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Two Million "Butterflies" Searching for Home: Identity and Images of Korean Chinese in Ho Yon- Sun's *Yanbian* Narratives

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**TWO MILLION “BUTTERFLIES” SEARCHING FOR HOME: IDENTITY AND
IMAGES OF KOREAN CHINESE IN HŎ YŎN-SUN’S *YANBIAN* NARRATIVES**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the representation of Korean Chinese searching for home in relation to Korean diasporic identity. Home as a sense of identity is both personal and collective. It is also a reflection of one's psyche and emotion. For Korean Chinese, searching for a place to call home in between their host-homeland China and original homeland Korea involves many aspects of meaning, the home of an individual, of a family, and of a community. Therefore, the third cultural region Yanbian, the Korean Chinese Autonomous Prefecture of China, and Yanbian narratives become the central issue of this thesis. I first offer an analysis on the historical relations between Yanbian and Korean Chinese as well as Korean Chinese intellectuals' debate over Korean Chinese cultural identity and Korean diaspora. Then, I do a close reading of third generation Korean Chinese writer Ho Yon-sun's two novels *Windflower* and *Who Saw a Butterfly's Nest* respectively. Throughout my thesis, I argue that both the process of Korean Chinese characters' negotiation of an entry to Korea in *Who Saw a Butterfly's Nest* and the efforts to reconcile conflicts between Korean Chinese and South Koreans in *Windflower* is born from a desire of Korean Chinese to establishing a home and to position themselves in between their host and home culture.

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INTRODUCTION

In the 1980s, after China started its economic reform in 1978, the Korean government opened its door to China and to Chinese people. Since then, a number of Korean Chinese have travelled to Korea with the purpose of visiting relatives or as a visiting scholar. This trend of returning to one's cultural homeland is reflected in Korean Chinese literature. Many Korean Chinese authors have dealt with the subjects of South Korea and South Koreans in their writings. Coincidentally, as the Korean Chinese critic Ch'oe Sam-ryong recalls, South Korea and South Koreans first appeared in Korean Chinese literature in 1992, the year that the diplomatic relationship between China and Korea was established (Li & Han 14-15). Kim Nam-Hyön, a Korean Chinese teacher from Heilongjiang province published a short story entitled "Hansin Heights" in the Korean literature journal *Yanbian Literature*. This work has pioneered the subject of searching for home in Korean Chinese literature.

Searching for home is a basic need and desire of all human beings who want to settle in an "appropriate" home. When we are asked where home is, the idea of home that comes to our mind is a safe and secure image of an architectural construction in which we dwell. It can be a place where we stayed at once or longer, or the current place where our family members reside. In a broader range of meaning, a home also can be viewed as a city, or a nation-state

where we were born and raised. As a living environment, a home offers people a space that produces and maintains our personal and family daily life, customs, and history.

As “[k]nowledge about past,” history functions as “an essential ingredient in the formation of one’s identity” (Wertsch 5). But history does not simply provide us with “an accurate past,” rather; it is “a powerful instrument for shaping ideas and emotions that underline” important experiences in our everyday life and in the life of a nation-state (ibid. 6). Additionally, the relationship between an individual, others, and a place is defined by Per Gustafson, Sweden housing and urban researcher at Uppsala University, as a spectrum of personal and collective identity. According to Gustafson, the three elements, self, others, and an environment, are integrated into the process of social interaction, which as a “life path” is directly associated with one’s roots, “sense of home,” and “sense of community” (Gustafson 9). Through such a communication, we are able to observe “a person’s sense of place” and meaningful relationships “between [the] self and others” (ibid. 14). Therefore, the meaning of home becomes a crucial part of one’ identity both personally and collectively.

Home as identity questions who we are and what we are. It also questions how we are “being-in-the world.” In order to be at home, we must experience a journey from the “unhomely” to the “homely.” For world diasporas, the way of searching for home is even more complicated. The reason is that, in the context of diaspora, the notion of home not only relates to one’s host homeland and original homeland cultures but also to his/her hybrid cultural space. For Korean

Chinese in particular, the issue of home as identity has always been connected to China, Korea, and the hybrid cultural region of Yanbian, the official Korean Chinese autonomous prefecture in China.

In this thesis, I will focus on Korean Chinese novelist Hǒ Yǒn-sun's two novels, *Windflower* and *Who Saw a Butterfly's Nest*, which are widely known as representative Korean diasporic novels that deal with the subject of Korean Chinese searching for home. Hǒ Yǒn-sun (1955-) was born and grew up in the Yanbian Korean community in China. As a third generation Korean Chinese writer, she always connects the characters and subjects of her novels to the place Yanbian. Hǒ Yǒn-sun is the fifth child in Hǒ's family. Since her father expected a boy, Hǒ Yǒn-sun was poorly treated by her father in her childhood and was not given a name for a while after birth. The name Hǒ Yǒn-sun was given by her distant cousin who visited her. Because of this memory, Hǒ Yǒn-sun felt a sense of inferiority throughout of her childhood. At the same time, the memory became a basis for her to observe herself and others in her daily life and to develop her fictional characters (4). According to Kim Kwan-ung, Korean Chinese critic and Professor of Yanbian University, Hǒ Yǒn-sun once expressed that, for her, literature is a way of looking for her own name (ibid.).

Hǒ Yǒn-sun is the first writer who has entered Korea's book market among many Korean Chinese writers that have published their books in Korea. From her debut in 1986 to date she has published three short story collections

and four novels in Korea.¹ Her novella *The Transparent Darkness* (투명한 어둠) was published in the Korean literature journal *Yanbian Literature* in 1994 and was translated into Japanese in 1999. In July 2015, Hō Yōn-sun's fifth novel *Chinese Bride* (중국색사) was published by Yanbian People's Publishing House in China. This novel was first published as a series in the Korean Chinese journal *Yanbian Literature* and won the *Hansong Literature Award* established by the journal *Seasonal Literature* (문학사계) in Korea in 2014. Now the novel *Chinese Bride* is being serially published in *Seasonal Literature*.

Hō Yōn-sun gained a new reputation as a diasporic writer since she has published the novel *Who Saw a Butterfly's Nest*. Situated in the most recent 20 years of Korean Chinese society, this novel depicts the lives of eight characters of the lowest stratum in Korean Chinese society attempt to enter in Korea. *Who Saw a Butterfly's Nest* was first published as a series in the Korean literary magazine *Changbai Mountain* (Changchun, Jilin province, China) between 2003 and 2004, and published as a book by *Ingangua chayōnsa* (인간과 자연사) publishing house in Korea in 2004. In 2007, the novel won the 1st *Kim Hak-chōl Literary Prize* in Yanbian and was published by On Books in Korea again.

¹ Hō Yōn-sun's short story collections published in Korea: *The Lady's Love Affairs with Men* (사내많은 여인). Dong-A Daily Publishing House. 1991., *Temptation* (유혹). The Science and Thought Inc.1994., & *The Woman with Refined Taste* (바람을 몰고 온 여자). Munwōnbok. 1997. Her four novels published in Korea: *Although the Cuckoo is Crying* (빼꾸기는 울어도). Korean Studies Information. 2005., *Lost Night* (잃어버린 밤). The Medical Index Inc. 1994., *Windflower* (바람꽃). Pōm'ūsa. 1996., & *Who Saw a Butterfly's Nest* (누가 나비의 집을 보았을까). Ingangua Chayōnsa. 2004.

Following *Who Saw a Butterfly's Nest*, her novel *Windflower*, published in 1996, also regained readers' and academia's attention both in China and Korea. *Windflower* portrays Korean Chinese journalist and novelist Hong Chi-ha's search for family members in Korea, while at the same time, depicts the tough life of Korean Chinese laborers who work in Korea's construction worksites. Both *Who Saw a Butterfly's Nest* and *Windflower* become important literary texts in the discourse of Korean Chinese literature and the evaluation of Hō Yōn-sun's achievements as a Korean Chinese (diasporic) writer.

Many scholars such as Kim Ho-ung, Kim Kwan-ung, Han Hong-hwa, O Sang-sun, Ch'a Sōng-yōn and O Sūng-hi etc. both in China and in Korea have studied Hō Yōn-sun's *Windflower* and *Who Saw a Butterfly's Nest*. Kim Kwan-ung and Kim Ho-ung as the committee members of the 1st *Kim Hak-chōl Literature Award* have studied Hō Yōn-sun's novels in several articles. Both scholars examine Korean Chinese dual identities and argue that the two novels are typical Korean diasporic literature. O Sang-sun, professor of Minzu University of China contextualizes *Windflower* as Korean Chinese root-seeking literature. Han Hong-hwa examines how the main protagonist Hong Chi-ha's awareness of Korean Chinese identity changing through his journey in Korea, and concludes with Hong Chi-ha's ambivalent sense of identity between China and Korea. Comparing the two novels, Ch'a Sōng-yōn argues that, unlike *Windflower*, *Who Saw a Butterfly's Nest* does not deal with the issue of Korean Chinese ethnic identity, therefore, she thinks it is hard to consider the novel *Who Saw a Butterfly's Nest* as a Korean Chinese literature. Ch'a Sōng-yōn believes that Hō

Yŏn-sun and many scholars exclusively deal with Korean ethnic aspects in their literature in order to distinguish themselves from South Koreans and establish their identity as Korean diaspora. Taking *Who Saw a Butterfly's Nest* as an example, Cha says that, in the novel, some Korean Chinese traumatic experiences during the Cultural Revolution or their poverty in Yanbian does not specifically represent an issue that is related to Korean ethnicity because, in her understanding, everybody in China during that particular era may have experienced a similar situation. In opposition to Ch'a Sŏng-yŏn, Oh Sŏng-hi evaluates Hŏ Yŏn-sun's *Who Saw a Butterfly's Nest* as an achievement that observes the very personal aspect of ethnic Koreans' everyday life.

