this paper analyzes the disaffected language utilized by female characters in the novel, which eschews dramatic portrayal of gender conflicts in favor of delivering feminist speeches grounded in natural language. Drawing on Jacques Rancière's concepts of the literariness of language and an excess of words, the analysis highlights how *Kim Jiyoung, Born 1982* foregrounds the agency of female characters as active subjects engaged in the practice of feminist knowledge.

Ultimately, this paper demonstrates how *Kim Jiyoung, born 1982* exemplifies a new phase in Korean feminist literature, wherein women's self-representation shifts from passive victimhood to active advocacy and empowerment. By elucidating the novel's literary styles and political implications, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the affective turn in Korean feminist discourse and the ongoing transformation of women's narratives in literature. (308)