

MELANCHOLIA AND NIHILISM IN POST-KOREAN WAR LITERATURE (1950S–1960S): EXISTENTIAL-ANALYTIC APPROACH AND THEOLOGICAL POSSIBILITY

Taeha An, PhD student
Vanderbilt University, USA

Abstract

This paper offers an existential-analytic approach to interpreting 1950s–1960s Korean literature (*Obaltan* by Beom-seon Lee, *The Square* by Choe Inhun, and *A Respite* by Oh Sangwon), employing postcolonial melancholia as an interpretative tool for discerning their theologico-political and ontological-ethical valences. Drawing on Freud's distinction between mourning and melancholia and Heidegger's existential analytic, postcolonial melancholia is theorised as an existential attunement toward a world wherein the hope for redemption is grieved over as a loss. This melancholia confronts nothingness, revealing the absence of moral grounding in postcolonial liberation. Here, it is further contended that Walter Benjamin's organized pessimism and Friedrich Nietzsche's nihilism offer resources for theological reflection in a world where hope is no longer viable for a melancholic subjectivity – one to whom hope appears nebulous, meaningless, and therefore undesirable. By engaging Benjamin and Nietzsche, it is argued that theological reflection in a postcolonial world need not repeat the exhausted rhetoric of hope tied to liberationist paradigms; rather, it may seek to articulate the dense and resonant rhythms of human life as it moves within a world approaching the end of all things.

Keywords: *melancholia, postcolonial theology, Korean literature, nihilism, pessimism, theology and literature.*

Introduction

Drawing on Freud's distinction between mourning and melancholia and Heidegger's existential-analytic, I theorize postcolonial melancholia as an existential attunement toward a world wherein the hope for redemption (from socio-political oppression, alienation, or death) is itself grieved over as a loss. This melancholia confronts nothingness, revealing the absence of moral grounding in postcolonial liberation. Nietzsche's nihilism and Benjamin's pessimism illustrate this condition, indicating that theologies of postcolonial existence must centre their discourse on the courage *to be* and *to endure* when romanticized visions of redemption appear nebulous, meaningless, and thus undesirable.

This paper focuses on *Obaltan* (Beom-seon Lee), *The Square* (Choe Inhun), and *A Respite* (Oh Sangwon). While the title refers to "postcolonial" melancholia, these works more specifically belong to the body of postwar literature. What they share in common is that they were written when the memory of Japanese occupation (1910–1945) and the Korean War (1950–1953) remained vivid for the authors, readers, and even for the characters within the stories. It will be a separate claim – and perhaps require a separate paper – but I understand Korean postwar literature as inseparable from the memory of colonial occupation. I contend that postcolonial melancholia can serve as an interpretative framework through which these novels may be understood as sharing a coherent thematic concern, and that Nietzsche and Benjamin offer resources for theological reflection that foreground the articulation of suffering as an experience that is constantly *passing away*, rather than one that repeats liberationist paradigms. This framework proposes postcolonial melancholia as a lens for examining the existential conditions of postcolonial subjectivity in postcolonial world literature.

Postcolonial melancholia

In Lars von Trier's *Melancholia*, the first part of the film narrates the story of a bride, Justine, whose marriage unravels through a series of events on her wedding night. Her behaviour appears "nonsensical" and resists comprehension within the culturally conventional framework of the wedding ritual. She and her husband arrive at the venue two hours late; upon arrival, she visits her horse instead of proceeding directly to the reception hall, takes a long bath while the guests wait for her, and eventually has sex with one of them. Justine's "irrational" and apathetic behaviour illustrates the moment at which emotional regulation and the very sense of meaning collapse, thereby visualizing her estrangement from the culturally sanctioned rite of passage. It could be said that she chooses "a path of failure and self-destruction" to provoke others to hate her. Some commentators have argued that

Justine's culturally delinquent behaviour is not a purposeful act, but rather an act of lethargy arising from the confusion of not knowing what to do. On the other hand, some argue that such behaviour can be analysed as an act of self-destruction or self-punishment coming from the sense of guilt [Kim 2023: 17–18]. I contend that the second argument that interprets Justine's behaviour as self-destruction- and self-punishment-oriented act is more plausible to examine such a form of lethargic behaviour within the notion of melancholia.

