

Speaking Mouth, Writing Hand: The English-Language Autobiographies of North Korean Defectors and the Concept of Author Vocal-Writing

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Abstract

Since the turn of the new millennium, the genre of North Korean defector autobiographies has received widespread attention in the English-speaking world. Remarkably, these English-language publications typically do not first go through a process of translation from their subjects' first language to their target language. This paper consists of two parts. The first takes up the question of whether it is possible to define a work about the experiences of North Korean defectors as an autobiography if the author is not the defector himself or herself. In examining this question, the paper juxtaposes these North Korean defector autobiographies against related genres such as autobiography, ghostwritten autobiography, authorized biography, and unauthorized biography, as well as Gulag memoirs and memoirs of Communist disillusionment. The second part of this paper explores the publication process of these North Korean defector English-language autobiographies involving cooperation between various parties, including defector authors, translators, transcribers, and English-speaking authors. Focusing on the distance between the English-writing authors and the defector authors whose first language is not English, this paper sets forth the meaning of what can be called North Korean defector vocal-writing.

Keywords: North Korean defector, autobiography, biography, testimony, English publication, vocal-writing

Introduction

Since the late 1990s, the stories of defectors from North Korea have been published in South Korea. More recently, some of these accounts have been translated into English, French, German, Chinese, Japanese, Turkish, and Polish, among other languages. The autobiographies of North Korean defectors are a genre that stands out from others that represent North Korean defectors, such as independent films and television programs produced by South Koreans.¹ Representations of the experiences of North Korean refugees, even in non-fictional genres like autobiography and documentary, are heavily influenced by the conditions in which they are produced. Those who relay the account, such as directors, producers, and co-authors, exert influence in the act of telling it. In the genre of autobiography, however, North Koreans are made to come to the forefront as the subjects of their personal stories. After the publication of their accounts, defector authors are frequently invited to give lectures or take the stage to introduce their books to the public. Under the public spotlight, they appear to the audience as the victims of political oppression who have finally “seized control of their past.”²

North Korean defector stories have long been published in English under the category of autobiography or biography. Several of them, such as *The Girl with Seven Names* by Hyeonseo Lee and *In Order to Live: A North Korean Girl's Journey to Freedom* by Yeonmi Park, have become bestsellers. These autobiographies not only engage the sensibilities of their English-speaking readers who value human rights, but also serve to satisfy their curiosity about North Korea and its closed society. In 2015, five North Korean defector autobiographies were published in the United States. What is unusual about these works is that they were not translations of works that had already appeared in Korean. Because English is not the defectors' first language, it may seem somewhat unusual for these books to see English publication without first going through a process of translation from their first language. Accordingly, this paper has two parts. The first raises the question of authorship in relation to these works. If they have not been written by the defectors but rather accounts of their experiences transcribed by another, is it

appropriate to regard them as autobiographies, or should it prompt us to give a wider definition to the genre? This article considers where North Korean autobiographies fit among the kinds of works that are identified with the genre: autobiography, ghostwritten autobiography, authorized biography, and unauthorized biography. In addition, this paper also explores North Korean defector stories in relation to memoirs published during the Cold War expressing disillusionment with state socialism and accounts of the Gulag. The second part focuses on the publication process in which various specialists, including defector authors, translators, transcribers, and English-speaking authors, collaborate. How does verbalization or vocal-writing shape the way in which defectors relate their stories? Focusing on the distance between the defectors and the writers with whom they collaborate, this paper explores the process through which the English-language autobiographies of North Korean defectors see publication. I will argue that although North Korean defectors are obliged to rely on the abilities of their co-authors to relate their experiences in English, they nevertheless participate as active subjects in the production of their autobiographies by means of what I call vocal-writing. The act of composing an autobiography serves as a doorway for the North Korean defector to become an advocate for human rights, so that the process of speaking the self turns into the means by which he or she gains not only international recognition but also a political identity.

North Korean Defector English-Language Autobiography as Genre

If an autobiography is not written by a sole author, the subject of the story, can it still be published as an “auto”-biography? What indeed is autobiography? Jean Starobinski defines autobiography as “biography written by oneself.”³ As Youn Jeon points out, this definition involves three conditions: “identification between speaker and protagonist, narrative-dominant rather than description, and [the] story of [a] life journey.”⁴ Philippe Lejeune, by contrast, defines autobiography in terms of the “identity between the author, narrator, and the protagonist,”

in which a real person composes “retrospective prose narrative... concerning his own existence, focusing on the individual life, in particular on the development of his personality.”⁵ These definitions amount to the conventional meaning of autobiography, which, in the words of Timothy Dow Adams, is the result of “three separate components: *autos* or self, *bios* or life, and *graphe* or writing.”⁶ “Bios” can sometimes become interchangeable with “existence,” as there is not much difference in their meanings. Indeed, it is often the case that “autobiographers seldom make a distinction between autobiography, autobiographical novel, memoir, memories, or reminiscence, genres with different ideas of truthfulness.”⁷

The origins of autobiography as a genre that relays the truth about its author can be traced back to the *Confessions* of St. Augustine (397–400 A.D.). Augustine’s *Confessions*, which takes the approach of self-criticism before God, is also noteworthy for relaying his experiences in chronological order. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who was heavily criticized by his contemporary critics for the discordance between his words and actions, wrote his own *Confessions* (1782) as a candid defense of his life. Rousseau’s focus on his unfortunate childhood and complicated relationships with various women turned his book into a continent-wide sensation and gave readers clues into the renowned thinker’s psyche. Leo Tolstoy’s *A Confession* (1882) is another notable work in which the author describes the act of writing as having saved him from suicidal despair. John Stuart Mill’s *Autobiography* (1873), published posthumously, likewise treated the author’s distress and suffering in an open and earnest manner. These authors might have experienced psychological alienation between the representing self and the represented self in their writing, but there was little debate over questions of authorship and authenticity when these works appeared.