In this thesis, I will (re)examine Hŏ Yŏn-sun's two novels *Who Saw a Butterfly's Nest* and *Windflower*. What is new in my study is that I will focus on the role of home in the process of tracing Korean Chinese identity. Why do Korean Chinese people have an urge to look for home? Does a home have to be defined as a territorial nation-state or a geographical location? How does the notion of home function to first generation Korean Chinese and to their descendants? Keeping these questions in mind, I will analyze how and in what way the characters interpret the meaning of home, and how their identity and images have been reflected and represented. Throughout my thesis, I argue that both the process of Korean Chinese characters' negotiation of an entry to Korea in *Who Saw a Butterfly's Nest* and the efforts to reconcile conflicts between Korean Chinese and native Koreans in *Windflower* is born from a desire of Korean Chinese to establishing a home and of positioning themselves in

between their host and home cultures. Unlike the assertion that China is the only homeland for the current and future Korean Chinese generations, my textual analysis of Hŏ Yŏn-sun's two novels will demonstrate that Korean Chinese searching for home and positioning the self is an ongoing mode of continuing their migration history but not a fixed one.

This thesis is organized in three main chapters. In chapter one, I will first introduce the process for how *Chosŏnjok* or *Chaoxianzu* (Korean Chinese) has been named in the context of Korean Chinese migration history, and its relationship to the foundation of the Yanbian Korean community. Next, I will discuss two Korean Chinese scholars' debate on Korean Chinese cultural identity and on the Korean diaspora. In chapter two, I will do a close reading of Hŏ Yŏn-sun's novel *Windflower*. In the first part of the chapter, I will discuss how the image of "bucolic" Korea has been represented by the first generation Korean Chinese Hong Pŏm-san as an ideal homeland. In the second part of the chapter, I will focus on the main protagonist Hong Chi-ha's route of searching for his family roots in Korea. In the novel, a series of conflicts between Yanbian Korean Chinese people and native Koreans has occurred. In this process, reconciliations and negotiations have been emerged as a way of acquiring their cultural differences. In chapter three, I will do a textual analysis of the novel *Who Saw a Butterfly's Nest*. In the first part of my discussion, I will analyze how the fishing boat that carries eight characters from China to Korea resembles the image of Korean Chinese society. Next, I will examine how the characters in *Who Saw a Butterfly's Nest* interpret the meaning of home in the context of human existence.

CHAPTER ONE: DIASPORIC KOREAN CHINESE AND YANBIAN

This chapter attempts to bridge a historical relationship between China's ethnic Korean community Yanbian and Korean Chinese culture. This approach does not mean that I exclude the rest of Korean Chinese people who live outside Yanbian. There are around 1,200,000 ethnic Koreans such as in Changchun, Tonghua, Jilin, and Changbai cities in Jilin province, Shenyang, Tieling, and Dandong cities in Liaoning province, and in Shangzhi, Wuchang, and Jixi cities in Heilongjiang province for example. Since Jilin,² Liaoning and Heilongjiang provinces were the major areas of Manchuria,³ a number of Korean descendants live in the three regions, which are called “dispersion areas of Korean Chinese 朝鲜族散在地区 조선족 산재지구” in China (but much less than the population in Yanbian). However, the most concentrated Korean Chinese population lives in Yanbian. Besides the dispersion areas, a lot of Korean Chinese people are also living in Qingdao in Shandong Province, Beijing, Shanghai, and other regions.

² The dispersion area of Jilin Province refers to the outside Yanbian region.

³ Manchuria, also known as Manchukuo, was seized by Japan after the Manchurian Incident in 1931. Cho Ūn-ju writes in her book *Diasporic Identity and the Postcolonial Poetics* 《디아스포라 정체성과 탈식민주의 시학 *Diaspora Chŏngch'esŏnggue T'alsikminju'ŭi Sihak*》 that, as a common understanding, Jilin, Liaoning, and Heilongjiang Provinces were included into the region of Manchuria, but in a broader sense, the eastern part of Inner Mongolia, Outer Manchuria controlled by Russia, and Sakhalin were also included in the Manchuria area (12). See also *Manchu* edited by the Foundation of Koguryo Studies, 2005.

Despite the broad range of geographical locations of Korean Chinese, I intend to focus on Yanbian. I chose this focus because the idea of being Korean Chinese in China is intertwined with Yanbian both as a geopolitical term and as a particular transnational Korean culture. Therefore, my approach to the term Yanbian is not confined to its geographical location but includes a comprehensive understanding of Yanbian as a cultural icon of ethnic Korean Chinese.

In my following discussion, I will first discuss the naming of ethnic Koreans in China and its relation to the foundation of the Yanbian Korean community. Historically, as the center of Korean Chinese migration, Yanbian has played an important role in the formation of Korean Chinese culture and identity. Yanbian is not only a production of the Korean diaspora but also a legacy of the Korean Chinese emigration history. For Korean Chinese, the responsibility for the development of Yanbian might also be a way of keeping their cultural identity. In reality, however, the whole Korean Chinese society faces an identity crisis because of the shrinking Korean population in Yanbian. How to understand the interrelationship between Yanbian, Korean Chinese, and Korea emerges as a crucial issue in discussing Korean Chinese identity. Concerning this issue, I will discuss a debate conducted for decades by two Korean Chinese scholars, Hwang Yu-bok, professor of Minzu University of China and Kim Ho-ung, professor of Korean Chinese literature at Yanbian University. I will also present Korean scholar Ch'a Sŏng-yŏn's analysis on the two scholars' debate.

1.1 CHOSŎNJOK OR CHAOXIANZU AS THE NAME OF KOREAN CHINESE

The 2013 *Jilin Newspaper*, in its series of *One Hundred Korean Chinese* 49, reports Hwang Yu-bok as the scholar who spread the term *Chosŏnjok* (*Chaoxianzu*) to the world. *Chosŏnjok* (조선족) in Korean or *Chaoxianzu* (朝鲜族) in Chinese refers to ethnic Korean people who possess the PRC's citizenship. In his book *A Study of Korean Chinese Society and Culture* (2002), Hwang Yu-bok introduces the term *Chosŏn* 朝鲜 as the meaning of "bright morning" that comes from the name of the Korean kingdom, the first nation state of Korea founded by Li Sŏnggye in 1392 (168). According to the newspaper report, Hwang Yu-bok was the first person who introduced the term *Chosŏnjok* to American society in the 1st Overseas Korean Forum in New York administrated by the University of Connecticut in 1984. Until Hwang's presentation, local media were unfamiliar with the term *Chosŏnjok*, so they used *Han'in* (韩人, 한인) or *Hanminjok* (韩民族, 한민족) when they introduced Korean Chinese. Since Hwang Yu-bok insists on using the term *Chosŏnjok*, he asked newspapers and journals also to use the term *Chosŏnjok* directly instead of translating it as Korean Chinese or in other terms.

Both *Han'in* and *Hanminjok* are widely used terms in South Korea (the Republic of Korea, 大韩民国, 대한민국). Literally, the term *Han'in*, as a singular noun, means a person from South Korea. and *Hanminjok*, in a national level context, refers to the whole South Korean people. By the same token, in North Korea, *Chosŏnin* (朝鲜人, 조선인) as a singular noun refers to a North Korean

and *Chosŏn minjok* (朝鮮民族, 조선민족) designates the people from North Korea (the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, 朝鮮民主主義人民共和國, 조선민주주의인민공화국). In today's global cultural and social environment, beyond its national terminology, both *Hanminjok* and *Chosŏn minjok* also refer to Koreans worldwide in general. In other words, either *Hanminjok* or *Chosŏn minjok* means both the people from the Korean Peninsula and from overseas countries such as ethnic Koreans in China, Japan, America and other countries. Therefore, Korean Chinese (as *Chosŏnjok*), a term that specifically indicates ethnic Koreans in China, should be understood as a part of *Hanminjok* or *Chosŏn minjok* but does not designate all overseas Koreans.

Korean immigration from the Korean Peninsula to China started as early as in the 14th century (Kim H., Kim K., & Cho. Vol.1.1),⁴ but the most popular era was during the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. There were three major periods of Korean immigration, and the Yanbian region was a key location for the formation of a Korean community in northeast China throughout the era. The reason was due to the location of the border between China and the Korean Peninsula. It was not just because the border was located in the Yanbian region, but more importantly, the "Sino-Korean border

⁴ In her book *The Communication History of China and the Korean Peninsula* U Yŏng-ran writes that the communication between people from China and the Korean Peninsula even started from the mid-Paleolithic era (about B.C. 20,000-B.C. 500,000). According to her, after the 4th Ice Age, natural pedestrian bridges that connect the continents of the Bohai Sea (渤海) and the Yellow Sea (黃海) appeared several times on the surface of the sea. This natural environment provided communication opportunities for primitive men of the two continents (1-2).

had remained quite open” in certain historical periods and even until around 1945 (Olivier 9). This situation allowed a massive number of Koreans to enter the Yanbian region, and Yanbian became “a favorite destination” for Korean immigrants of that historical period (ibid. 7). Since Korea faced poor harvests for several years around the 1860s, Korean peasants who came to China to look for farmland occupied the major population of the Yanbian region even before the second era of Korean migration to China (Jin Chunshan 47, 92).

Unlike the first migration period, the second period (around from 1910 to 1920) was characterized by both voluntary and forced modes of exile. After the empire of Japan occupied Korea in 1910, the Yanbian region turned into a center of “organizing and supporting the Korean independent movement” (ibid. 3). Many patriotic youth and writers came to the region and participated in various revolutionary activities. They shared a “common goal: working for the liberation of Korea and shaping its future” (Olivier 8). Such a political movement even motivated “the Korean peasants who had not been politicized” to desire a return “to a liberated Korean homeland” (ibid.).

Although most Korean nationalists (as well as many peasants) did not plan to stay in China permanently, after 1945, (the year of Korean Independence from Japan,) many Koreans including those who were forced to come to China during the third immigration era did not return to Korea. The third migration era, which was called the period of “impelled migration” or “controlled migration,”

mainly refers to the years between the 9.18 Incident⁵ in 1931 and Korean Independence from Japan in 1945. A number of Koreans were forced to come to northeast China to provide for the shortages of labor for the Japanese empire (Hwang 50). Between 1938 and 1941, the population of Korean migrants increased over 100,000 each year, and in 1942, the whole Korean population in Manchuria was over 1,500,000 (Hwang 48). Half of the Korean immigrants returned to Korea around the 1950s, and the other half became naturalized citizens of China.