This cinematic portrayal of melancholia takes a dramatic turn in the second part of the film, where the narrative juxtaposes Justine, her sister Claire, and an apocalyptic anticipation of the world's destruction. As death becomes imminent and the end of the world approaches, Justine remains calm and apathetic, whereas Claire, who initially appeared mentally healthy and stable, becomes increasingly anxious and unstable. This contrast helps illuminate a key dimension of melancholia: the subject identifies with the lost object of affection and becomes thing-like (*das Ding*), emotionally numb and indifferent [Kim 2023: 21–22].

Von Trier's film provides a tangible visualization of Sigmund Freud's essay, *Morning and Melancholia*. Freud distinguishes mourning from melancholia, as follows: in mourning, a person grieves the loss of a specific love object, whereas in melancholia, a loss is grieved but cannot be fully comprehended or identified [Freud 1917: 243, 245]. Mourning is, according to Freud, a "healthy" response to loss, whereas melancholia is neurotic, pathological. Mourning is a finite process that transforms pain into something that can ultimately be accepted, even though the object is grieved as a loss. Melancholia, on the other hand, is a persistent state located within the unconscious. What characterizes melancholia is the internalization of pain, which damages the griever's sense of self. In this internalization process, however, the loss remains inarticulable and inexplicable. Melancholia is a reaction to the real loss of a loved object, but it is "marked by a determinant which is absent in normal mourning or which [...] transforms [normal mourning] into pathological mourning" [Freud 1917: 250]. Although the pain of loss shapes the griever beneath the conscious surface of awareness, the object that induces the pain cannot be specified. Object loss signifies that the self's internal connection with the object is faced with something catastrophic, thus it concerns the self's sense of well-being, as well as the sense of cohesion within its ego – the danger of object loss belongs to the person's sense of self, which depends on the sense of an ongoing internal attachment to the love object [Roth 2018: 48–49].¹ Freud notes that the loss in melancholia is so unbearable that it is relegated to the unconscious, thereby disabling the possibility of processing

¹ There is a narcissistic dimension in melancholia; the hatred of the object in melancholia is sometimes engendered by the object's separateness from the self [Roth 2018: 54–55].

grief in the conscious mind. The impossibility of consciously objectifying pain leads the self to turn that pain inward. Building on Freud, Anne Anlin Cheng notes that melancholia is “a structural, identificatory formation predicated on the loss of self as legitimacy” [Cheng 2000: 20]. As Cheng demonstrates in her psychoanalytic examination of American histories of exclusion, imperialism, and colonialism, melancholia can serve as a helpful interpretative tool for investigating social and political forms of grief and their psychical impact on subjectivity. William James, too, accounts for religious melancholy in Lev Tolstoy and John Bunyan, whose writings are deeply concerned with religious themes and ideas. Tolstoy expresses a feeling of “absolute disenchantment with ordinary life,” from which it becomes impossible to return to ordinary happiness [James 1985: 116–120]. If such a person is fortunate, James argues, he or she arrives at a new place where natural evil is “swallowed up in supernatural good” [James 1985: 120]. John Bunyan’s melancholy, by contrast, is described as a different kind: he perceives the wrongness as lying within himself, rather than in the outside world [James 1985: 120–121]. James interprets Bunyan’s case as an example of someone with a psychopathic temperament – sensitive to the point of pathology.