Controversies over authorship involve more recent cases in which readers question whether the subject of the life story *actually* wrote the autobiography. On the other hand, ghostwriting has become widely accepted and recognized as a legitimate occupation by the wider culture. Some ghostwriters, such as William Novak, who wrote *Iacocca: An Autobiography* (1984), and Tony Schwartz, who wrote *Trump: The Art*

of the Deal (1987), have become well-known in their own right. These authors interview their subjects and write autobiographies for them, serving as the writing hand of the subject, as it were. The subject of the autobiography reviews the author's writing style, confirms whether his or her public image is portrayed to his or her satisfaction, and sometimes deletes sensitive passages. The financial success of an autobiography and recognition in the publication industry can ironically give the ghostwriter "an identity problem,"⁸ as in the case of Tony Schwartz, who expressed his regret at having written a best-selling autobiography for the much-vilified President. Conversely, it took almost fifty-two years for Theodore C. Sorenson to admit to having ghostwritten John F. Kennedy's *Profiles in Courage* (1956). In his own autobiography *Counselor: A Life at the Edge of History* (2008), published two years before his death, Sorenson opened up about his role as a speechwriter for and advisor to the President, putting an end to the rumors that had circulated for decades about the authorship of Kennedy's best-selling book.

The case of biography is less laden with controversy, for there is far less ambiguity in the reader's understanding of the book's authorship. In some masterpieces of the genre, such as James Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson* (1791), the author devotes his or her life to accurately recording the details of the subject's life. Just as Johnson was a collector of words for his *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755), so Boswell collected the letters and conversations of Johnson and did his utmost to confirm the accuracy of dates and facts. The authors of biographies can sometimes find themselves in difficulties, however, when legal cases are filed by their subjects. For example, Elizabeth Gaskell published her *Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1857) two years after the death of the author who had been a personal friend of hers. Brontë, the author of *Jane Eyre* (1847), was one of the few women writers in nineteenth-century Britain where social expectations limited most women's education as well as opportunities. Despite the exceptional nature of Gaskell's achievement as a woman who wrote the biography of a celebrated female writer, many of those mentioned in the biography filed lawsuits against Gaskell for defamation, forcing her to make substantial alterations. Later, Gaskell's work was criticized for her intentional omission of some parts of Brontë's

life, such as her love for a married man. Rather than portraying Brontë honestly and accurately, Gaskell tried to rehabilitate Brontë's reputation, portraying her as a pious and devoted woman who acted within the social and moral boundaries of the time.

Boswell and Gaskell were proximate to the subjects of their biographies, either emotionally or physically, which enabled them to study their subject for decades and publish their biographies not long after the deaths of their subjects. Such cases can be categorized as authorized biographies rather than unauthorized ones, in which authors write biographies without having to answer to their subjects. The following graph (fig. 1) indicates the psychic distance between authors and the subjects of their books for autobiographies, ghostwritten autobiographies, authorized biographies, and unauthorized biographies. The distance between the subject of the story and the writing author indicates the degree of intimacy and collaboration as well as the identification between the two. Early autobiographies demonstrate the ultimate identification between the subject and the author, whereas unauthorized biographies show the least degree of convergence between the x and y axes.

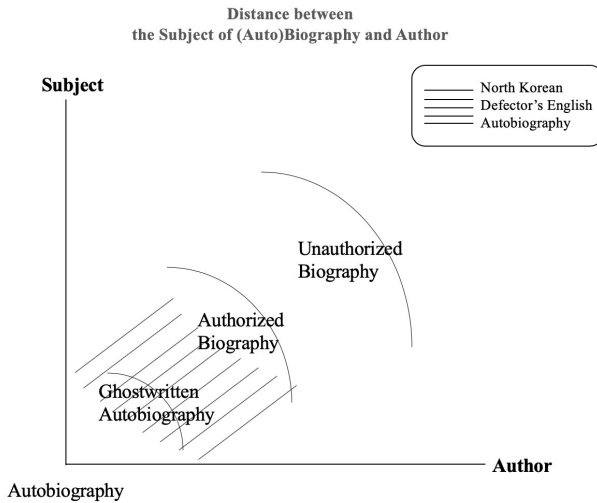


Figure 1. Distance between the Subject of (Auto) Biography and Author

The English-language autobiographies present an interesting case for the purposes of this graph. Their English-speaking authors undergo multiple procedures of writing since there is more than one mediator between the author and the subject, owing to the presence of the language barrier. The work of the writing author's duty in terms of literary craftsmanship may be close to that of the author of an authorized biography. As Ira B. Nadel points out, "whatever role the biographer consciously chooses, his or her presence in the text is inescapable through the tropes, narrative style, and language of the work."⁹ The authenticity and truthfulness of the North Korean defector narrative, however, may not be something that the writing author can fabricate, for the defector's private episodes in North Korea are not ones that the author can reenact. In this regard, North Korean defector autobiographies sit closer to the position of autobiography on the graph. They can be placed somewhere between ghostwritten autobiography and authorized biography, though precisely where is disputable.

In these terms, North Korean defector stories may be placed with communist disillusionment memoirs and accounts of the Gulag. Their authors are taken to be living proof of the failures and crimes of communism and their writings are understood as testimonies. During the Cold War, the stories of the survivors from the Gulag, or *Glavnoe upravleniia lagerei* (Main Administration of Camps), attested to the inhumanity of the Soviet Union. Before the publication of stories of the Gulag survivors, a number of thinkers and authors wrote about what they had witnessed in the Soviet Union as a revolutionary state still "in the making" during the 1920s and 1930s.¹⁰ Walter Benjamin saw the USSR as a place where "all factuality is already theory"—like other scholars who were eager to witness the unprecedented developments in the land that had until recently been a monarchy—but realized that the high tide of the revolution had already passed.¹¹ André Gide, who visited the USSR in 1936, also found himself disillusioned with this "less free" and "more fearful" country.¹² His memoirs were among the most famous among those expressing disillusionment with communism. North Korean defector stories, for their part, show how their authors were brainwashed into believing whatever the North Korean regime said. After the Great

Famine of the 1990s, when rations from the state decreased and eventually stopped, North Koreans who began to fear for their survival embarked on the risky cross-border journey to China. As a result, many North Koreans came to realize how isolated they had been from the outside world. A common element throughout North Korean autobiographies is an account of how the political beliefs in which they had been inculcated from an early age came to be shattered.

