

## A Meaning of the Healing Writing Shown in a Text- Focusing on the Movie Titled the Reader (2008) and the Novel Titled Heuksan (2011)

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### Abstract

*This study shows that characters could heal their wounds through a self-therapeutic process. In other words, people who act spontaneously and intensely in the therapeutic literature process positively impacted their therapy mechanism. It demonstrates that people or characters in the context become self-conscious through the consolidation of 'past wounded self' and 'current self' which intend to see the past from a new perspective. The research method of this study is the analysis of characters in the two texts and the process of mental health through these characters analysis is to explore its meaning. We can seek the examples in the text. Hannah and Michael represent the analog-style reading and writing in the era of information technology, and correspond to the main character in Heuksan (黑山) who strolls to interact with nature, writes the memories of the past, and communicates with neighbors. The characters in this study indicate those kinds of lifestyles. With feedback and sympathy, people who participate in the therapeutic literature process can make a meaning and a value in their life which previously consisted of deficiencies in communal values and goals. In conclusion, the object of the therapeutic literature is the consolation-oriented therapy process between two selves; one that a character created and the other that self-expressed.*

**Keywords:** Healing process in writing, Therapeutic literature, The reader, Heuksan, Self-reflection

### 1. Introduction

In the humanities therapy including mental health or counseling, the themes dubbed 'literature as a cure' or 'healing in literature' are receiving attention these days [1]. This flow is adding the new possibilities to a meaning that literature has amidst our life that becomes more and more complicated. New probability here implies to be extended up to a meaning of healing and compensation beyond this, not signifying literature any more just as semantic reading in the dimension of traditional hermeneutics. That is to say, people who regard literature as cure and healing consider that it can be expanded into the process of becoming an author oneself (Der Autor) when being exposed to a text, reading a meaning, or reproducing own text on it, and of becoming a reader (Der Leser) of own text at the same time through interpreting it. Accordingly, a reader or a participant [2] in a literary text becomes the author and the reader simultaneously in the reading process and the treatment chapter.

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According to a change in this flow, a counselee or a client in counseling or psychotherapy is used as a person of autonomously joining the text work, namely as a concept dubbed a participant in the literary healing sphere. Hence, a participant is defined as ‘a human being with creative vitality or sense (die Anthropologie des schöpferischen Menschen),’ rather than being deemed as an object or a case (case, der Fall) that will receive treatment due to having a problem. In other words, the participant here is accepted as ‘the human subject that is remained a healthy part, not a sick person’.

Consequently, this study aims to examine the healing vitality and factors, which appeared in the healing texts, through the process of life in characters, and also to explore how it can be applied and comprehended actually in literary therapy. Also, the objective is to compare and analyze how different and similar the text as a cure, which is indicated in a literary text, is from the participants’ texts in the actual literary therapy. This is what inquire into how the literature as a cure and the healing in text proceed with constructing its meaning, as well as with which method the healing process and the reconciliation process are available. The reason is that this process is just a new alternative plan for the crisis in humanities, namely, the background of birth in literary therapeutics and the meaning of existence. That is to say, the function of meaning and an interpretation in the literature and the movie text can be mentioned to be just the characteristic function in the literature that the participants themselves proceed with finding in the process of literary therapy.

## **2. Literary healing as creative anthropology**

In the traditional Gestalt psychotherapy or psychoanalysis, it generally makes it a rule to seek its healing power by paying attention to psychological pathology (Pathogenese) with various mental diseases such as psychosis, neurosis, personality disorder. But in the literary therapy, the starting point is health science (Saluthogenese), which maximally applies the creative power and the innate sense that a human being has. This is similar to the principle as if we learn to drum or sports dance through using muscles of having not been used at ordinary times, express the image of the sky with a color or reproduce it with the body while looking at the blue sky. On the other hand, a human being in the literary therapeutics is defined as “the body subject that perceives, remembers, contemplates and expresses (perzeptiver, memorativer, reflexiver und expressiver Leib Subjekt)” [3]. A human being here is seen as involving all, reaching from what is available for expression (conscious thing) through fully mobilizing all senses that oneself has, to what is unavailable for expression (unconsciousness). Owing to this media-based compatibility or inter-media characteristic, the literary therapy belongs to the section in the expressive art therapy given seeing in the technical aspect, and corresponds to the humanities therapy (Humantherapie) given seeing in the dimension of seeking for the breakthrough that modern people will proceed with living in the 21st century, or of exploring the anthropological value.

### **2.1. Literature as a cure**

Seeing from the memory theory, the literature is deemed as what was formed newly while authors’ memory and literary imagination act synergistically, namely, as the construction of other memories [4]. In other words, ‘authors’ fantastic stories are considered to be what came to rise above the surface of consciousness through being pulled out from what was denied(ex. negativo) between memory and oblivion’ [5]. Hence, literature is the remembrance work from the past memory as for an author oneself and becomes the healing and reconciliation process

through this. This healing function in literature is being regularized and specified more and more in the territory of literary therapy.