Li Kwang-il, professor of the Korean Language and Literature program in Yanbian University in China, points out that it is important to clarify why half of the Korean people never returned Korea. Although both Bernard Olivier, professor in the History Department of Jean-de-Brebeuf College in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, and Li Kwang-il say that there is no explicit explanation to this question, they offer very similar perspectives for the phenomenon. “Many of those who remained did so either because they were already actively engaged in the Chinese Communist movement or because they had nothing to lose and the Land Reform had just given them land” (Olivier 9). Included in those who stayed were many Korean writers. They not only shared a common understanding of constructing a socialist country but also followed the socialistic and realistic writing style since the 1930s (Kim H., Kim K., & Cho 11-12). Furthermore, resonating with 1940s Land Reform, Korean writers in China celebrated the

⁵ The 9.18 Incident, also known as the Manchurian Incident, was the Japanese invasion of Manchuria on September 18, 1931.

possibility of becoming a legal individual property owner in their literature. Most importantly, many Korean writers who were outside the Yanbian region came to Yanbian and dedicated themselves to developing Yanbian literature, which became the basis of Korean Chinese literature. With the foundation of PRC, especially after the establishment of the Yanbian Korean community, all Koreans in China were identified as Korean Chinese.

As an ethnic group in China, Korean Chinese did not have the name *Chosŏnjok* or *Chaoxianzu* until the 1950s. It is a recent term that has presumably been favored from the full name of Yanbian, the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture (Yanbian chaoxianzu zizhizhou 延边朝鲜族自治州).⁶ According to Hwang Yu-bok, the earliest documentation that the Chinese government recognized China's overseas Koreans as one of the ethnic groups of the country was in *The Resolution of the Ethnic Minority Issues*⁷ approved in the 6th National Congress of China's Communist Party (Zhongguo gongchandang diliuci

⁶ Yanbian was founded as the Yanbian Korean Autonomous District (Yanbian Chaoxianminzu zizhiqu 延边朝鲜民族自治区)—a province/state region on Aug. 26 1952, but was changed as the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture, which is a lower level administrative region by the constitutional law of PRC on Aug. 30 1955.

⁷ “The 6th National Congress of the Communist Party of China considers that the issues of ethnic minorities in China's territory (Mongolian and the Hui people in the northern area, Koreans in Manchuria, Taiwanese in Fujian province, Miao, Li, and other ethnicities in the southern area, and Xinjiang and Tibet) are significant to our revolution. Therefore, we appoint the Central Committee of Communist Party of China to prepare Chinese minorities' documents before the 7th National Congress of Communist Party of China so that they can be recorded in the agenda and in the Party Program.” See *Selected Documents of the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee* Vol. 4. (1928).

quanguo daibiao dahui wenjian 中国共产党第六次全国代表大会文件) on July 9, 1928. But the resolution document did not indicate Korean Chinese as *Chaoxianzu*, rather, filed it as *Gaoliren* 高丽人.⁸ After this resolution Korean Chinese were recognized politically as one of China's ethnic groups. However, the Chinese government and national media still kept filing the terms which were used during the Manchurian period such as the Korean nation-state people (Chaoxian minzu 朝鲜民族) or *Manchu* Korean (Manzhou chaoxianren 满洲朝鲜人), or Korean people (Chaoxianren 朝鲜人, Gaoliren 高丽人).⁹ This identity confusion on documenting the name of Korean Chinese came to an end in the 1950s with the foundation of the Yanbian Korean community.

Compared to other ethnic minorities in China, (for instance, the *Dai* group, 傣族) ethnic Koreans' settlement in China has a relatively short history. Korean Chinese history records more than 100 years if we count the history from the period of the end of 19th century when Koreans' migration to China became popular. But if we consider Korean Chinese history from 1949, the year of PRC's foundation and of the ethnic Koreans' naturalization in China, then the history even gets shorter.¹⁰ In contrast, the Dai ethnic minority, who originally settled in

⁸ Gaoli (Ko-ryo in Korean) is an ancient Korean state which thrived between 918-1392, and Gaoliren, in today, usually refers to Korean Russian that dwell in the Soviet Union countries.

⁹ Hwang Yu-bok says that *Renmin Daily*, released on Dec. 6, 1950, also indicates Korean Chinese as "the Korean nation-state people" (97). Therefore, he assumes that the term *Chosŏnjok/Chaoxianzu* was formalized between 1951 and 1952, during the period of constructing and inaugurating Yanbian as the official ethnic Korean community of China (Hwang 97).

¹⁰ Identifying Korean Chinese history is controversial especially with regards to the history of Korean Chinese literature. There are two different perspectives on

Yunnan province in China but crossed borders and spread to other countries later, date history back to the ancient period of China. Similarly to Korean Chinese the ethnic *Dai* also have had different names both inside and outside China. For instance, it has been called as ethnic *Thai* in Thailand, ethnic *Lao* in Laos, and ethnic *Shan* in Myanmar. In China, the ethnic *Dai* were called *Tai* or *Dai* (also known as *Baiyi*, or *Boyi*) and nominated the official name Daizu in the 1950s.

In recent years, the identity crisis of Korean Chinese society has always been connected to the discourse of Yanbian. It has been mentioned by scholars many times that Korean Chinese may face Yanbian's disappearance due to the descending of Korean Chinese in Yanbian. Unlike the Dai ethnic group that has many autonomous administrative divisions in China, for Korean Chinese, Yanbian is the only Korean autonomous prefecture. Therefore, Yanbian remains as the central issue in developing Korean Chinese society and resolving existing problems.

this issue. Korean scholars argue that the history of Korean Chinese literature started in 1949, the year of the foundation of the People's Republic of China (PRC). But Korean Chinese scholars insist that the history of Korean Chinese literature should include literature works that were produced before 1949. The reason is that overseas Korean literature from the first half of 1900s should be understood as a continuity of contemporary Korean Chinese literature. See (Li & Han 252).

1.2 THE DEBATE ON THE KOREAN DIASPORA

A long-term debate has been conducted by two Korean Chinese scholars, Hwang Yu-bok, professor of the Ethnic Studies Program at Minzu University of China, and Kim Ho-ung, professor of the Korean Language and Literature Program at Yanbian University in China. The main dispute of the two scholars is how to understand Korean Chinese cultural identity and the term “Korean diaspora.” Hwang Yu-bok argues for “Korean Chinese” as an independent category that is related to neither Chinese culture nor the culture from the Korean Peninsula. By “keeping a distance from both South Korea and North Korea” (Ch’a 90) and denying the connection to both Chinese and Korean cultures, Hwang Yu-bok does not accept the term “Korean diaspora.” In contrast, Kim Ho-ung emphasizes the relationship of Korean Chinese to both their homeland (Korea) and host-land (China) cultures. He insists on Korean Chinese dual identity as an important factor of understanding Korean Chinese society and literature.

Hwang Yu-bok contests both the idea of Korean Chinese duality and of the Korean diaspora by coining the term “100% *Chosŏnjok* (100% Korean Chinese).” In his article “The Cultural Community of Korean Chinese,” Hwang Yu-bok gives two main points to support his new term “100% *Chosŏnjok*.” First, Hwang Yu-bok argues that ethnic Koreans and their culture in China is completely different from that of ethnic Koreans living in the Korean Peninsula. Therefore, it is impossible to discuss Korean Chinese duality at all. Next, concerning the term “diaspora,” he argues it should be only in relation to a

religious understanding. In Hwang Yu-bok's understanding, world Koreans, unlike the Jewish nation, do not share a common religion. Therefore, Korean Chinese should be understood as transnational Koreans rather than diasporic Koreans.¹¹ In his research "The Korean Immigrants Society and Culture in P.R.C. and U.S.A" Hwang Yu-bok writes about the formation of Korean Chinese identity as:¹²

"The ethnic consciousness of Korean Chinese is quite clear. It can be categorized in two different periods, before and after Korean Independence from the Japanese Occupation in 1945. Before 1945, the main concerns of Koreans in China were the fight against Japan, Korean independence, Korean education, and Korean culture. After Korean independence [between 1945 and 1950] the circumstances of the Korean Peninsula were highly effective in the formation of Korean Chinese identity. More importantly, 1950s' Korean Chinese identity shows an obvious transnational feature.

¹¹ Hwang Yu-bok's articulation of the term "diaspora" is ambiguous. The reason is that he denies applying the term "Korean diaspora" to ethnic Koreans in China on the one hand, but on the other hand, he says that in the perspective of native Koreans, ethnic Korean Chinese can be seen as a group of diasporic people. Both Han Hong-hwa, professor of Ocean University of China, and Ch'a Sŏng-yŏn, professor of Kyŏng-hi University in Korea, have mentioned that Hwang Yu-bok makes some mistakes in his articulation of the term "dual identity." See (Li & Han 128) and (Ch'a 89).

¹² Hwang Yu-bok was a visiting scholar of the Harvard-Yenching Institute from Sep. 1987 to Jun. 1988. This research report was turned in to the institute in Oct. 1988.

People who decided to stay in this country [China] permanently had the desire to develop their own culture here” (Hwang 97-98).

Hwang Yu-bok sees the period from 1945 to the 1950s as the transitional moment of the formation of Korean Chinese identity. This understanding is based on the historical movements both in China and in Korea during that period. After World War II (hereafter WWII,) both China and Korea experienced civil war. In China, the establishments of the PRC in 1949 and of the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture in 1952 officially recognized Korean Chinese citizenry and ethnicity in China. In Korea, the Korean War that started in 1951 continued until 1953. In the end, the 3.8 military demarcation line has divided the Peninsula into two countries, the Republic of Korea (ROK, South Korea) and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK, North Korea). In his essay “China’s Ethnic Korean Culture and Kmerican Culture of America” Hwang Yu-bok says “current Korean Chinese culture should be distinguished from that of the Korean Peninsula and of Chinese Han culture” (Hwang 122).