The autobiographical accounts of Gulag survivors, such as Alexander Solzhenitsyn's well-known *Gulag Archipelago* (1973), and Gulag literature, such as Herta Muller's *Atemschaukel* (2010), depict how hunger and violence destroyed both life and morality in the camps. In an interview for his 1976 edition of *If This Is a Man*, Primo Levi, an Auschwitz survivor, was questioned why he did not mention the Soviet labor camps.¹³ There were certainly some similarities between the Soviet labor camps and the Nazi concentration camps, but for Levi the fundamental difference lay in their distinct purposes. Auschwitz aimed to eliminate the Jews and their culture through a process of ethnic cleansing, so that the camp existed for death itself. In the Soviet labor camps, Levi explains that deaths were not the purpose but rather resulted from famine, cold, disease, and hard labor. Most importantly, the "criminals" in the era of Stalin were sentenced to a period of limited servitude, whereas the people in Auschwitz were not. Levi asserted that the hope of being released makes a fundamental difference to one's morale and well-being under cruel and brutal conditions.

North Korean defectors have described their experiences in the forced labor camps of North Korea, to which they were sentenced mostly as a result of illegal border crossings. According to a report by the Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, there are three levels in the North Korean camps which were "originally modeled on the Soviet gulag."¹⁴ According to David Hawk, first, there are *kwan-li-so* [관리소], which are penal colonies for holding "scores of thousands of political prisoners." Then come the "long-term, felony level penitentiaries and prison camps" known as *kyo-hwa-so* [교화소]. In addition, there are three institutions designed for arbitrary detention: "*ku-ryu-jang* [구류장] police interrogation and detention facilities; *jip-kyul-so* [집결소] misdemeanor level prisons;

and mobile labor brigades termed *ro-dong-dang-ryeon-dae* [로동당련대] labor training centers.”¹⁵ When North Koreans are caught and repatriated after having crossed illegally into China, they are sent to *kyo-hwa-so* or *jip-kyul-so*. Because the most defector authors were released from the camps within a few years, their accounts of their period in the camp do not occupy a major part of their autobiographies. North Korean defector stories typically relate events in chronological order and generally adhere to the following points: (1) the subject’s youth in North Korea, (2) the Great Famine or the Arduous March in the late 1990s, (3) the survival of the subject and his or her family, including their participation in the black market, *Jangmadang* [장마당], or in smuggling goods to and from China, (4) crossing the border into China, (5) ordeals that the subject experienced on the escape route, including human trafficking, and/or repatriation and internment at a labor camp, (6) escape, whether from human traffickers or from North Korea itself, and (7) settlement in South Korea, America, or Europe. The stories of the labor camps may appear in succession with accounts of crossing the border. Although the guards in the camps did not treat the prisoners as human beings, death and starvation were not the purpose of this penal institution: punishment, forced labor, fear, and reeducation were.

In these memoirs, the question whether the defectors give truthful accounts of their experiences becomes central, as they are seeking to reveal the truth in the cause of human rights. Thus, the testimony of Yeonmi Park, the author of *In Order to Live* and a speaker at the One Young World 2014 Summit in Dublin, has been controversial as Park has changed her story several times.¹⁶ Park later acknowledged the inconsistencies in her stories: “I was reacting, improvising like a jazz musician playing the same melody a little differently each time, unaware that there might be people out there keeping score.”¹⁷

The controversy over Shin Dong-hyuk’s testimony has continued on for several years. Blaine Harden’s *Escape from Camp 14: One Man’s Remarkable Odyssey from North Korea to Freedom in the West* became a sensation after a YouTube clip titled, “Lie and Truth,” was released by the North Korean regime in 2014.¹⁸ Published in 2012, the book told the story of Shin Dong-hyuk, a North Korean defector, an account which North

Korean authorities claimed was fake in a video they put together about Shin Dong-hyuk's past. Shin's autobiographical memoir had already been published in South Korea in 2007, but the North Korean authorities did not publicly react to his story until 2012, when Harden's book about Shin's story became widely known to the world. The North Korean authorities made three claims in "Lie and Truth." First, Shin Dong-hyuk had not been born in Concentration Camp 14, as evidence they produced a photo of Shin taken at age five. Second, in response to Shin's story that his finger had been deliberately cut off by a camp guard as punishment for making a mistake while at work, the North Korean authorities contended that he lost his finger while undergoing surgery to fix a broken bone after falling on sharp rocks while working in a mine. Third, North Korean authorities denounced Shin Dong-hyuk not only as a liar but also as a criminal who escaped to the South after raping a thirteen-year-old girl. This video sought to boost the credibility of these claims by including statements from Shin's father and other ordinary workers.¹⁹

In response to North Korean authorities' criticism, Shin withdrew some of the statements he had made in his book. The most important statement that Shin Dong-hyuk withdrew regarded whether he was born in Concentration Camp 14. In Harden's *Escape from Camp 14*, Shin claimed that he was born in Camp 14, in which extraordinary environment, where people are not treated as human beings, he never saw a portrait of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il. However, when the North Korean authorities called his claim into question, he changed his story, claiming that he was born at Camp 14 but was later transferred to Camp 18. The two camps are extremely different: Camp 14 is a notorious political prison camp, from which few prisoners are ever released, whereas Camp 18 is designated for minor criminals. Its prisoners have a good chance of being released once their attitudes are thought to have improved sufficiently. Shin Dong-hyuk received more attention than other North Korean defectors because he declared that he had escaped Camp 14. In one interview he gave in a South Korean television program, he acknowledged that even though some of his statements were not true, some of the North Korean authorities' claims, in particular the allegations that he committed crimes, were not true either.²⁰