The trio of Korean postcolonial and postwar literary works illustrates this melancholic dimension of existence through their depictions of characters’ inward movement between memory, interpretation, action, and inaction. *Obaltan* by Beom-seon Lee is set in postwar Korean society. As a side note, I have chosen to use the transliterated title *Obaltan* instead of its English translation because, when the novel was adapted into a film, the title *Obaltan* was retained rather than translated as *Aimless Bullet*. The film adaptation popularized the novel among a wider audience when it was released in 1961. Long before the globalization of Korean cinema and the recent worldwide recognition of the Korean film industry, exemplified by Bong Joon Ho’s *Parasite* (2019) winning the Oscars, *Obaltan* was considered the greatest Korean film ever made for decades [Min, Joo, Kwak 2003: 46]. The social-critical dimensions of the novel (especially its focus on unemployment and poverty) became even more pronounced in the film, which ultimately led to its ban by the newly established military government [Min, Joo, Kwak 2003: 41, 46–47]. The protagonist, Cheolho, is a working-class man struggling to support his family. Cheolho suffers from a severe toothache but delays visiting the dentist because he knows that other members of his family are also suffering in different ways. Although he works diligently, postwar social conditions prevent his family from escaping poverty. His mother suffers from dementia, and his wife, exhausted by economic hardship, becomes physically ill. His brother, unable to secure stable employment due to wartime trauma, ends up imprisoned for burglary. His sister becomes a prostitute at a U.S. military base. Throughout the story, Cheolho’s mother, in her dementia, repeatedly

exclaims, “let’s go, let’s go!” – but nobody knows where she wants to go or where they are supposed to go. Near the end of the story, Cheolho’s wife dies in childbirth. Instead of mourning her death or processing his grief, Cheolho goes to the dentist to have his wisdom teeth removed and faints from excessive bleeding on the taxi ride home. The title *Obaltan*, meaning “aimless bullet”, refers to each character, wandering and no longer knowing where to go or what to become in a chaotic society.

The Square by Choe Inhun explores the conflict between ideological division and an individual’s search for identity and freedom in a society fractured by war. The protagonist, Lee Myong-jun, is a prisoner of war who must choose between the two Koreas as the war ends. He rejects both, insisting on being sent to a neutral country: the freedom promoted by capitalist South Korea appears to him as an illusion marked by corruption, while the equality promised by North Korean communism appears oppressive and surveillant. After boarding a ship bound for a neutral country, he realizes that human freedom is always elusive – and that he would never truly be free anywhere. He throws himself into the sea to end his life.

In Oh Sangwon’s *A Respite*, the protagonist is a second lieutenant in the South Korean army who loses all the members of his platoon on the battlefield. The novel depicts the moment just before he is executed at a North Korean outpost. There is no conventional “story”; instead, the narrative presents what unfolds in the protagonist’s mind as he faces imminent death. Despite the North Korean soldiers’ attempts to persuade him to defect, his dejection and withdrawal from the external world led him to accept his death.

All three literary works can be read as portraying the very aspects of melancholia Freud describes. Their protagonists recognize that there is no escape, no further redemption from their situations. Upon this realization, they experience “profoundly painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, inhibition of all activity, and a lowering of the self-regarding feelings,” which ultimately leads them either to end their lives or to accept their imminent deaths [Freud 1917: 244].

An existential-analytic approach to melancholia

Just as Martin Heidegger develops an existential-analytic approach as the method and framework for investigating the meaning of Being (*Sein*), an existential-analytic approach is helpful for studying how these post-Korean War novels may be understood as sharing a thematic concern.² The existential-analytic approach examines

² The starting point for Heidegger’s existential-analytic approach is that the “essence” of *Dasein* lies in its existence. This means who *Dasein* is not determined by an immutable nature but by how *Dasein* lives and projects itself into possibilities.

the ontological structures that make human existence possible. Heidegger's analysis discloses fundamental existential structures such as attunement (*Befindlichkeit*), understanding (*Verstehen*), care (*Sorge*), and discourse (*Rede*) [Heidegger 1973: 172–179]. The notion of attunement deserves more systemic attention in the study of these postwar literary works. *Befindlichkeit* signifies “attunement” both in the ordinary emotional sense and in the fundamental sense that describes the way *Dasein* finds itself in, and relates itself to, the world – the *how* of its being-there, *Da-Sein*. Attunement is the fundamental existential condition without which there is no “there” (*Da*) of *Dasein* [Heidegger 1973: 174]. In Heidegger's words, *Dasein* is “always brought before itself, and has always found itself, not [...] by perceiving itself, but in the sense of finding itself in the mood it has.” In Heidegger's words, “a state-of-mind [or attunement] makes manifest ‘how one is’ [*wie einem ist*]” [Heidegger 1973: 175].³