Kim Ho-ung’s study of the Korean diaspora is much based on Stuart Hall’s multi-culturalism that directly contrasts Hwang Yu-bok’s assertion of “100% *Chosŏnjok*.” In his essay “Cultural Identity and Diaspora” Hall indicates that the view “common historical experiences and shared cultural codes” could serve to build a community’s “oneness” or a sort of cultural “essence” is insufficient (Hall 223). Hall argues that “cultural identity” is not an “accomplished” entity but “undergo[es] constant transformation” (ibid. 225). In discussing the Korean diaspora, following Hall, Kim Ho-ung confines the term “diaspora” neither to the

Jewish exile history nor to Hwang Yu-bok's "100% Chosŏnjok," rather, he advocates cultural diversity and hybridity. In his further discussion on the term "hybridity," Kim Ho-ung identifies Yanbian as a "third region/space." Third space, a term attributed to the post-colonialist Homi Bhabha, is a production of hybrid culture and a result of mimicry between colonized and colonizers. Colonial relationships are not the sphere of my discussion, but it can be understood as unbalanced power relationships between two cultures. Cultural differences exist everywhere, as Kim Ho-ung says, but this does not mean the two cultures have to share equal measures.

Etymologically, the term "diaspora" originated from the Greek verb "speiro" which means "scattering" or "disperse" (Bergsten, Choi 10). From the origin of the word "speiro" itself, there is no religious connection. However, in early period, the term "diaspora" was widely used to refer to the Jewish exile. Based on the biblical record, the Jewish diaspora indeed has a long history, which started even before Christ. Because of this historical background, many people understand that the term diaspora must be a religious term. In this sense, Hwang Yu-bok's understanding of "diaspora" relies on its early definition.

However, since "[l]anguage is dynamic, always adapting and changing in response to, or in adaption of, broader changes in society," "the meanings of terms and concepts [also] change" when "larger changes occur in society" (Oakes & Price 207). Thus, we should not neglect the changes that motivate us to study a cultural phenomenon in a new social context. The term "diaspora," under the accelerated trend of globalization and transnationalism, has been

reexamined and redefined by many scholars. For example, as Bauböck and Faist have pointed out in *Diaspora and Transnationalism: Concepts, Theories and Methods*, it is hard to demarcate the boundary between the two terms “transnationalism” and “diaspora.” In my personal point of view, the term “diaspora” defines a transnational ethnic group’s collective identity that has been formulated through their migration history rather than personal border crossing activity. Thus, if the term “transnationalism” refers to all kinds of border crossing activities, the term “diaspora” should be understood as a particular transnational phenomenon, which is historically proved collectivity of an ethnic group. In the same vein, since Korean Chinese as a transnational ethnic group have developed their history in China for more than one hundred years, their culture and literature should be considered as part of the Korean diaspora. As I discussed in the previous section, the Yanbian Korean community is representative of such a concept of diaspora.

Concerning the debate between Hwang Yu-bok and Kim Ho-ung, Ch’a Söng-yön, professor of Kyöng-hi University, argues that there are no substantial differences between the two scholars’ understanding of Korean Chinese. The reason is that both Hwang Yu-bok and Kim Ho-ung emphasize “Korean Chinese people’s Chinese nationality,” and at the same time, “recognize[ing] the importance of developing ethnic Korean culture” (Ch’a 89).¹³ Ch’a Söng-yön further argues that, for the debate, the overall linking question is “how to

¹³ See “The Representation of ‘South Korea’ and ‘Diasporic Identity’ in Korean Chinese Literature: A Discourse on Hō Yōn-sun’s Novels.” *Studies of Korean Chinese Humanities*. Vol. 31. Korea. 2010.

understand the relationship between Korean Chinese and South Korea” (ibid. 90). For this question, she says that both Hwang Yu-bok and Kim Ho-ung keeps its distance from South Korea since both of them “identify China as the only homeland for current and future Korean Chinese generations” (ibid.). In so doing, Ch’a Sŏn-yŏn says, they can continuously contextualize Korean Chinese and their literature in relation to Korean diaspora and to world literature.

For the question of where the Korean Chinese home is, I propose a multi-layer conception of home. In this thesis, my discussion of home is beyond the sense of architecture. Following Gustafson and Dovey, my understanding of home is “a series of connection[s]” between self and others, “between person and world” and “a place where our identity is continually evoked through connections with the past” and future (Dovey 42- 43). In relation to identity, home is “very much a dynamic and fluid concept” (Hall & Muller 87). Like Hwang Yu-bok’s and Kim Ho-ung’s assertion, China is indeed a home of Korean Chinese. From a cultural perspective, for Korean Chinese, China is the host homeland. Or as the South Korean scholar Yim Kyŏng-sun argues, “Politically, for the Korean Chinese who were born in China after 1949, their homeland is China” (Li & Han 254). Although not everyone “necessarily” has the need of recognizing “multiple representations of home” (Hall & Muller 87.), I argue that, as a group of diasporas, Korean Chinese can and should take some different positions in identifying their own meaning of home. By so doing, they can have a better understanding for their past, present, and future. Like Dovey’s emphasis on the mutual interaction between home and identity, “[w]e not only give a sense of

identity to the place we call home, but we also draw our identity from that of the place” (Dovey 41).

CHAPTER TWO: MAPPING RETURN MIGRATION IN *WINDFLOWER*

In his essay “Diasporas in Modern Societies,” William Safran lists a series of characteristics of the term “diaspora.” Dispersed from a “center” to multi-foreign countries, world diasporas not only share collective memories of their communities but also “continue in various ways to relate [to] that homeland” (83-84). In contemporary transnational and global conditions, increasing number of world diasporas are now searching for home through physical, social, cultural, and border crossing movements. In this sense, the current term diaspora bears a dialectic understanding, namely, a dispersion and a return of an ethnic group. Therefore, searching for home, to world diasporas, essentially means a return migration to their original homeland.

Searching for home is a long-term multigenerational task that is associated with one’s identity and challenges it both personally and collectively. Since neither individual identity nor community identity is a static one, world diasporas produce and reproduce their cultural identities in the process of searching for home. Therefore, certain generational differences and relationships are inevitable in this process. As a production of diaspora, generational differences may offer an understanding of how the first generation’s memory in their original homeland influences to the second generation’s identity formation. At the same time, compared with first generation diasporas, second generation

diasporas retain some ambivalence between their host and home cultures.

Hö Yŏn-sun's novel *Windflower* invites readers to take the perspective of Korean Chinese return journey from China to Korea. In the novel, the main protagonist Hong Chi-ha, a second generation Korean Chinese journalist and novelist from Yanbian, visits his father Hong Pŏm-san's homeland *Kyongsangbuk-to Talsŏng-gun Tasan-myŏn* in Korea to fulfill his father's lifetime wish—to return home to Korea. This novel takes place in the early 1990s when some significant historical movements took place within the diplomatic relationship between China and South Korea. Unlike North Korea, which established the diplomatic relationship with China immediately after the foundation of the People's Republic of China, South Korea first began economic communication with China in 1978. That same year China set up its economic reform and open market policies, but the two countries' diplomatic relationship was not officially constructed until 1992 (Yang 1622). Another significant moment was the 1988 Summer Olympics held in Seoul, South Korea. The game was broadcast in China, and served as a great opportunity for Chinese people to learn about the other part of the Korean Peninsula. For Korean Chinese in particular, this broadcasting brought a new hope that more and more people could travel back to their homeland Korea in the near future. After this event, the number of Korean Chinese people who visited South Korea to find their South Korean families, increased significantly. 1990s South Korea suddenly became a public site where Korean Chinese people and native Koreans met.

But due to the different living environments between Korean Chinese and South Koreans, which are under the two “different national ideologies and policies” (socialism in China and capitalism in South Korea,) certain conflicts occurred between Korean Chinese people and native Koreans. Hŏ Yŏn-sun’s *Windflower* witnesses such an encounter between the two groups of people. In this chapter, I will focus on two related issues. First, I will discuss how the image of the original homeland has been produced and represented by the protagonist Hong Chi-ha’s father Hong Pŏm-san, a first generation Korean Chinese. Then, I will further discuss how the generational relationships of the family have been represented in the process of Hong Chi-ha’s searching for home in Korea. At the same time, I will focus on how Hong Chi-ha deals with his “confusion and conflict” with South Koreans he encounters in the novel.

2.1 “BUCOLIC” KOREA AS THE IDEAL HOMELAND

For diasporic people, as Safran states, their original homeland is an “idealized” space to which “either they or their descendants should return” (84). Kang Chin-gu, professor of Chung-Ang University in South Korea, also says that drawing an idealized homeland is typical in diasporic memory (Kang 110). He indicates that although diasporic people visualize their homeland in various ways, in most cases, their portrayal of home is always positive and peaceful regardless of its objective validity (ibid.).

In *Windflower* the image of the original homeland Korea, as Kang Chin-gu argues, is mythologized as a “bucolic” and “tranquil” landscape by Hong Chi-ha’s father Hong Pöm-san. Hong Chi-ha recalls his father’s description of Korea:

There would not be enough words to express his endless pleasure if he [Hong Pöm-san] were able to come South Korea. I [Hong Chi-ha] do not quite know what home means but my father missed it throughout his whole life. He [Hong Pöm-san] never forgot those chestnut trees, narrow paths, lucid brooks, and the weedy hill at the back of his house (Hö 1996: 41-42).

The image of the natural environment and of the bucolic setting portrayed by “chestnut trees,” “narrow paths,” “lucid brooks,” and “weedy hill,” which in reality are quite different from both the space of Yanbian in China and the metropolitan Seoul in Korea, offers Hong Chi-ha a frame of reference regarding the home country of Korea. The landscape not only romanticizes Hong Pöm-san’s old home in Korea but also projects the space as a memory that he himself used to belong to. At the same time, despite the fact that mythologized homeland does not exist in reality, its aesthetic and sentimental beauty recalls and symbolizes the land as a “mother’s care” (ibid. 42).

Hong Pöm-san’s main concern in Hö Yön-sun’s *Windflower* also can be understood in the context of “environmental consciousness.” According to Stephen Hussey and Paul Thompson, “environmental consciousness” has a long tradition in literature. Since human life on a large basis depends on and involves environmental systems, there are great “symbolic and practical relationships

between people and their environments,” which are much indebted to (both written and oral) personal narratives (Hussey & Thompson 2). For Kang Chin-gu’s understanding, the personal narrative of Hong Pöm-san’s memory of “bucolic” Korea greatly relies on the character’s consciousness about home. It is a response and reaction to Hong Pöm-san’s internal concern about his life and living environment in his homeland of South Korea.