Then, the next aims to explore the literature as a cure, and the healing in a literary text while examining the cases on the therapeutic process available for being easily found in a literary text. The perspective of literature as a cure, which was elicited through reading a text in this study, can be identified diverse standpoints in many aspects, but can be arranged by connoting it with around 2 key things. These two viewpoints include, first, the healing as reconciliation and comfort, second, the healing as observation and insight of life [6].

## **2.2. Case 1: “I reconciled with our story” - Literary healing as reconciliation and consolation - Having a case as Hannah in the movie titled *The Reader***

What the functions of comfort, a reconciliation and a reward play a primary role in characters can be often seen among original functions of literature. Especially, seeing from the position of authors who write, there are many cases that most of their works ultimately attempt a reconciliation with it while addressing the memory in the past as a material. For example, even in “The Reader” a German movie that is addressed in this presentation, the main character Michael in the last chapter of work is confessing the process of reconciling with the past memory, which had been hard, with recalling “a reason that I tried to write our story is because of having liked to escape from this story. However, the memories were not reminded properly when I am about to write. Meanwhile, I realized that our story is getting out of me. So, I desired to hold on to those things anyhow through writing. Nevertheless, even writing failed to revive my memories. I just left our story alone without touching it from a few years earlier. I reconciled with our story. Upon that, our story returned with the round and complete image that has its own direction, up to the details and enough not to give sorrow any more to me” [7].

In other words, the impossibility of communication, which is caused by failing to be shared this periodical context between these characters, is one of the central themes in a work. These characters are lonely and solitary each. For example, the image of Michael who confesses his problem to his mother after the passage of about 20 years, Michael’s daughter who had just felt that her father keeps away from her until she becomes an adult, and the image of Michael who comes to see Hannah’s true nature just through the sentence of guilt can be considered to have originated from the community spirit in which these people failed to share each other. In general, people are considered to mutually commune with each other’s sentiments “while the emotion of sympathy is changed into the feeling of empathy” [8].

In this way, Michael talks to his daughter about his memory of infancy in front of Hannah’s grave in the last scene of the movie, thereby being able to give consolation for the outcome of agony in the meantime to him himself as well as to his daughter. Furthermore, this therapeutic action can be interpreted as compensation for the absence of her father in the past even as for his daughter. If so, how is the therapeutic process in Hannah as a heroin being shown? As can be seen even in the above movie scene, Hannah can be known at a glance to be a character who has thoroughness and perfection in order. For example, even in the scene of sharing love with Michael, she gives careful instructions (reading a book → showering → love-making, etc.) and asks Michael to act according to her rule. Especially, the uniform that she wore, a stiff look, and precision are well revealed even through the body language that she shows.

Also, even in the scene that Michael asks her name for the first time, she overreacts for no reason. Moreover, the writing on the blackboard dubbed “Goethe,” which is presented in Michael’s school class, and the concept of “secret,” correspond to the important concept in Western literature. A character in a novel is defined by the specific information of being possessed by a character who appears in it. The characters in *Odysseus* have a crooked character sometimes, and also have a high taste occasionally. The commentary in a literature teacher as saying that “characters are subject to not disclosing well own private information” is ever read as a phrase of hinting at the reality of the past in Hannah. At last, Hannah disappears without previous notice to Michael after listening to her superior’s saying, “Your work performance is perfect as I scanned the report. You will be assigned to an office position. You were promoted. Congratulations.”

The climax of the therapeutic process in this movie, namely, the process available for being considered to be around the new directional setting phase in the chapter of literary therapy, is the scene that Michael begins again in earnest to read a book to Hannah while getting divorced to leave his daughter to his mother. He indulges in a happy smile while taking out books again that he had read to Hannah before. Hannah now proceeds with finding a new self by re-experiencing the past memory with him while listening again to Michael’s voice. Furthermore, these characters proceed with continuing their own communication method again through reading and listening. Finally, Hannah comes to write her name for the first time with coming to get literacy while listening to a literary text that Michael sent. Also, Hannah writes to send Michael a simple letter such as “Thank you for what you sent this time. It was so funny,” “Please send me many love stories,” “In my opinion, Schiller will need to probably find romance,” “Do you ever receive my letter? Please give me a reply.” A prison officer evaluates Hannah’s this change in this way.

### **2.3. Case 2: “Ja(玆) also has a meaning of now, this moment, here. So, isn’t it good?” - Literary therapy as observation and insight of life - Kim Hun’s *Heuksan* (2011)**

Most of literary works can be mentioned to have therapeutic characteristics. Especially, the therapeutic process that is depicted through the hero Jeong Yak-jeon in Kim Hun’s 『*Heuksan* (黑山)』 shows very strong message. The therapeutic process, which is described in this work, is begun with arriving safely on the island called Heuksan (黑山) after the main character left a place of exile. For example, leaving trauma of the body behind, he takes comfort from saying, on that occasion that “the smell of time sprouting beyond the horizon throngs (Heuksan, pp.19),” “I am glad I didn’t die.... because new time in that way is flooding like a mountain.” In other words, even before the grief of the survivor died down, his mind of looking at the sea turns into a series of hope for ‘new time.’ This is also a gift of nature that the sea with eternity (億劫) gives. But it is no exaggeration to say that it originated from the attitude of life that accepts everything with destiny and conformity. Then, let us examine from which point the i-process that he is making a therapeutic life was begun [9].