Heidegger calls anxiety (*Angst*) a fundamental attunement (*Grundstimmung*), a special kind of attunement that reveals Being-in-the-world through an uncanny encounter with the nothingness of significance – the withdrawal of the world as meaningful, not nonbeing in an ontic or metaphysical sense. *Befindlichkeit* is attunement in general, whereas *Grundstimmung* is a mode of *Befindlichkeit*. All fundamental attunements are *Befindlichkeiten*, but not all *Befindlichkeiten* are fundamental attunements [Heidegger 1973: 232, 233–235]. Anxiety does not concern any “definite kind of Being for *Dasein*”, nor “a definite possibility for it”; rather, the threat it discloses is “indefinite” and “certain” [Heidegger 1973: 232; Blattner 2012: 169]. The indefiniteness of anxiety is precisely that through which *Dasein* feels “uncanny” (*unheimlich*). The “uncanniness” of this fundamental attunement deserves particular attention because, for Heidegger, it also signifies “not-being-at-home” (*das Nicht-zuhause-sein*), or more literally in English, “unhomelike” [Heidegger 1973: 233]. In anxiety, the world offers no possibility for *Dasein* to understand (*Verstehen*) itself [Blattner 2012: 167]. This feeling of “un-home-like-ness” in anxiety, I argue, has Freudian resonances.

With necessary methodological caution, I interpret Freudian melancholia as a kind of attunement through which the world is perceived, understood, and related to in particular modes of being. This interpretation should be pursued when other elements of Freud's larger psychological framework (e.g., libido, ego and superego, etc.) are bracketed. I examine melancholia phenomenologically, not clinically. Melancholia, as a pathological relation to the lost object in the form of internalization, is not a simple emotional response but an attunement through

³ See Heidegger 1973, 233 and the original German version. Through this pre-reflective, world-disclosive attunement, *Dasein* discovers itself always-already situated in a meaningful world in the way that the world “affects” and “matters” to the being of *Dasein*.

which the worlds of Being-with-others, Being-in-the-world, and Being-oneself are encountered in oppressive and alienating ways.

Beyond the uncanniness experienced in melancholia, it also possesses a revelatory function, much like Heideggerian anxiety, in that the world is disclosed as a space of loss, non-belonging, and self-estrangement. Heideggerian anxiety and Freudian melancholia are two distinct existential phenomena, yet a connection can be drawn because both concern an encounter with nothingness through which the world becomes manifest.⁴ Yet again, this is not Heidegger's "nothing" but a *phenomenological analogue*: the world appears emptied, voided, and deprived of meaning. Just as anxiety differs from fear in that it concerns the indefiniteness of the object toward which one's consciousness is directed, so too the lost object in melancholia remains indefinite, whereas it can be identified as definite in mourning. As an affective revelation of the world as lost, melancholia discloses nothingness as loss – a temporal and memorial void that is not known because it cannot be known.

It must also be noted that whereas Heidegger's anxiety reveals "the possibility of no-longer-being-able-to-be-there (*das Nicht-mehr-dasein-konnens*)", melancholia manifests the reality of "no-longer-being-able-to-hope". Employing an existential-analytic approach can help us understand melancholia not as a pathology but as an attunement in which the world appears precisely in, or after, the moment when meaning is no longer present. Meaning often takes the form of hope for redemption in the pre-melancholic stage. It is not redemption that endows hope with meaning; rather, hope itself provides the meaning-structure for the idea of redemption, signalling that there is *something* to be desired and anticipated instead of *nothing*. In the three novels, each character's final moments of action appear apathetic and lethargic, much like Justine in *Melancholia*. They do not long for redemption, nor do they find any sense of meaning, because they inhabit a state of no-longer-being-able-to-hope. The melancholic dimension of their being allows us to understand them as beings who are "no-longer-able-to-hope".