Kang Chin-gu’s argument about the diasporic home-consciousness, however, does not offer an explanation for why people tend to remember their original homeland positively despite the fact that they have left their country due to difficult situations in their homeland. This idealization of home is defined by Avtar Brah as “homing desire.” In her book *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*, Brah distinguishes the term “homing desire” from “a desire for a homeland.” Following Paul Gilroy’s articulation of “roots and routs,” Brah argues that not all diasporas desire to return to their original home, but a “homing desire” is certainly related to “political and personal struggle over the social regulation of ‘belonging’” (Brah 174). In this sense, the image of “bucolic” Korea can be understood as Hong Pöm-san’s “desire for intimacy and a sense of belonging” in his cultural homeland (ibid. 59). Also, the interaction between Hong Pöm-san’s close attachments to his homeland and Hong Chi-ha’s recollections of his father deepens the discourse of Korean identity into a generational discussion.

Such visions of home-consciousness help construct an idealized national image of Korea in which myth and reality interact mutually. However, some may

argue that one's individual experience and memory may not be enough to represent a community's collective memory. In order to clarify this doubt, in the following section, I will discuss a widely known Korean song "Spring Season of My Home" as the subtext. My comparison Hong Pöm-san's homeland of Korea and the Korea represented in "Spring Season of My Home" is based on the common historical past that the two texts share--the historical circumstances of colonized Korea, which was under the pressure of Japanese rule between 1910 and 1945. The image of Hong Pöm-san's "bucolic" Korea is precisely represented in this song.

My home was in a blooming mountain valley

Peach, apricot blossoms, and baby azaleas

Such a colorful palace with the flowers

I am dreaming of those playful days in my home.

Village of flowers, village of birds was my old home

The sweet wind from the Southern green field

Danced with the willows on the side of the creek

I am dreaming of those playful days in my home.¹⁴

¹⁴ This Korean song has been unofficially translated into English in many different versions. I translated the song in my own way but partly adapted those versions of translations. This song was composed by the composer and pianist Hong Nan-p'a (1898-1941).

This children's poem was written to commemorate the poet's father who passed away in 1925 and the place *Sodab-ri Kyongsangnam-to Ch'angwŏn* in Korea where the author Yi Wŏn-su (1911-1981) spent his childhood. Published in 1926 in the magazine *Child (Ŏrini 어린이)*, this poem depicts a teenager's nostalgia toward for the "blooming" countryside. Identifying the bucolic home as a past image, each stanza of the poem begins with a statement on "my old home." On the one hand, the poet optimistically celebrates the natural beauty of "my home" through the eyes of a child, which enables the aesthetic moment to be filled with a sense of naiveté and innocence. As the poet recalls in his essay "Please Listen to My Words," he, as a growing boy of that time, did not "quite realize the beauty of the landscape but happily played with" his friends (255). On the other hand, the juvenile poet reveals a yearning for the lost "playful days." This underlining sentimentalism arises not simply because the poet no longer lives in his "old home," but because his childhood home is set in the historical circumstances of Korea at that time. Although it is not overly stated, the poem implies the Korean people's sorrowful emotion and deep longing to return to the period before the colonization of Korea by Japan.

By signing the Annexation Treaty between Korea and Japan on Aug. 22, 1910, Korea lost its sovereignty to Japan. A number of Korean peasants and Korean fighters for independence crossed the border to come to China, settling mostly in the Yanbian region, which became "a favorite destination for many Korean nationalist refugees" (Olivier 7). Furthermore, from the late 1930s, the Japanese empire attempted to expand its control to Asia and to the Pacific. As a

subsidiary stratagem, during WWII, Japan forced Korean young men and women into labor. Men were usually drafted into the Japanese army, and women were mostly coerced to serve as “comfort women” for the military. Since Japan had to handle both the second Sino-Japanese War and WWII, the empire also recruited women from its own country and Taiwan, a colony of Japan at that time. In 1938, the Japanese empire published the National Mobilization Law 国家总动员法 to legitimize their recruitments in Korea. According to the statistical result, “[b]y 1944, 270,000 Koreans allegedly did military service in the Japanese force” (Kleiner 42).

In *Windflower*, Hong Pöm-san was one of the victims forced to serve in the Japanese military in China. Soon after his marriage in Korea, Hong Pöm-san came to Manchuria in 1944, one of the years that the Japanese recruitment was most seriously rampant. After 1945, the Chinese government decided to return all Japanese soldiers including their Korean drafts to Japan. Hong Pöm-san was afraid that he might never be able to go back to Korea if he were sent to Japan, so he escaped from the P.O.W. camp in order to return to Korea later. But since the Korean Peninsula had been divided into two countries, the Republic of Korea (ROK, South) and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK, North), Hong Pöm-san never gained a chance to return his homeland.

Korea’s colonial history left its scar imprint on the nation, and undeniably, it was overshadowed the previous image of homeland Korea. The song “Spring Season of My Home,” which has been widely disseminated and sung by world Koreans till today, has sublimated the image of “bucolic” Korea into a national

representation. By highlighting the hometown as a “palace” with “flowers” and “birds,” the idealized national image of Korea is visualized and memorized. Memory, especially collective memory is important in a diasporic discourse not simply because it helps recall the past but because it merges one’s fragmented past and present together, and celebrates a new birth of one’s identity. As has often been said, “most people have an interest in loosing memory.” What concerned first-generation Korean Chinese Hong Pöm-san the most was his Korean identity that was strongly tied to the missing and absent site of “bucolic” Korea. For him, therefore, recalling his homeland Korea before 1944, the year he came to China, functions as a means of returning to the lost past, the untouchable homeland, and fulfilling his “homing desire.”

2.2 THE ROUTE OF SEARCHING FOR FAMILY ROOTS

By producing the “bucolic” image of Korea as an idealized homeland, Hong Pöm-san passed on his home-consciousness to his son Hong Chi-ha who was born and raised in China. Although Hong Chi-ha constantly emphasizes his identity in the novel, sometimes he could not quite understand why his father Hong Pöm-san could not forget the homeland Korea in his whole life (Hö 1996: 42), he does not deny his Korean heritage at all. The route of Hong Chi-ha’s searching for his family roots in Korea is the realization of his father’s lifelong dream of returning to his home country. In this process, a generational, patriarchal atmosphere is underlined throughout the novel. The portrait of Hong Chi-ha’s father and grandfather, is prominent as an icon of tracing Hong Chi-ha’s

family roots. The novel *Windflower*, therefore, embodies a strong sense of Korean cultural tradition, filiality and loyalty that binds Hong Chi-ha's family relationship together.

In addition to Hong Chi-ha's searching for family root, the journey reflects both generational and gendered relationships that privilege men. A typical example is that, in *Windflower*, Korea is constantly regarded as an eternal homeland of Hong Pöm-san, whereas the host country China, as a temporal space—"a home where his mother lives." Furthermore, the ancestral lineage in *Windflower* is depicted in vertical relationship. After arriving in Korea, Hong Chi-ha's first destination to look for his family root is the *Taegu* city in *Kyongsangbuk-do* where his father's hometown *Talsöng-gun Tasan-myön* is located. Hong Chi-ha's encounter with his grandfather's old friend who still lives in the village not merely reveals a possible clue for the whereabouts of Hong Chi-ha's Korean family but also reiterates the importance of father-son relationships. Responding to the senior's commandment "it is so great that you come from overseas, which is far away from Korea to seek your root," Hong Chi-ha says "Leaves still belong to the root of the tree even after they flutter down" (Hö 1996: 36). The botanical metaphor of a tree gives insight into the inseparable relationship between "leaves" and the "roots" that sustain a tree's life. Hong Chi-ha's reply implies that there are no "leaves" without "roots." This attributive linkage between "leaves" and the "roots" of a tree as a vision of the family tree represents the generational relationship of grandfather Hong Sun-bo, father Hong Pöm-san, and son Hong Chi-ha.

Hong Chi-ha's efforts to look for his Korean family roots go through many stages. As a journalist and novelist in Yanbian, Hong Chi-ha has published a novella entitled as *Roots* that deals with his family history. Interestingly, Hong Chi-ha's career as a novelist parallels that of the author Hǒ Yǒn-sun, and to some extent, Hong Chi-ha can be seen as the embodiment of Hǒ Yǒn-sun. Like many Korean Chinese people in 1989, for the first time, Hǒ Yǒn-sun travelled in Korea for the purpose of visiting her relatives. But during her time in Korea, she spent most of her time reading Korean novels and meeting with Korean literati there. This became a significant inspiration to her novelist career. After this travel in Korea, Hǒ Yǒn-sun decided to resign from the governmental Yanji Cultural Affair Bureau (Yanjishi wenhuaju 延吉市文化局) and became a full time novelist. In his essay "A Critical Review of Hǒ Yǒn-sun's Novels" Kim Kwan-ung writes that Hǒ Yǒn-sun's 1989 visit to Seoul and her later study abroad in Korea gave her an opportunity to deeply think about Korean Chinese identity, and provided her with a basis for writing diasporic novels (8). Not only as a novelist but also as a Korean Chinese descendant who experienced the dynamics of both Korea and China in the end of 20th century, Hǒ Yǒn-sun conveys her autobiographic voice in the novel *Windflower*.

Hǒ Yǒn-sun's accommodation of "roots" into the novel *Windflower* and the intertwined metaphorical book title of Hong Chi-ha's novella *Roots* reflect each other in remembering and continuing their ancestral history. We can find this intention as early as in the Preface to *Windflower*. At the very beginning, Ho Yon-sun writes:

I am a rootless windflower. I was always struggling in between the two spaces where wind blows in and out. As always, there were no places I could stay, and I had to flow from one place to another with my memories, forgetfulness, and resentment. I was always in between the two worlds and sometimes I tried to escape from there. Then, who was I, and who am I?" (Hö 1996: 7)

Except this preface, the majority of the novel is written in a third person narrative. The ambiguous narrator "I" who wanders in between "the two worlds," China and Korea, juxtaposes itself to "a rootless windflower." It can be seen as either the author Hö Yŏn-sun or the main protagonist Hong Chi-ha, or any Korean Chinese who have had an identity question about his/her diasporic circumstances, but Hö Yŏn-sun does not clearly indicate who the I-narrator is.