Jeong Yak-jeon, who is a leading character of having gone through a therapeutic life in the novel titled 『*Heuksan*』, is a person who was forced to run away to Heuksan Island (黑山島) on a charge just of “Mumin (誣民, cheating people) using the absurd matter-of-fact remark (妖言) as saying of burning ancestral spirits to abolish ancestral rites, and of the dead coming back to life to make a state without king and ancestors in a place where is not the land in this place.” That is to say, Jeong Yak-jeon (丁若銓) is a figure who came in contact with Catholicism called ‘Sahak (邪學, incoherent and cunning learning)’ and then got over an

eternal storm, but comes to suffer distress in which most of his brothers come to have their head cut off.

What allowed his life to regain therapeutic vitality in earnest includes fish, and a character named Chang-dae who had never gone ashore. He is being delineated just as a character who “does not mix what can be asked with what cannot be questioned, and does not add what can be answered to what cannot be replied” [10]. He was “a person who knows the inside of things through taking a quiet look at even if having been born on the island and having read only three or four books.” In such a way, he is playing a role like a mirror available for looking into the window of his mind in Jeong Yak-jeon who has to live in exile alone. The conversation and communication with Chang-dae and fish provide an opportunity for Jeong Yak-jeon to come to write it in a book with looking into fishes for his whole life. That is just <Jasaneobo (茲山魚譜, Encyclopedia of fishery)> that he left during his life of exile.

In terms of Jeong Yak-jeon’s therapeutic process like this, facing the sea, which goes ashore, may be seen as the introduction stage. On the other hand, it can be interpreted as the working stage as for observing fish and talking with Chang-dae, as the direction setting or new direction setting stage as to the process of building a house newly, greeting a woman and coming to have a son. In particular, his writing a book in light of fish shape and human life image can be therapeutic vitality that is made at the final stage of literary therapy. Let us directly check the process through his mouth.

In this way, the above dialogue is the passage of ultimately representing the process in which the trauma of the body that this novel has is changed into the new meeting, new living foundation, and new life energy. Above all, the feeling gives a strong impression that a horror or anxiety of the whole life in a place of exile is eradicated through the language expression called Jasan (茲山). This can be regarded as the therapeutic process that the leading character Jeong Yak-jeon proceeds with experiencing in this novel. We can know here that the therapeutic vitality of being possessed by language can be obtained through the surrounding environment or new incidental vehicles. This is just the part of showing as well that the literature as a cure can reach the integration of mind and body through a method dubbed the artistically embodied languaged.

### 3. Conclusion

The conclusion available for being gained in the texts, which were addressed in the above main subject, is a point that all the leading characters finally come to get healing through experiencing the self-therapeutic process themselves. In other words, this is similar to what the participants in literary therapy reach the therapeutic process by taking part in literary activity spontaneously and intensely. For instance, the characters in literary text come to acquire a reward of mind through the literary activity leading to forming new ego or to reconciling with the past. That is to say, the literary self or the expressive self comes to achieve a result that comes to be again integrated ‘the wounded ego’ in the past and the present self of trying to look at it newly through the written words and the spoken words. Of course, it is possible only when expressing and speaking self can accomplish work with oneself fiercely.

Accordingly, in terms of the conclusion that may be made through the characters in texts of having been examined in the main subject, the literature as a cure, and the healing in a literary text can be considered to be a fruition of the continuous memory work and introspection on oneself. Moreover, with inquiring into the therapeutic process and the characters in the literary text, the solution to the 21C modern people’s mental pathology, which gets more

serious day by day, might be what looks back upon lifestyle in virtuous men/literatures in Korea including Germany, and what we experience and reflect it again. For instance, such a way of life will just include a book reading and writing (Hannah and Michael) in analogue method, not internet or screen in the era of information technology, taking a walk for interacting with nature, and writing leading to composing and looking back on oneself (the main character in Heuksan), and the communication through talking with people around.

The characters in the text of having been examined in the main subject can be seen as the ones who practiced this lifestyle [11]. Also, the participants through literary therapy, and the feedback and the sympathy sharing among participants will give a meaning and a value of new life to modern people who have low consciousness of ‘common value or common goal.’ This can be mentioned to be just a device of literary therapy available for vitalizing the literature as a cure, and the healing in literature much more. Therefore, the literature as a cure, namely, the healing in literature, is considered to be likely able to be linked to the true integration of body and mind just through which the leading character oneself proceeds with finding the creative self, and the ego of expressing oneself [12].

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