What might be the reasons for the false recollections, for which Shin came around to admitting blame? Perhaps the process of composing his memoir encouraged him to exaggerate his experiences for marketing purposes. In the course of leaping between the past and present, Shin might have fallen prey to the temptation to present himself as the living miracle demanded by the Western readership. Whatever the reason, his retraction of certain statements has led readers to question the validity of the statements made by other North Korean defectors as well. One may say that in the wake of the controversy, Shin, who backtracked on his words, has become seized by a past that he thought he could both escape and control. The matter of authenticity is always controversial in testimonial memoirs, as Tony Docan-Morgan and his co-authors argue in their article, "Propaganda, Survival, and Living to Tell the Truth: An Analysis of North Korean Refugee Memoirs," that deception and truth-telling are both key strategies that North Korean refugees use to survive.²¹ But in this instance, it is virtually impossible to distinguish truth from falsehood, not least due to the reclusive nature of the North Korean regime. Moreover, although Shin serves as the subject of *Escape from Camp 14* and co-author Harden agreed to share the profits equally with him, it is the latter who holds the copyright to the book. If holding the copyright for a book is the same as taking moral responsibility for the content, then what share of the responsibility for the distortions and retractions should Harden bear?

After Shin admitted that he had distorted some of his experiences for the book, Harden gave an interview in which he delivered Shin's apology "about all this mess."²² He went on to quote Shin as saying that "I made a compromise in my mind. I altered some details that I thought wouldn't matter. I didn't want to tell exactly what happened in order not to relive these painful moments all over again."²³ In this interview, Greg Scarlatou, executive director of the Washington-based Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, did not retreat from their initial embrace of Shin, saying, "He [Shin] is a political prison camp survivor, period." Harden added, "He [Shin] is still saying that all of this happened, but that they happened at different times and places."²⁴ Thus both Shin and Harden appealed to the traumatic character of Shin's experiences to account for

the inconsistencies and distortions in his account, sidelining the question of moral responsibility for a possibly false testimony.

Some scholars are willing to argue that memories can be falsified during the course of writing about the past. Shin's misrepresentations could have arisen either in the process of writing, due to the impulse to exaggerate events for dramatic effect, or in the course of Shin's act of remembering the past, as what sometimes happens after a traumatic experience.²⁵ As Leona Toker argues, there is a fundamental tension "between the stance of a retrospective memoirist and the experience of his or her own former self as a depleted, deprived, humiliated prisoner whose inner life proceeds in ways that elude the language shaped by the practices of normal life."²⁶ The testimonial autobiography's embedded falseness is due to the subject's "double temporal perspective," which throws the subject into a blurry zone between "real time" and that of "retrospective."²⁷ In a North Korean defector's English-language autobiography, there is more than a "double temporal perspective" at work. For the division between the two authors—the defector author's vocal-writing and English-speaking author's hand-writing—makes the scheme of temporality more complex.

Moreover, "falseness" can be regarded as an innate element of biography. In "The Historian, Literature and the Genre of Biography," Jacques Rancière observes that the genre of biography is a mode of expression that reveals certain historical conditions that enabled an individual's life to be extended into public discourse. Rancière states that "the genre of biography is the privileged place for this double indistinguishability: between action and states, but also between the real and fictional."²⁸ He goes on to emphasize that "[b]iography does not happen without some indistinguishability between reality and fiction."²⁹ Authors of biography take such "falseness" to be an inevitable element in the act of writing about the life of another. Owing to the co-author's role as the writing hand of the North Korean defector, their English-language autobiographies also exhibit the falseness inherent to the telling of a biographical narrative. The next section explores the unique book-making process of North Korean defectors' English-language autobiographies.

An Ethical Project: How to Write a Story of a “Grievable Life”

Herta Müller, who received the 2009 Nobel Prize in Literature, writes in the afterword of *Atemschaukel* (*The Hunger Angel*) about how she came to write her novel about a survivor of the Soviet gulag. Since her childhood, Müller had sensed an unspoken fear afflicting her family. She also noticed that the adults in her Romanian village often held their conversations in secret. As she grew older, Müller realized that the fear that gripped the adults in the village had its origin in the time they had been interned in the Soviet gulag. In 2001, Müller began writing accounts of these secret dialogues. When she found out that her friend, the poet Oskar Pastior, had been sent to the Soviet Union for forced labor, she asked him whether she could write about him. The two of them met regularly to talk about his experiences, which generated four notebooks full of notes.³⁰ But Pastior’s sudden death in 2006 meant that they could not complete the project as they had planned. In 2009, she finished on her own the book she had promised to write with Pastior. The working process between Müller and Pastior, even though it was not brought to completion, is comes to mind for many regarding the manner in which a speaking mouth and a writing hand might work together. There appear to be few complications as well as a shared trust between the witness and the author.

The process that results in the production of the autobiography of a North Korean defector, by contrast, follows a very different set of protocols. North Korean defectors who tell their stories inevitably acquire a team comprising a translator, transcriber, and English-speaking author. Second, the act of writing an autobiography in English for defectors whose first language is not English presents additional complicating factors. This section of the article examines the practice of vocal-writing among North Korean defectors by focusing on language differences between speaking authors and writing authors. North Korean defectors have written autobiographies with “co-authors” or “collaborators” who help them bring their memories to publication in English. On the copyright pages of North Korean migrants’ autobiographies and commercial websites such as Amazon, as Table 1 demonstrates, North Korean authors are named alongside their co-authors.³¹