I interpret the postcolonial melancholia found in post-Korean War literature as an encounter with nothingness, in the sense that it compels postcolonial subjectivity to recognize that liberation, as experienced in the postcolonial present, has no moral grounding in itself. The characters in these novels realize that their experience of freedom in the present is parasitic upon the constant reconstruction/deconstruction, re-narrativization/denarrativization, and reconceptualization/unknowing of the past and its psychical imprints. What these works share is the realization that redemption

⁴ However, Heidegger is using "nothing" in the sense of the collapse of significance, whereas Freud's loss is the lost object (love-object).

is *nothing*, and their melancholic attunement arises from confronting a post-liberation world in which hope is no longer a viable force for orienting and sustaining one's life.

Organized pessimism and nihilistic affirmation of vitality

In what direction might theological reflection proceed on the basis of this interpretation of the literary works through the lens of melancholia? As noted earlier, the characters in these novels express the meaninglessness of continuing their lives. Their realization that there is no moral grounding – articulated through their words crafted by the authors writing in the historical period of liberation – resonates with Friedrich Nietzsche's nihilism. Nietzsche's engagement with Christianity centres on his critique of its morality, which, he argues, fosters weakness-affirming values such as humility, self-denial, and pity [Nietzsche 2005: §7, 6].⁵ This critique is explicit in *The Anti-Christ*: in his view, Christianity undermines "the good", which is "everything that enhances people's feeling of power, will to power, power itself" [Nietzsche 2005: §2, 4]. Slave morality in the Judeo-Christian tradition, Nietzsche argues, is driven by resentment toward the powerful and strong and is coupled with the moralization of the condition of the violated and the oppressed [Nietzsche 1994: §260, 154–157]. The death of God underpins Nietzsche's metaphysical framework of the will to power [Reginster 2008: 104]. Nietzsche's nihilism is a deliberate process aimed at disclosing the groundlessness of metaphysical – especially Christian – beliefs and their valuations of good and evil. The postwar literary works depict the absence of moral grounding. However, the nihilism depicted in these postwar literary works is not chosen but endured – an irresistible encounter with the absence of moral grounding.

Nietzsche and Walter Benjamin, although not self-identified religious or theological thinkers, provide important trajectories upon which further theological reflection may build. In his very short text *Theologico-Political Fragment*, Benjamin reflects on the Messiah and asserts that the Kingdom of God cannot serve as the ultimate goal of history, since the fulfilment of Messianic time through the coming of the Kingdom of God in this world would signify the completion – the end – of history [Benjamin 2006: 305–306]. History is impotent in itself because it cannot directly relate to the Messianic; only the Messiah can redeem history. Benjamin's philosophy of history is pessimistic, emphasizing the impotence of human agency in bringing about redemption. As Michael Löwy notes, Benjamin was not concerned with the "principle of hope" in the way Ernst Bloch was. Instead of

⁵ "Christianity is called the religion of pity. Pity is the opposite of the tonic affects that heighten the energy of vital feelings: pity has a depressive effect. You lose strength when you pity."

focusing on “radiant future”, Benjamin prioritized *organizing pessimism* – perceiving and interpreting imminent dangers [Löwy 2005: 112].

Although not as explicit as in his writings on German Baroque drama (*Trauerspiel*), *Theologico-Political Fragment* carries a melancholic tone. Benjamin’s pessimism is expressed through a form of revolutionary melancholia. His pessimism is theological rather than psychological. His philosophy of history, which envisions a time of redemption and affirms the weak (*schwache*) messianic power, is not rooted in any optimistic trust in the power of the “masses” or in an emancipatory future. Rather, it is grounded in a melancholic recognition of the powerlessness of life and of the eternal postponement of redemption in this world. His pessimistic view of history and redemption, which nonetheless affirms the possibility of struggle for emancipation, can thus be understood as a melancholic *wager* in the Pascalian sense [Löwy 2005: 11–12]. For Benjamin, it is pessimism that enables action, not an optimistic vision of final emancipation or a belief in the possibility of self-redemptive human effort.