A critical issue that runs through Hong Chi-ha's journey in Korea is cultural conflict between Yanbian people and native Koreans. According to Fredrik Fahlander, often "a higher rate of confusion and conflict occur[s] when people do not share the same tradition or language" (Cornell & Fahlander 15). Although Korean Chinese people and native Koreans share the same language and cultural tradition, their living environments in two different nation-states for decades inevitably involve the people in certain "confusion and conflict." Such "confusion and conflict" as a product of cultural difference can be explained by the term heterogeneity. Heterogeneity, a term prevalently discussed in cultural studies, means the state of something consists of diversity or difference.

“The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation. The ‘right’ to signify from the periphery of authorized power and privilege does not depend on persistence of tradition; it is resourced by the power of tradition to be reinscribed through the conditions of contingency and contradictoriness that attend upon the lives of those who are ‘in minority’. The recognition that tradition bestows is a partial form of identification” (Bhabha 36).

In Homi Bhabha’s terms, heterogeneity is a progressive state associated with “hybrid culture.” According to Bhabha, the production of hybrid culture requires time and is shaped by contradictions and negotiations. Hong Chi-ha’s trip to Korea is remarkable because through this trip he recognizes the existing cultural differences between Korean Chinese and native Koreans. These differences are especially evident after his meeting with his father Hong Pöm-san’s Korean family, An Pun-nö, Hong Pöm-san’s Korean wife and Hong Söng-pyo, Hong Chi-ha’s half-brother, in Seoul. Both An Pun-nö and Hong Söng-pyo do not want to accept Hong Chi-ha and Hong Pöm-san as their family members. Rather, they blame Hong Chi-ha’s improper manner of drinking coffee, and accuse Hong Chi-ha of being a swindler who attempts to cheat them. Besides this, Hong Chi-ha constantly has conflicts with the Korean character O Tu-sök who works with Hong Chi-ha on a fishing boat for several months. O Tu-sok does not like Korean Chinese people and directly expresses his “dislikes” to Hong Chi-ha, which

evokes a quarrel between the two. Hong Chi-ha's understanding of a homogeneous Korean culture gradually changes.

Both Bhabha's and Fahlander's articulations of cultural differences are connected to the discourse of power relations. Fahlander emphasizes the importance of recognizing that "most social collectives are heterogeneous and consist of a series of individuals and groups with different means of agency and power" (Fahlander 18). As Suzanne Gearhart¹⁵ writes, the "question of minority cultures is inseparable from a question of power" (Lionnet & Shih 28), and an interaction between two groups, or a group's control over the other group is possible but it does not mean the two groups must be equal.¹⁶ In order to change the relationship between Yanbian people and native Koreans, Hong Chi-ha makes his own efforts to disclose and negotiate some unfair issues. After he has heard that seventeen Korean Chinese people caught by the Seoul police due to their illegal status and their subsequent escape from the police station causing some unexpected injuries, Hong Chi-ha publishes an article entitled "The Inhospitability from Native Koreans" to a newspaper in Korea. In his interview with a Korean broadcasting station reporter, Hong Chi-ha describes the incident is "a national tragedy" (Hö 1996: 155). This event was related to the Law of Ethnic Koreans Abroad (Aug. 1999) which states that Koreans who immigrated to overseas countries before the foundation of South Korea were excluded from the

¹⁵ Suzanne Gearhart is professor of French and Italian at the University of California, Irvine. See "Inclusions: Psychoanalysis, Transnationalism, and Minority Cultures" in *Minor Transnationalism*. 27-40.

¹⁶ In her essay Gearhart also says that the "major" and "minor" relationship is subversive, and therefore, "minor" does not mean "periphery."

category of overseas Koreans. Based on this law, the descendants of Korean Chinese and of Russian Koreans were excluded from the category of overseas Koreans, since most Korean Chinese and Russian Korean people left the Korean Peninsula in the earlier period of 1948, the year South Korea was established (Li & Han 140). Because of this exclusion, many Korean Chinese people entered Korea with an illegal status. In the novel, Hong Chi-ha argues that all ethnic Koreans should be understood as people who share the same heritage (Hö 1996: 156).

Toward the end of the novel, Hong Chi-ha gradually realizes the impasse of his Korean family reunion. His grandfather's death also brings Hong Chi-ha's journey to an end. The novel ends with Hong Chi-ha's returning to Yanbian with the Yanbian girl Yun Mi-yŏn rather than with the Korean girl Sŏ Ŭn-mi who helped him to look for his grandfather while in Korea. This decision marks a turning point in Hong Chi-ha's search for home. While the novel does not describe Hong Chi-ha's future in Yanbian, the continuing romance between Hong Chi-ha and Yun Mi-yŏn—"the gloomy, foggy winter is ending and spring is upon us"—sends a hopeful message to readers (Hö 1996: 371). Kang Chin-gu states the ending as Hö Yŏn-sun's "making a new home" (Kang 119). Although Kang understands Hö's purpose in "making a new home" he is skeptical of this project's success. Kang Chin-gu believes the answer can be found in Hö Yŏn-sun's *Who Saw a Butterfly's Nest* which he believes provides counter-evidences that many Korean Chinese still leave their host homeland China (ibid.).

If Hong Chi-ha's return to Yanbian, as Kang Chin-gu says, were his way of "making a new home," I would argue that this should not be understood as a onetime "project" but as part of the process of Korean Chinese searching for home and authentic identity. As Korean Chinese critic Ch'oi Sam-ryong writes in his essay "Korea and Koreans in Korean Chinese Novels," "due to the complexity and conflict of social and cultural environments, Korean Chinese people's involvement in Korean society will not be easy, it needs both sides' mutual concern for each other" (Li & Han 22).

Even though the novel *Windflower* in a large part deals with the "confusion and conflicts" between Hong Chi-ha and his South Korean family as well as other South Koreans, we still can find some possibilities of negotiation between Korean Chinese people and native Koreans. Hong Chi-ha's reconciliation with the South Korean guy O Tu-sök and O Tu-sök's transition from hatred to love of Korean Chinese is one of such examples. Near the end of the novel, O Tu-sök marries Hong Chi-ha's ex-wife Go Ae-ja. There are both positive and negative perspectives for the two characters. The negative perspective is that by deciding to stay in Korea, Go Ae-ja has turned into a money worshiper. The positive perspective is that O Tu-sök's acceptance of a Korean Chinese wife represents reconciliation between Korean Chinese and South Koreans.

CHAPTER THREE: HOME AS IDENTITY IN *WHO SAW A BUTTERFLY'S NEST*

As I briefly discussed at the very beginning of this thesis, there is a certain connection between the concepts of home and identity. This relationship can be understood as Gustafson's "three pole triangular model." According to Gustafson, the social interactions among self, others, and a place enables us to trace an individual's "sense of place" and meaningful relationship with others within an environment (Gustafson 9-11). Since home is where the heart is, the notion of home is a feeling and a reflection of one's psyche more than an image of a physical construction. At the same time, the term identity can be defined by answering the question of who you are and/or what you are. Questions about identity are always "associate[ed] with forging one's own character ... and engag[ing] with others," "[i]dentity is at once a very personal issue and a very social one" (Cresswell, Dixon 67). Such an integration of self, others, and a place can be understood as the definition of "home as identity."

"Home as identity is primarily affective and emotional," and people are always longing to be at home (Dovey 40). Then, what does it mean to feel at home? Both a feeling of homesickness and a sense of stability reflect the basic human need for a place called home. But searching for a place to call home is a difficult task for all human beings. It is even more challenging for the diasporic people who live as members of an ethnic minority group in a country. As

Kimberly Dovey, architectural critic and professor of Architecture and Urban Design at the University of Melbourne, argues, home as identity “is not just a matter of the representation of a self-image of a world view; it also entails an important component that is supplied by the site itself” (ibid. 41). Therefore, the association of home with one’s identity embodies a sense of dwelling in the world as a way of human existence.

Having been born and raised in Yanbian, the protagonists in *Who Saw a Butterfly’s Nest*, look for a home outside China. They are seven ethnic Koreans, including the main protagonists An Se-hi and her childhood friend Song Yu-söp, and one Chinese character who was adopted into and raised in a Korean Chinese family. What does their birthplace Yanbian mean to them? How does the new home that the characters look for in the novel differ from Yanbian? In their 15-day journey from China to Korea, these characters share tortuous experiences and are filled with anxiety and fear for their lives in Yanbian. The characters constantly question their identities and look for a home that belongs to them.

In this chapter, I will discuss how the Korean Chinese characters manage and negotiate their return to Korea, how they remember their life in China as minority, and what function their memory as Korean Chinese serves as a context of their return narrative. The purpose of scrutinizing how and in what way the characters interpret their own meaning of home is the main goal of this chapter.

3.1 THE FISHING BOAT AS A MINIATURE KOREAN CHINESE SOCIETY

In the early 2000s, Korean Chinese attempts of illegal entries to Korea became a social issue reported on both Korea's and China's media. Hŏ Yŏn-sun's novel *Who Saw a Butterfly's Nest* reveals and reflects this problematic social issue. After a lapse of 7 years between her discussion of Korean Chinese "root-seeking" migration in *Windflower*, Hŏ Yŏn-sun explores another Korean Chinese return migration in *Who Saw a Butterfly's Nest*. By addressing the subject of looking for home, Hŏ Yŏn-sun presents her novel *Who Saw a Butterfly's Nest* as a claim for personal identity for the subaltern immigrants who have suffered from cultural conflict and assimilation and lost their voice in China's Han-majority society. In her essay "The Consciousness of Modernity in Post-1990s Korean Chinese Novels," Oh Sŭng-hi, professor of Kyŏng-hi University in Korea, says that if the previous Korean Chinese literature focused on dealing with the dilemma of Korean Chinese dual identities between their cultural homeland and host homeland, the narrative of Hŏ Yŏn-sun's *Who Saw a Butterfly's Nest* is an achievement that delves into the very personal aspect of Yanbian ethnic Koreans' everyday life (Li & Han 196). The narrative of searching for home in *Who Saw a Butterfly's Nest*, however, is not written to extend the author's compassion only. In a deeper sense, it criticizes the eight characters' obsession to "go to Korea" and to achieve their "Korean dream" in an unlawful way as a tremendous social ill.