Table 1. North Korean defectors' (auto)biographies published in English³²

Title	Author(s)	Publisher/Copyrights (©)	Published Date	Publication in Korean
<i>The Aquariums of Pyongyang: Ten Years in the North Korean Gulag</i>	Kang, Chol-hwan (Author) Rigoulot, Pierre (Author) Reiner, Yair (Translator)	©2000 by Éditions Robert Laffont ©2001 by Basic Books Translation © 2001 by Kang Cho-hwan and Pierre Rigoulot	Originally published in French in 2000 as <i>Les Aquariums de Pyongyang</i> . Translated into English in 2001.	Translated into Korean in 2003 under the title, <i>Song from a Concentration Camp</i> [수용소의 노래]
<i>Long Road Home: Testimony of a North Korean Camp Survivor</i>	Kim Yong (Author) Kim, Suk-Young (Contributor)	©2009 by Columbia University Press	June 19, 2009	N/A
<i>Escape from Camp 14: One Man's Remarkable Odyssey from North Korea to Freedom in the West</i>	Harden, Blaine (Author) ³³	Viking, a member of Penguin Group (2012) Penguin Books (2013, 2015) ©2012, 2015 Blaine Harden	March 29, 2012 A new edition with new forewords was published 2015.	Translated into Korean in 2013 under the same title.
<i>Dear Leader: Poet, Spy, Escapee – A Look Inside North Korea</i>	Jang, Jin-sung (Author) ³⁴	First 37 INK/Atria ©2014 by Jang Jin-sung	May 13, 2014	Published in Korean in September 2014.
<i>Thousand Miles to Freedom: My Escape from North Korea</i>	Kim, Eunsun (Author) Falletti, Sébastien (Author) Tian, David (Translator)	©2012 by Éditions Michel Lafon Epilogue St. Martin's Press © 2015 by Eunsun Kim and Sébastien Falletti Translation © 2015 by David Tian	Originally published in French under the title <i>Corée du Nord – 9 ans pour fuir l'enfer</i> in 2012. Translated into English on July 21, 2015	N/A
<i>Under the Same Sky: From Starvation in North Korea to Salvation in America</i>	Kim, Joseph (Author) Talty, Stephan (Contributor)	Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (2015) Mariner Books (2016) © 2015 by Joseph Kim	June 2, 2015	N/A
<i>The Girl with Seven Names: A North Korean Defector's Story</i>	Lee, Hyeonseo (Author) John, David (Contributor)	William Collins (2015, 2016) © 2015 by Hyeonseo Lee	July 2, 2015 Published in 35 languages.	N/A
<i>In Order to Live: A North Korean Girl's Journey to Freedom</i>	Park, Yeonmi (Author) Vollers, Maryanne ³⁵ (Author)	Penguin Books ©2015 by Yeonmi Park	September 29, 2015 Also published in German and Italian in 2015, and in Korean, Chinese, Polish, Japanese, Thai, Danish, French, Slovenian, Czech, Romanian, Hungarian, Portuguese, and Swedish in 2016.	Translated into Korean and published in 2015 under the title, <i>Wish You Knew What I Have Seen</i> [내가 본 것을 당신이 알게 됐으면]

Title	Author(s)	Publisher/Copyrights (©)	Published Date	Publication in Korean
<i>Stars Between the Sun and Moon: One Woman's Life in North Korea and Escape to Freedom</i>	Jang, Lucia (Author) McClelland, Susan (Author)	Douglas & McIntyre (2014) W.W. Norton&Company, Inc. (2015) ©2014 by Lucia Jang and Susan McClelland	Originally published in Canada on October 5, 2014 American Edition was published on October 5, 2015 Also published in German in 2015.	N/A
<i>Every Falling Star: The True Story of How I Survived and Escaped North Korea</i>	Lee, Sungju (Author) McClelland, Susan (Author)	Amulet Books, an imprint of ABRAMS Text ©2016 by Sungju Lee	September 13, 2016	Translated into Korean and published in 2017 under the title, <i>Shoes of a Beggar Boy</i> [거리 소년의 신발]

Between 2012 and 2016, eight North Korean defector memoirs and autobiographies were published in English. Of these, four were translated from English into Korean after they had become bestsellers in English-speaking countries. Twenty North Korean defector stories had already been published in South Korea since the 1990s, of which sixteen were originally published in Korean.³⁶ The other four were initially published in either French or English, then later translated into Korean. Why is it that US publishers avoid translating these already-published accounts into English but instead create their own versions? The autobiographies of North Korean refugees gained an audience in the US without the mediation of the Korean publishing industry. The likely answer is that American publishers choose to work closely with English-speaking co-authors as part of a marketing strategy aimed specifically at the US and other Western readers. Such marketing and publishing strategies may in turn also influence the content of such autobiographies.

The publication process for each book took a different trajectory. Work on *Escape from Camp 14* began only after Blaine Harden spent nine months persuading Shin to sign a contract for the book. Shin Dong-hyuk had begun writing his diary one year after his defection. His journal

entries served as the basis for his memoir, *North Korean Political Prison Camp, a Total Control Zone: Escape to the Outside World* [정치범수용소 완전통제 구역: 세상 밖으로 나오다], which was published in Korean in 2007. However, his book failed to draw much attention from South Korean readers. As Harden reports, the memoir sold only five hundred copies from a printing of three thousand.³⁷ Shin wound up making no money from the work. Because of his failure to gain a readership in South Korea, Shin was reluctant to publish his story in English. Although Shin had a copy of his memoir written in Korean, Harden reworked it in a journalistic style for Western readers. As a result, Harden's *Escape from Camp 14* is rather looser in composition than other North Korean autobiographies, frequently citing experts on North Korea.