From this perspective, *On the Concept of History* can be read as a creative integration of pessimism and messianism. Although Benjamin speaks of the conditions of possibility for revolutionary action, undertaken by means of the redemptive power of remembering the past in the messianic *now*, the full redemption – the possibility of full citability – remains suspended until the coming of the Messiah. *Theologico-Political Fragment* affirms this idea at its outset: “Only the Messiah himself consummates all history, in the sense that he alone redeems, completes, creates its relation to the Messianic” [Benjamin 2006: 305]. Benjamin’s integration of pessimism with messianism focuses on now-time (*Jetztzeit*), a liminal moment endowed with more power to enact revolutionary praxis desired by the oppressed, even though there remains a sense of “not-yet”, as the oppressed are remembered (or “cited”) only in images and fragments. The messianic power of now-time is weak, too weak to redeem, complete, or create history, yet it remains present. The redemptive significance of this messianic power emerges when remembrance of the struggles of the oppressed constellates with present struggles against oppression.

Benjamin understands nihilism as a method and proposes strategically using nihilism *against* nihilism itself [Benjamin 2006: 306].⁶ To employ nihilism methodologically is to accept the impermanent, transient, and ever-passing nature of worldly structures of existence while organizing this acceptance toward their dissolution in anticipation of the Messianic – the end that is not a goal. The theologico-

⁶ This suggestion appears in the final sentence of *Theologico-Political Fragment*, requiring interpretation to uncover its contextual significance.

political force of postcolonial melancholia can thus be located in its willingness to inhabit the rhythms of a world that is continually *passing away*.

Nietzsche does not directly anticipate Benjamin, but both deploy nihilism methodologically. Nietzsche uses nihilism in the service of revaluation, and Benjamin in the service of messianic interruption. Nietzsche employs nihilism as a method of deconstruction to create a vacuum of meaning within inherited (Christian) moral frameworks (*Umwertung aller Werte*: “revaluation” or “transvaluation” of all values). The aim of this deconstructive nihilism may be interpreted as producing “a change in the element from which the value of values derives” [Deleuze 1983: 171]. Nietzsche’s methodological use of nihilism culminates in the claim that the world is nothing other than will to power [Reginster 2008: 104]. Whether or not one follows Nietzsche or Benjamin in their specific conclusions, their work discloses a theological possibility: that reflection need not repeat the exhausted rhetoric of hope attached to liberationist paradigms. Instead, it may seek to articulate the dense and resonant rhythms of human life as it moves within a world approaching the end of all things. In other words, for melancholic subjectivity, to whom hope is inconceivable, theological reflection can take the form of articulating that the experience of suffering is itself constantly *passing away* and will eventually come to an end. This certainty of the end may offer a stronger consolation than the hollow invocations of hope.

Literature of han? Global significance of Korean postcolonial melancholia

It may be tempting to read these works as literature of *han*. As many prominent *minjung* theologians such as Ahn Byung-Mu and Kim Yong Bock have argued, constructing a social biography of the people’s lives and emotions around a central theme like *han* can appear appealing when theologizing the sentiments expressed by a particular generation of literary works. Listening to the actual people’s “suffering, crying, and longing”, rather than analysing “cold data”, has been understood as a primary task for *minjung* theologians [Chung 1990: 104].⁷ *Minjung* theologians may thus read this trio of texts as a valuable source for constructing a social biography through which the history of *minjung* can be further clarified. Indeed, *han* and *minjung* have often been grouped as in “*Han of Minjung*”, as seen in *minjung* readings of literary works of Kim Chi Ha and other writers [Kim 1980: 318]. *Han* can possibly be understood as an attunement – as a fundamental horizon of

⁷ Chung Hyun Kyung writes, “Listeners of socio-biography hear not cold data but actual people’s suffering, crying, and longing. [...] When Korean women theologians, [...], hear a poor, old Korean woman’s life story, they hear the recent history of Korea. Through her story they learn what it means to be colonized and sexually abused by the Japanese, and what it means to lose a husband during the Korean war [...]”

consciousness. However, although Andrew Sung Park identifies both conscious and unconscious levels of *han*, it nevertheless has a definite object and is intrinsically relational, grounded in the power dynamics between oppressor and oppressed [Park 1993: 31–42]. Moreover, *han* is often interpreted in a collective sense, as the “root experience” or the collective immemorial consciousness of the Korean people. This understanding does not adequately describe the existential, intransposable, and individualizing mood depicted in these novels.