The novel *Who Saw a Butterfly's Nest* begins with the eight characters concealing themselves as stowaways on a fishing boat at a harbor of Ningbo in China after over a month's wait to cross the Korean border. From the boat,

an offensive odor greets one's nose. It was a smell accumulated year by year, and a smell that mirrors the cruel and desperate history of the boat. If it were not a fishing boat to go off to the sea but a famous painter's picture on a Chinese drawing paper or an exhibit of a museum, it must be definitely appreciated for its long standing. Artists may put positive comments about the boat as a masterpiece that embraces the joys and sorrows of the Korean people even though it is faded and old. However, at least for now, it is not a work of art, it is standing here with a curse of death and disaster (Hö 2004: 9).

Rather than a protective image, the fishing boat in *Who Saw a Butterfly's Nest* shows its vulnerability. Facing the sea's uncontrollable violence, the rickety boat becomes a demarcation between life and death and a threat to the stowaways. The eight people initially suffer a dilemma of whether or not to take this boat, but at the moment, this boat is the only option that they can rely on for their trip to *Wan-to* in Korea. By gathering the characters from different regions together and sharing their everyday life as well as their traumatic past experiences, the "narrow and dark" space of the fishing boat that connects the characters' past and present is a miniature image of Korean Chinese society.

In literature, the image of a boat has been symbolized in a variety of ways. For example, as a means of transportation on water, the boat image essentially represents a journey from one place to another, either physically or spiritually. In his book *The Great Mother: An Analysis of the Archetype*, Erich Neumann introduces the image of boat as an archetype of “salvation,” “protection,” and the symbol of mother (45).¹⁷ Neumann’s articulation of ship as a maternal symbol basically comes from the “character of vessel” which functions as protection.¹⁸ By contrast, the boat image also has the meaning of death (ibid. 258), namely, a lifetime journey from birth to death.¹⁹ In Neumann’s terms, therefore, the boat image signifies both salvation and death.

Boat imagery as a symbol of human life can also be found in Korean literature. The image of boat has been prevalently paralleled with the human desire to live an integritous and a harmonious life with nature especially in traditional Korean literature. *Chosŏn* Dynasty Shijo (시조 traditional three-stanza Korean poetry) poet Prince Wŏl-san’s “Night Falls on the Autumn River 추강에 밤이 드니 Ch’ugang’e pami tŭni” is a good example of such imagery.

¹⁷ Erich Neumann (1905-1960), a German psychologist and philosopher, was a student of Swiss psychiatrist Carl G. Jung. In this book, Neumann provides a psychological analysis on the symbolic archetypes of mankind. He also traces mythical, religious and etymological origins of the symbols.

¹⁸ According to Neumann, the other evidence for the metaphoric connection between “ship” and “vessel” comes from the roots of different languages. As he says that “[t]he terms for vessel and ship are the same in many languages” (Neumann 256).

¹⁹ For the dead image of a ship, Neumann writes: “[a]s place of birth, as way of salvation, and as ship of the dead, the ship is the wood of the beginning, the middle, and the end” (ibid. 258).

When night falls on the autumn river, the water turns cold

I cast a hook into the cold, but nothing would bite

Loading my boat with the generous moonlight, I return home
empty-handed.

In this three-verse poem, the narrator “I” reveals his resolution not to be blinded by worldly desires. Even though life in this world is difficult, people come and go “empty-handed” like the “empty boat.” The image of the “empty boat” as a form of transportation takes the “I” on his life journey alone.

Visualizing and exploring Korean Chinese society, the image of the fishing boat in *Who Saw a Butterfly's Nest* entails both positive and negative aspects of symbolic meanings, as a vehicle and as a death threat. More importantly, this binary image accompanies the characters' mentality throughout the novel. For readers, it is a reference point reflecting the mood and condition of characters in the boat. However, the dominant imagery of the boat, as we can see from the opening scene, is quite pessimistic. After they board the boat, the characters wish to pop open a bottle of Champaign to celebrate the good start of their trip to Korea. However, the novel exposes this event as a cover for the inner anxiety and tension of the characters. Their fear is uncovered by the woman character Mal-suk from the Wangqing County in Yanbian. Unlike the characters that celebrate their fortune, Mal-suk inauspiciously doubts the very little likelihood of the success of this journey. She is the only character who has tried to smuggle herself into Korea many times after her only son is unfairly sentenced to death.

Also, she is the only person who can give an immediate explanation whenever a new event happens in the boat, but there is always a tacit warning following her words. To some extent, Mal-suk's tortured psyche infuses this journey with a predictable result.

Mal-suk's unstable mentality also makes her as an unreliable character who lacks the capability of recognizing and dealing with the problems she faced through her life in Yanbian. For example, she thinks herself as a helpless mother. Living in extreme poverty, Mal-suk is not able to satisfy his son's last wish to eat instant noodles before the implementation of his death penalty. In her understanding, leaving Yanbian and going to Korea is a way of finding a solution to poverty. For this reason, she displays an abnormal obsession with her dream to go to Korea as the inevitable life path. As she says in the novel, she will keep trying to travel to Korea until she successfully steps on the soil of that country.

As a resemblance of the ills of Korean Chinese society, the image of the fishing boat highlights the characters' subaltern status. For women characters in particular, the female protagonist An Se-hi is the central figure. An Se-hi is a peripheral but unusual woman in her middle ages. As a single parent, she fulfills both paternal and maternal roles for her two sons who were born by two different biological fathers. Her marginalized status is defined not so much by her minority identity, but rather, more pressure comes from by her difficult financial situations in parenting two sons by herself. Hō Yōn-sun's treatment of An Se-hi's career and of the means of her living is opaque even though she is definitely the most important character in the novel. Perhaps the reason for this vagueness of her

career is to provide for the novel and An Se-hi an anxiety-ridden result to take the boat to go to Korea by enduring the tremendous death threat.

An Se-hi's journey to Korea, in both geographical and symbolic considerations, is an attempt to escape from her fragmented, chaotic past and present life and of looking for "a new home" where she really belongs (Hö 2004: 12). Having experienced a parentless and sexually abusive childhood, and unsmooth marriages (and divorces) with three men in her adult years, An Se-hi suffers from lack of love and from lack of a whole family. It is her wish that her two sons would have "a peaceful life." An Se-hi gives them her last name "An 安" which means "peace and calm" in Chinese. From the novel, we can see her ambivalent attitude about the meaning of home. Before her departure from China, An Se-hi regrets her decision to take the boat. The narrator says: "this [China] is the land that she has to return to. Two fatherless sons live here. For her, home is the place where her two sons stay" (ibid.), but at the same time, "it seems that there is another home she really desires" (ibid.).

In this sense, the male character Song Yu-söp's presence in the same fishing boat no doubt plays a meaningful role for An Se-hi's journey as well as enables the narrative of *Who Saw a Butterfly's Nest* constantly to leap back and forth both in space and in time. Throughout her childhood spent in her uncle's home, An Se-hi was isolated by her uncle's family members. The reason was that her parents were suffering from the Cultural Revolution and that fact prevented her cousins from joining the Red Guard. In the village, Song Yu-söp

was the only friend who would play with An Se-hi. Therefore, for An Se-hi, Song Yu-söp was regarded as a guardian icon in her youth.

However, regardless of An Se-hi's multiple inquiries, Song Yu-söp avoids revealing his real identity to An Se-hi until almost very end of the novel. The reason is that Song Yu-söp does not want to let his first love An Se-hi know about his family crisis that he experienced during his growing years. In the novel, Song Yu-söp does not know who his real parents are. Since his previous stepparents left him alone, he was adopted to a new family in a different village. During the years of life in the new family, Song Yu-söp has faced an unexpected the name crisis. His new parents called him as "Yun Song-ch'öl," the name of the new family's dead son. At the same time, his new father's career as a Christian pastor has become an obstacle for him to join the People's Liberation Army. Finally, he decided to leave the family and pretended he was an orphan.

Family is a small unit of a society where people feel safe and protected. In this sense, home "connotes our networks of family" (Brah XV). It is important that the life meaning we learn from childhood with "particular relationships, events, forms of behavior, and social perspectives" ties a strong linkage to our family as well as "a sense of belonging to a community" (ibid. 26). In *Who Saw a Butterfly's Nest*, however, the characters, like Mal-suk, An Se-hi, and Song Yu-söp do not have such "a sense of belonging." In Kim Ho-ung and Kim Kwan-ung's words, these characters essentially have lost a sort of "family homogeneity" (Kim H., Kim K. 87). In the essay "Dual Identities and Literary Narrative" Kim Ho-ung and Kim Kwan-ung say that "family homogeneity" means that a family

essentially has been protected by parents and at least their kid(s) will not have to face a name crisis (ibid.).

Having grown up in incomplete families and as foreign-born member of a diaspora, the people in *Who Saw a Butterfly's Nest* consciously and subconsciously feel the need to search for a way to protect themselves from a series of social and economic oppression in both their host culture and home culture. By gathering the subordinated group of people in one fishing boat, the boat image with the characters together not only explores the ills of the Yanbian Korean Chinese society but also poses the question of whether or not the characters' return migration to Korea is a solution in for looking for the "sense of belonging."

3.2 TWO MILLION "BUTTERFLIES":

A JOURNEY OF SEARCHING FOR "DWELLING"

If the fishing boat in *Who Saw a Butterfly's Nest* represents the symbolic image of Korean Chinese society, the image of butterfly metaphorically refers to two million ethnic Koreans in China. In this novel, Butterfly is a non-human character, a hybrid pet dog, kept by Ch'un-ja, a friend of An Se-hi, first, and by An Se-hi later. Butterfly was called as *Huanhuan* 欢欢 that means "joy and pleasure" in Chinese but has been renamed by An Se-hi's son An Yong-yi as Butterfly. Abandoned at birth, Butterfly is depicted "homeless" representing two million Korean Chinese who have been born and raised outside their cultural

homeland. The metaphoric connectedness of two million Korean Chinese and “butterflies” is inspired from the natural attribute of butterflies, that they lack a home. Rather than dwelling at in place, and move from place to place.