Stars Between the Sun and Moon, the account of Lucia Jang's life as a refugee from North Korea, on which she worked with Susan McClelland, was supported by HanVoice, Canada's largest human rights organization assisting North Korean refugees. When the publishing firm Douglas & McIntyre proposed a book project with HanVoice, Soohyun Nam, a translator and lawyer, recommended Jang to HanVoice, having heard Jang's story from her immigration lawyer in Canada. Nam, who worked as a translator between Jang and McClelland, met the two "nearly every Saturday morning for a year to translate."³⁸ In their acknowledgments, Jang and McClelland express their gratitude for Nam's contribution, which she provided with "no expectation of compensation."³⁹ In the case of *Stars between the Sun and Moon*, the roles of McClelland (co-author) and Nam (translator) appear significant. Jang had kept a diary after escaping to Mongolia, but McClelland declares that "it was *not* used in the creation of this book."⁴⁰ Instead of relying on these journals, McClelland posed questions to her, which Nam translated into Korean. Nam then translated into English Jang's responses to McClelland.⁴¹ The relative straightforwardness of this process implies that the skeleton of Jang's autobiography was already laid out by McClelland while Jang's answers were taking flesh. In short, Jang engaged in selective vocal-writing according to the pre-drawn design of the book's author.

Lee Sungju's memoir, titled *Every Falling Star*, McClelland's second project involving North Korean defectors' autobiographies, would likely

have followed much the same process as *Stars Between the Sun and Moon* with the writing author posing questions to the defector. In this instance, however, Lee did not need a translator as he was able to communicate with McClelland on his own. Lee's project began when Lee went to Canada as the second beneficiary of the HanVoice Pioneer project. There, Lee met McClelland, who had already published Jang's autobiography, and they worked together for several months. In his acknowledgments, Lee writes that his childhood memories, especially conversations, were "re-created for literary effect"⁴² with McClelland's assistance. Lee's *Every Falling Star* was written as a book aimed at adolescents and it was marketed successfully in the US. Lee's story of his childhood, including his period begging on the streets, won the 2016 Parents' Choice Award of the Parents' Association in the United States.⁴³

Kim Yong and Suk-Young Kim's *Long Road Home: Testimony of a North Korean Camp Survivor* went through a different process of writing than other North Korean English-language autobiographies. The book relates the story of defector Kim Yong, who survived a North Korean camp, but is structured differently from others. Suk-Young Kim, one of the book's co-authors, wrote the preface and introduction. Her introduction offers a brief history of Korea to help readers to understand Kim Yong's story, and her preface describes the process behind the writing of the book. Kim declares that she was constantly forced to ask herself how far she should take the role of co-author, since it relies fundamentally on Kim Yong's personal history and experiences:

As translator and transcriber, I constantly had to make decisions to capture accurately the unique array of Kim's experiences and bring them to life in English. ... Although Kim Yong and I share the same language and certain common grounds of Korean culture, and although we lived not too far away from each other—the distance between Pyongyang and Seoul being only 120 miles—we seem to have existed in parallel universes. ... How was I to overcome the profound gap between us, marked by differences in age, gender, and finally the ideology that divided the two Koreans into hostile regimes? How were our perspectives

supposed to merge and create a singular narrative. ... When I started transcribing the recorded interviews, I had to make a conscious decision: *how to negotiate between the commitment to faithfully capture Kim's cadence and voice and the impulse to embellish his story with literary flair*. I discussed this very issue with Kim Yong many times, and we concluded that it would be best to *transcribe* Kim's story from the original interviews with minimal dramatization or stylistic alteration, which might diminish the credibility of his story. At the same time, we also felt the necessity to polish the raw narrative to make it more readable, so long as this process would not interfere with the veracity of the events presented. (emphases added)⁴⁴

Crucially, Suk-young Kim identifies herself as a “translator and transcriber” who continually questioned her ethical stance during the process. She speaks frankly about her dilemma regarding how much liberty she had to transform Kim Yong's stories, lest she “diminish the credibility” of his experiences. Whereas McClelland in *Stars Between the Sun and Moon* and *Every Falling Star* minimizes the division between the writing author and the defector authors, writing author Kim of *Long Road Home* puts her own role at the forefront, frequently reminding the readers that she is the co-author. She emphasizes her role as the writing hand this time, with the two authors having decided to make this project a truthful record distanced from dramatized stories of defectors. Considering that the preface written by the writing author who reflects on the moral questions behind the process of collaboration, this book locates itself between biography and anthropological studies, where there is a distinct boundary between the researcher and the person who is the object of his or her study.⁴⁵ The writing author's readiness to examine the issue of her moral responsibility in undertaking her project *Long Road Home* stands out from other North Korean defector memoirs. These reflections enable us to take a vital glimpse into the process of composing North Korean defector autobiographies—the matter of selecting the subject's experience, arranging the resulting stories, and adopting a specific writing style.

In English-language autobiographies of North Korean defectors, the issue of authorship raises urgent questions about the ethics of writing. The authors of *Long Road Home* agreed that a story “faithfully captured” was the aim of the book, in which it was important to alter as little as possible Kim’s story so that it could serve as a testimony to the dire state of human rights in North Korea. “Testimony,” as Gillian Whitlock argues, constitutes “a speech act that demands recognition and a response in terms of social action and social justice.”⁴⁶ In return, “the world responds and reacts as an ethical witness in good conscience.” Such a response entails, in the words of Thomas Keenan, the “mobilizing [of] shame,”⁴⁷ which “secures the work of testimony.”⁴⁸ In North Korean defector autobiographies or testimonies, both authors and readers participate in this ethical project, which is comprehended as a “social action and social justice.” Thus, the life of the (past) subject of North Korean defector autobiography becomes what Judith Butler calls a “grievable life,”⁴⁹ whose “life matters” and “would be grieved if it were lost.”⁵⁰ When the refugees understand that their life “would be grieved,” their vocal-writing begins.