Reading these three novels as literature of *han* may have global significance in its own right, but an existential-analytic approach to postcolonial melancholia may better illuminate the structure of consciousness involved in confronting inarticulable grief in postcolonial world literature – including, for example, Ngugi wa Thiongo’s *Weep Not, Child* and Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*. In *Weep Not, Child*, Njoroge attempts suicide in a moment of profound shame and hopelessness. His mother intervenes before he hangs himself, but the attempt itself reveals Njoroge’s existential condition – one in which hope for a better future has become impossible. Okonkwo’s life in *Things Fall Apart* likewise culminates in suicide, when he realizes that his people will not continue their resistance against the colonizers. The overwhelming sense of hopelessness extinguishes his desire to struggle further for the independence of his tribe. The colonial dynamic is presented more directly, though also more complexly, in *Things Fall Apart* than in the implicitly rendered postwar realities of the Korean literary works discussed in this paper. Yet the melancholic dimension of Okonkwo’s final moment can still be analysed through the existential-analytic framework developed here. An intercultural exploration of the melancholic existence among postcolonial subjects may enable postcolonial theology to locate its relevance for individuals or communities for whom hope no longer appears as a viable horizon for the cultivation and discipline of the self.

Sources

- Achebe, C. (1996). *Things Fall Apart*. Expanded ed. with notes. Oxford: Heinemann Educational.
- Benjamin, W. (2006). Theological-Political Fragment. In: E. Jephcott (trans.). *Selected Writings, Volume 3: 1935–1938*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, pp. 305–306. (Originally written 1920–1921 or 1937–1938; unpublished in Benjamin’s lifetime.)
- Blattner, W. (2012). Heidegger: The Existential Analytic of Dasein. In: S. Crowell (ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to Existentialism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 158–177.
- Choe, I. (2009). *The Square / A Nine Cloud Dream*. Seoul: Moonji Publishing.

- Chung, H. K. (1990). *Struggle to Be the Sun Again: Introducing Asian Women's Theology*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- Freud, S., Strachey, J. and Freud, A. (1953–1974). *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. XIV. London: Hogarth Press.
- Heidegger, M. (1973). *Being and Time*. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (trans.). Oxford: Blackwell.
- James, W. (1985). *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. J. E. Smith (intro). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Kim, C. K. (2023). Melancholia: The Sublimation of Death through Incorporation into a Lost Object. *Contemporary Film Studies*, No. 19 (1), pp. 9–26.
- Kim, Y. B. (1980). Doing Theology in Asia Today: A Korean Perspective. In: D. J. Elwood (ed.). *Asian Christian Theology: Emerging Themes*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, pp. 315–319.
- Lee, B. (2007). *Aimless Bullet*. Seoul: Moonji Publishing.
- Löwy, M. and Turner, C. (2005). *Fire Alarm: Reading Walter Benjamin's "On the Concept of History"*. London: Verso.
- Min, E., Joo, J. and Kwak, H. (2003). *Korean Film: History, Resistance, and Democratic Imagination*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.
- Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1964). *Weep Not, Child*. London: Heinemann.
- Nietzsche, F. W., Ansell-Pearson, K. and Diethe, C. (1994). *On the Genealogy of Morality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nietzsche, F. W., Ridley, A. and Norman, J. (2005). *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Oh, S. (2008). *A Respite*. Seoul: Moonji Publishing.
- Park, A. S. (1993). *The Wounded Heart of God: The Asian Concept of Han and the Christian Doctrine of Sin*. Nashville: Abingdon.
- Reginster, B. (2008). *The Affirmation of Life: Nietzsche on Overcoming Nihilism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Roth, P. (2018). Melancholia, Mourning, and the Countertransference. In: T. Bokoński, L. Glocer Fiorini and S. Lewkowicz (eds.). *On Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia"*. 2nd ed. London: Karnac, pp. 48–64.