The 25th Hahn Moo-Sook Colloquium in the Korean Humanities, GW, Saturday 21 October 2107

**Opening Remarks**   
by Young-Key Kim-Renaud

안녕하세요? Good morning everyone! Distinguished speakers, my dear colleagues, students, and friends,

I am most grateful and humbled to be given the honor of opening the 25th Hahn Moo-Sook Colloquium in the Korean Humanities at the George Washington University.

There is a saying even a little child knows in Korea, which says, “t’ikkŭlmoa t’aesan티끌모아 태산,” literally meaning, “Even specks of dust, if accumulated continuously, could form a great mountain.” It feels just like yesterday that we started this rather special GW Korean studies outreach program in the DC metropolitan area, but we have already reached the landmark of a quarter of a century.

Why do I say it is a special gathering?

First, this is a forum where topics in Korean studies focus on the humanities. We have shown through all these years not only the relevance but the crucial role of the humanities in providing backgrounds and explanations for all aspects of the current workings of Korean life. We have thus covered topics such as education, medicine, public diplomacy, the military, and architecture, in addition to the bona-fide humanities subjects like language, literature, arts, religion, philosophy, and history.

Second, it is a regularly scheduled academic Korean-studies outreach program, which honors a literary figure and also a woman, Hahn Moo-Sook.

Third, we have consistently had the best scholars on the particular topic chosen from the beginning to today. Furthermore, this Colloquium is famous for having the speakers and discussants come highly prepared. You can tell by the reaction of the invited speakers, when we reach out to them. Being invited to the Colloquium has become a clear sign of having been recognized as a major Korean-studies scholar.

Fourth, our audience is of the highest caliber. This was noted by our invited speakers from the very first meeting we organized. Indeed, many can be speakers themselves and in fact have been.

Finally, this is an academic meeting, but it has a friendly atmosphere, where we try to provide the best possible Korean food within our budget, to create a positive ambiance where people do want to talk and socialize with each other in a dignified and stylish manner.

The 25th Colloquium is even more special in that the topic of translation, which we have addressed in the past, receives a deeper and more scholarly treatment as we limit our discussion to the classic Korean love story of Ch’unhyang that everyone interested in Korea already knows or will learn about sooner or later.

The endearing Tale of Ch’unhyang has received many different forms of artistic representations since it first appeared in Korea about four centuries ago. Its origins are uncertain, although at least one scholar, Sŏl Sŏnggyŏng (설성경) in his book, “춘향전의 비밀 (The Secret of *the Tale of Ch’unyang,* Seoul National University Press, 2001),” has identified the original author as a yangban aristocrat, Cho Kyŏngnam (조경남, 1570-1641). But the origins of the Tale largely remain sheer conjecture, and its actual author is not clearly known. Moreover, this dramatic story of pure love, hardship, abuse of power, faithfulness and eventual joyful reunion is such a good vehicle to reflect ever changing social conditions that it has been reinterpreted and recreated myriad times in Korea – more than 100 times and now abroad, too, as the story has caught international attention, as we will find out more today.

Our speakers today are presenting many different angles from which we can view the various interpretations that the Tale of Ch’unhyang has received in different places over time. As we would expect, through these efforts to navigate between faithful and reader-friendly interpretations, other issues emerge such as how rewriters (including their translators) incorporate their own beliefs and wishes and how they recreate the work to please and also influence their readers and audiences. In this sense, today’s papers depart from the usual discussions of the challenges of translation, for instance, how some linguistic and cultural matters are difficult to adapt into another language and form of cultural expression. This colloquium promises to be exciting, illuminating, and thought-provoking, just as we always hope our HMS colloquium to be.

Before we proceed into today’s main program, I should like to commend Prof. Jisoo Kim who has been the main convener of the HMS Colloquium series, since my retirement two years ago. As many of you know, Jisoo’s responsibilities have become even heavier since she assumed the directorship of the university-wide Institute for Korean Studies at GW which officially opened this year. Yet it seems the more she does the more energetic and versatile Jisoo becomes. She has worked tirelessly even through her sabbatical leave and succeeded in organizing not only today’s academic conference but also a beautiful p’ansori performance by top Korean artists at GW’s Mount Vernon campus last night. For those who attended, this creative evening has added a vivid and enriching foundations for our Colloquium exchanges today.

There are many others without whose support and help Jisoo couldn’t have done this as easily and well. The GWIKS is blessed to have our precious program assistant, Ann Young-Ha Yang. She combines professionalism with warm human qualities, which makes working with her a pleasure. We have also benefitted from a very able and devoted group of interns, Soo-jin Kweon, Bomie Lee, Kylan Toohey, Grace Wright, and Yutong Zhou.

Just as important, the HMS Colloquium values the financial support that it has received from the Literature Translation Institute of Korea, the Korea Foundation, and the Sigur Center for Asian Studies, as a public recognition of the importance of what we do and as a valuable encouragement to continue our mission.

Finally, ladies and gentlemen, I thank all of you for being here, when you could be anywhere else on a Saturday, and on such a beautiful autumn day. We are truly touched by your interest, participation, and stimulation. You have made the Colloquium what it has become.

Thank you!