“They Are Not Mute”: North Korean Defector Authors’ Vocal-Writing

In his 1933 essay, “Experience and Poverty,” Walter Benjamin writes that the value of experience diminished after World War I, during which people had experienced “some of the most monstrous events in the history of the world.”⁵¹ The survivors returned home in silence, having nothing to share with the younger generation about their experience on the front lines. It led to an era marked by the impoverishment of experience. The survivors chose silence as their language, but their silence was also mandated by those who did not want to know what had happened to the survivors. Similarly, when the protagonist of Herta Müller’s *Atemschaukel* (*The Hunger Angel*) returns home from the gulag, he speaks of the predicament of not having to speak: “For months my feet had been at home, where no one knew what I had seen. Nor did anybody ask. The only way you can talk about something is by again becoming

the person you're talking about. I was glad that no one asked anything, although I was also secretly offended."⁵² Just as the protagonist of the novel felt that he had to become his former self in order to talk about his experiences, North Korean defectors are likewise often reluctant to speak about their experiences. It is not the fact that they lack words for what they have gone through, but rather, they feel uneasy about reproducing in the present the traumas they suffered in the past. For example, when Shin Dong-hyuk began to talk to the public, it took a long time for him to break free from the psychological barriers that kept him in silence. When audiences asked him to relate about the story of his escape, he became very uncomfortable and said, "This is really private and sensitive. I try to avoid talking about it as much as I can." Shin used to cut short his talks by saying, "My story can be very heartbreaking. I don't want you to be depressed."⁵³

Gillian Whitlock describes what is required for testifiers to break their silence: "To accrue value and jurisdiction, testimony needs fortune, history, and national interest on its side."⁵⁴ North Korean defectors did indeed in a few cases obtain some of these elements. To borrow the words of Jacques Rancière, it is history that enabled the defectors to speak. Rancière asserts that "[h]istory gets the mute to talk."⁵⁵ Biography, or the written microscopic history of individuals, has provided subalterns with a language. However, the veracity of this claim is undermined by Rancière himself in the next sentence: "For the 'mute' themselves, it's not so simple. Precisely because they are not mute."⁵⁶ In composing their autobiographies, North Korean defectors exemplify something of this paradox. Sitting with an English-speaking writer, the North Korean defector tells his or her stories of life and escape. The writer records the tale, taking notes on the defector's story and asking questions to clarify the chronology and other details. The writer requires the help of a translator to write a North Korean defector's autobiography *that has never been written before*.

I use the expression "vocal-writing" in an ontological sense to refer to the role of the North Korean defector in writing his or her English-language autobiography.⁵⁷ The act of defector authors' vocalizing process not only makes the story their own but also affects their way of

storytelling. The voice, or what Adriana Cavarero calls, “a vocal ontology of uniqueness,” combines the act of speaking and the act of hearing oneself speak, whereas the writing process is typically silent.⁵⁸ Cavarero explains the difference between thought and speaking in the following manner:

Thinking wants to be timeless. ... Speaking, on the contrary, is always bound to time. ... Thought is as solitary as speech is relational. Speaking is not at all a thinking that expresses itself out loud, nor is it merely vocalized thought, nor is it an acoustic substitute for thinking. The phenomenology of speaking possesses an autonomous status in which the relationality of mouths and ears comes to the fore.⁵⁹

Cavarero also quotes Franz Rosenzweig’s observation that in speaking to another, this other is “someone ... always quite precise,” who “not only has ears, like the collectivity, but has a mouth as well.”⁶⁰ The act of writing their English-language autobiographies is not at all a solitary process for North Korean defectors; instead, defector authors speak to English-language writing authors and translators, who have not only ears but also mouths. The listeners also ask questions of the defectors, which gives a relational character to the entire process of writing. The cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the writing authors are decisive factors in structuring and refining the narratives. The symbiotic relationship between defector and writing author and translator is at the center of the completed project.

However, not only do the co-authors select and arrange the defector’s story, but the defectors also play a significant role in choosing what to tell and not to tell their readers in the process of their vocal-writing. Thus, North Korean defectors can claim authorship of their autobiography as vocal-writers. Earlier, I defined autobiography using its literal meaning: auto-bio-*graphy*, with the suffix clearly emphasizing *writing* as a practice or a specific means of representation. The Korean word for autobiography is *chasöjön* [자서전], which carries the meaning of the self (*cha*, 자), chronologically written/delivered (*sö*, 서) and story (*jön*,

전).⁶¹ Interestingly, *sŏ* and *jŏn* have dual meanings. When *sŏ* functions as a modifying participle, its primary meaning is the state of being written, but it also means to narrate. *Jŏn* functions as an ending noun, which means biography itself or a story that is told or transmitted.⁶² In this view, the subject of autobiography or *chasŏjŏn* has more freedom in its mode of delivery, so that it can encompass the practice of vocal-writing among North Korean defectors.

What has led North Korean defectors to turn to this unusual process of collaborative composition? Certainly English-language publication guarantees a wider range of readership than can be expected for memoirs written in Korean. The publication of their work in English brings more than an increase in the total number of readers. As Shin Dong-hyuk's case demonstrates, North Korean defector memoirs are no longer an attractive product to Korean readers. The number of North Korean defectors has increased since the 2000s, having reached 33,523 as of 2019, which is the latest official number.⁶³ In addition, North Korean defectors are relatively visible in Korean society through their appearances on television shows. An increase in the number of North Koreans does not mean that their settlement in South Korea is financially secure or that their cultural adjustment is smooth, yet the relative visibility of North Korean defectors has reduced the interest of South Korean readers and audiences in issues that concern North Korean defectors. Among the difficulties that defectors experience, language has been a significant barrier to border crossers. Defectors who spend time in China as undocumented immigrants must learn Chinese to survive, whereas in South Korea they can already communicate with others. However, when they realize that their northern accent marks them as defectors, they tend to lower their voices. After spending a couple of years struggling to settle in their new country while contending with financial difficulties and cultural discrimination, some North Korean defectors leave South Korea or even return to North Korea, feeling abandoned by their fellow Koreans.⁶⁴ The desperation they experience in South Korea is intensified when their stories do not reach others who use the same language. Public ignorance imposes silence on them, but some have decided to cross this linguistic boundary just as they previously crossed a national one. As a

result, the moments when their vocalization transforms into letters and becomes public speech are crucial in their process of self-recognition and self-definition. In this process, defector authors broaden their vocal boundary, or its relational topos. For North Korean defector authors, vocal-writing enables them to gain the realization that they have become the subjects of their story and that they have finally “seized control of their past.”