Symbolically, the juxtaposed naming of Butterfly the dog and concept “butterflies” in general, in Kim Kwan-ung’s words, is a picture of the “tragedy of two million homeless missing children.”

I distinguish Kim Kwan-ung’s identification of “homelessness” from the “lack of physical structure in which to live” (O’Mahony 168). In relation to the German philosopher Martin Heidegger’s notion of “dwelling,” I would understand the terms “homeless” and “homelessness” as modes of people’s “thinking and acting” (ibid.). Unlike *Windflower* which traces the route of searching for family roots in one’s cultural homeland, *Who Saw a Butterfly’s Nest* expands the meaning of home to the broader context of human existence in general. The term “dwelling” as a fundamental mode of human beings is first illustrated in Martin Heidegger’s two essays “... Poetically Man Dwells...” (1951) and “Building Dwelling Thinking” (1954). In his works, Heidegger defines, “dwelling” as the process of “building” one’s identity or home. He traces the connection between “dwelling” and “building” back to the old German word “*buan*”. In traditional German language, the verb “*buan*” means both “building” and “dwelling,” which meaning “to remain, to stay in a place” (Meagher 120). As a condition of human existence, “dwelling” pertains to the feeling of safety and “protection” of one’s self and of others, which is defined by Heidegger as “care.” “As human beings, we

cannot fail to dwell, for dwelling, ultimately, is the essential existential core of human being-in-the-world” (Richardson 45).

At the same time, Heidegger also indicates that in order to find one’s “dwelling,” one must first experience the feeling of being “not at home.” In his essay “The World and the Home,” Bhabha explains this condition as the “unhomely” or being “unhomed” (Bhabha 1992: 141). In his terminology, the “unhomely” or being “unhomed is not to be homeless” (ibid.). I view the characters’ “homeless” feature in *Who Saw a Butterfly’s Nest* as an example of Heidegger’s being “not-at-home” and Bhabha’s concept of being “unhomed.” This parallel is reasonable because in the novel, the characters do not look for a house that they can reside but desire a sense of stability. Moreover, for Bhabha, the notion of “home” is “a mode of living made into a metaphor of survival” (Bhabha 1997). Such “a mode of living” accompanies one’s anxiety, fear, and instability on the one hand, and on the other hand, is a process of one’s being at “home in the world” (ibid.). As Stan Chu Ilo, research professor at the Center for World Catholicism and Inter-Cultural Theory of DePaul University, says, we “need to be homeless to appreciate our homes” (Ilo 4). The reason is that “[w]hen people are homeless and realize it, they ask fundamental questions about their life and engage their future in such a way that they seek to find their way to their home” (ibid.). The binary aspect of “being at home” and the “unhomely,” therefore, is inseparable in searching for one’s identity.

In *Who Saw a Butterfly’s Nest*, both An Se-hi’s and Song Yu-söp’s life experience devoid of “family homogeneity” exemplifies an “unhomely” condition

of the characters. Even though both of them have been born and raised in Yanbian for many years, yet, they do “not dwell in home” (Heidegger 1954: 348). It might be because their childhood memory in Yanbian and the place of their torment constantly not only gives them certain pressures but also threatens their life. Their marginalized social position and limited life to their “dark and narrow” society, therefore, urges them to manage their rough life, to change the “unhomed” reality into looking for an ideal home. In this regard, although Heidegger does not mean that the process of building one’s identity or looking for home would equate with the physical journey, in *Who Saw a Butterfly’s Nest*, the journey of the eight characters migration from China to Korea can be seen as a way of searching for their “dwelling” home condition.

In the fishing boat, the eight characters gathering together recall their life in Yanbian. All their memories are filled with the “loss of absolutes.” Unfortunately, these recollection serve as a way of getting over their fear of the tortuous boat environment during their journey from China to Korea. Both in Bhabha’s and Heidegger’s understanding, “being not at home” or the “unhomely” condition is also a state of mind, a mood, and an inner condition, but not necessarily an association with a location. Travelling with a vulnerable boat, fear of death becomes the characters’ primary anxiety. On the boat, An Se-hi understands what her father’s last will really meant. It was a self-consolation and “an escape from the fear of death” (Hö 2004: 85).

I shall return to heaven

The day this beautiful journey ends

I will go and say it was beautiful (ibid.).

Before his death, An Se-hi's father recited Ch'ŏn Shang-pyŏng's²⁰ poem "Return to Heaven." The poet proposes that "heaven" is the place where he came from and where he should return. Compared to eternal "heaven," the life in this world is portrayed a temporal "journey." By expressing the "journey" as a beautiful one, the poem conceals the paradoxical mourning of the loss of human life in its optimistic narrative. In this sense, the characters' fear of death extends to a broader anxiety about human existence. As it says in the novel, "it is not as easy, as the poet says, to face one's death with a peaceful mind as it is to return one's home. Death is a sad thing, for everyone ..." (ibid.).

In terms of searching for home, Hŏ Yŏn-sun's characters experience a journey in between "being" and "death." In the end of the novel, many people in the boat die from suffocation before setting foot on Korea's soil. The answer to the question of the novel's title "who saw a butterfly's nest," is quite negative. Hŏ Yŏn-sun writes in her "Author's Note":

I was in a *Sŏrabŏl* Coffee Shop in Seoul, Korea. Over the window, the Square of *Sŏngbuk* Station was visible. I was watching white snowflakes like butterflies flying. I thought the snowflakes were maybe the souls of butterflies, who were looking for their

²⁰ Ch'ŏn Shang-byŏng (1930-1993), a Korean poet and critic, was born in Japan. The poem "Return to Heaven" is one of his major works.

nests. After that, I could not stop thinking about butterfly's souls and I wanted to give their story a sweet end.

Has anyone ever seen butterfly's nest? Nobody can see that since butterflies do not have nests. However, my protagonists of the novel endlessly look for what is absent" (ibid. 350).

Although Hō Yōn-sun says that her characters always look for "what is absent," it seems that she does not give a decisive ending to the story. The novel ends with a little bird flying into the fishing boat. "That was a Horonis Canturians" (ibid. 349). Horonis Canturians birds inhabit in the countries of China, Korea, Laos, Russia, Thailand, and Vietnam. In order to look for food, these birds build their nests in different places. By using a new metaphor at the end of the novel, Hō Yōn-sun implies that her characters' search for home will be continued and that they will someday find a home where they belong.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this thesis, I have tried to examine Korean Chinese searching for home in relation to identity formation by analyzing Korean Chinese intellectuals' debate on the Korean diaspora and the Korean Chinese writer Hō Yōn-sun's two novels *Windflower* and *Who Saw a Butterfly's Nest*. In *Windflower*, we have seen how the first generation Korean Chinese Hong Pōm-san's consciousness about home influences his son Hong Chi-ha and Hong Chi-ha's return migration to Korea. In the novel, Hong Pōm-san who was born and raised in Korea and came to China in his twenties shows his strong attachment to his original homeland of Korea, which becomes a crucial motivation for Hong Chi-ha to make a return migration. Compared to his father Hong Pōm-san, Hong Chi-ha tends to identify himself as a Chinese but does not exclude his Korean identity. Hong Chi-ha's experience of hybrid culture in between China and Korea has been used to explore "confusions and conflicts" between Korean Chinese and South Koreans. I do not see the gap between Korean Chinese and South Koreans as a negative one, rather, I argue that the process of facing certain conflicts and trying to reconcile the differences is an inevitable "life path" for Korean Chinese searching for home.

Compared to *Windflower*, a broader sense of meaning of home lies in the novel *Who Saw a Butterfly's Nest*, which parallels "home" and "identity" in the

context of human existence. An important notion running through *Who Saw a Butterfly's Nest* is that not only for diasporas but also for all human beings searching for home is a long term life journey from birth to death. Although the motif of the novel is based on the Korean Chinese illegal return migration, the author Hŏ Yŏn-sun constantly questions the meaning of home through her characters. Instead of giving an explicit definition of home, Hŏ Yŏn-sun not only exemplifies an “unhomely” condition by highlighting “homeless” Korean Chinese characters but also suggests we think about how such a condition may guide our understanding on the meaning of home as identity.

Most importantly, both *Windflower* and *Who Saw a Butterfly's Nest* do not directly designate where the Korean Chinese home is. Like the first generation Korean Chinese Hong Pŏm-san in *Windflower*, who imagines the “bucolic” Korea as an ideal homeland, other Korean Chinese characters of the two novels look for an imagined home represented by their ancestral homeland, Korea. This means that for second generation Korean Chinese, home is not a fixed place of origin but a route of anchoring oneself in stability. At the same time, both novels inform the readers of how our surrounding environment influences one’s understanding of the notion of home and identity. For the Korean Chinese characters in *Windflower* and in *Who Saw a Butterfly's Nest*, their journey from China to Korea is a passage to re-recognize their cultural identity, accept their cultural dualities, and look for a position that they can stay “being-at-home.”

As readers, through *Windflower* and *Who Saw a Butterfly's Nest*, we can find Hŏ Yŏn-sun’s practice authorship. For instance, in *Windflower* she shows the

limitation of defining Korean Chinese identity through the one-time route of searching for family roots. For diaspora populations who have been born and lived in their host-homeland, it is difficult to assimilate into either their original homeland culture or host-homeland culture. In *Who Saw a Butterfly's Nest*, Hō Yōn-sun calls readers' attention to the misery of circumstances of the subordinated minorities more than exploring it as a social issue. At the same time, she practices self-criticism on behalf of Korean Chinese society. As the Korean Chinese critic Ch'oe Sam-ryong indicates, "the failure of the 'Korean Dream' is not always the fault of Korea or of Korean people. We should look for the intrinsic reason from ourselves" (Li & Han 30).

Both in reality and in fictional space, Korean Chinese people constantly come and go between China and Korea. As foreign born members of a diaspora and as a minority group in both their host and home countries, for Korean Chinese people, the continuation of their migration journey to look for one's own "homely" status or their settlement in a "third space" is a way of positioning self.

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