Notes

¹For an analysis of the representations of North Korean migrants in South Korean independent films and in South Korean television shows, see Eun Ah Cho, “*The Journals of Musan* (2010): North Korean Migrants’ Masculinity in South Korea,” in *Rediscovering Korean Cinema*, ed. Sangjoon Lee (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2019), 461-72; and “Becoming North Koreans: Negotiating Gender and Class in Representations of North Korean Migrants on South Korean Television,” *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review* 27 (2018): 26–50.

²This is the expression used by Blaine Harden with regard to Shin Dong-hyuk, the subject of his book *Escape from Camp 14*. See Blaine Harden, *Escape from Camp 14: One Man’s Remarkable Odyssey from North Korea to Freedom in the West* (New York: Viking, 2012), 193. After Shin gave a moving lecture in Seattle, Harden states, “In that speech, if not yet in his life, Shin had seized control of his past.”

³Jean Starobinski, “Le style de l’autobiographie,” *Poétique* 3 (1970): 257.

⁴Youn Jeon, “Fiction of Truth or Truth of Fiction—Problems of Autobiographical Writing (Fiction de la vérité ou vérité de la fiction—Problèmes de l’écriture autobiographique),” *Société Coreenne d’Enseignement de Langue et Littérature Francaises* 7 (1995): 5, 263.

⁵Philippe Lejeune, “The Autobiographical Contract,” in *French Literary Theory Today*, ed. Tzvetan Todorov (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 193.

⁶Timothy Dow Adams, *Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 1; italics in the original.

⁷*Ibid.*, ix.

⁸Josh Getlin, “Ghost to the Stars: William Novak Is the Invisible Writer behind *Memoirs* by Lee Iacocca, Nancy Reagan and—Soon—Magic Johnson,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 17, 1992, accessed May 17, 2020, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1992-09-17-vw-968-story.html>.

⁹Ira B. Nadel, “The Biographer’s Secret,” in *Studies in Autobiography*, ed. James Olney (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 25.

¹⁰André Gide wrote in his *Return from the U.S.S.R.* that “[t]he Soviet Union is ‘in the

making'; one cannot say it too often. And to that is due the extraordinary interest of a stay in this immense country which is now in labour; one feels that one is contemplating the parturition of the future"; André Gide, *Return from the U.S.S.R.* (Vancouver: Read Books Ltd., 2011), np, Kindle.

¹¹ Walter Benjamin, *Moscow Diary*, trans. Richard Sieburth (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986), 132.

¹² André Gide, *Return from the U.S.S.R.*, trans. Dorothy Bussy (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1937), 42.

¹³ Primo Levi, *If This Is a Man* [이것이 인간인가] (*Se questo e un uomo*), trans. Hyunkyung Lee (Paju: Dolbegae Publishers, 2007), 286–87.

¹⁴ David Hawk, *The Hidden Gulag* (Washington D.C.: The Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, 2012), 4.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, viii, ix.

¹⁶ Journalist E. Tammy Kim focuses on Yeonmi Park's case in her long article, "Escape from the DPRK: How Yeonmi Park, a North Korean Defector, Became a Controversial Globe-Trotting Celebrity on the Stage of International Human Rights," *The Nation*, February 11, 2016, accessed Feb. 20, 2020. Citing journalist Mary Ann Jolley, who has raised suspicions about the authenticity of Park's account, Kim points out that Park has changed her narratives on different occasions and in front of different audiences.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ "Lie and Truth," Uriminzokkiri [우리민족끼리], October 26, 2014, accessed April 20, 2017, video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i1pTAGxgDwk>. Shin Dong-hyuk presented himself before audiences and the US government as a human rights activist calling attention to the violations of human rights by the North Korea state. It seemed that the North Korean regime considered Shin's lectures on the international stage to be a threat to state security.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ In an interview, Shin Dong-hyuk said that he saw his father's face for the first time in decades in the video taken by the North Korean authorities. After watching his father telling him not to lie, Shin said, "I wanted to die." To the North Korean authorities, Shin responded, "If I have lied, let me meet my father in person. I will ask him directly." He added, "Tell me why my family had to go concentration camp"; Shin Dong-hyuk, "North Korean Kim Jong Eun's Most Fearful Character?," December 2, 2014, accessed April 20, 2017, video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tFOaE1y47J4>.

²¹ This study treats North Korean refugees' autobiographies as a sphere where survivors or "those who have been oppressed and muted" can express their voices and seeks to "further illuminate the nature and effects of human rights abuses." Tony Docan-Morgan, Sarah A. Son, and Golnar B. Teimouri, "Propaganda, Survival, and Living to Tell the Truth: An Analysis of North Korean Refugee Memoirs," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Deceptive Communication*, ed. Tony Docan-Morgan (Cham, Switzerland:

Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 997.

²² Anna Fifield, “Prominent N. Korean Defector Shin Dong-hyuk Admits Parts of Story Are Inaccurate,” *The Washington Post*, January 17, 2015, accessed July 7, 2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/prominent-n-korean-defector-shin-dong-hyuk-admits-parts-of-story-are-inaccurate/2015/01/17/fc69278c-9dd5-11e4-bcfb-059ec7a93ddc_story.html.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ “Shin Dong-hyuk, a North Korean Defector’s Shocking Confession. Admitting False Accusation of Political Prison Camp?,” *Chanel A News*, video, 8:22, January 19, 2015, accessed April 20, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JvxxE4oTKvM>.

²⁶ Leona Toker, *Gulag Literature and the Literature of Nazi Camps* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019), 15.

²⁷ Ibid., 16.

²⁸ Jacques Rancière, “The Historian, Literature and the Genre of Biography,” in *The Politics of Literature* (Cambridge: Polity, 2011), 177.

²⁹ Ibid., 182.

³⁰ Herta Müller, *The Hunger Angel*, trans. Philip Boehm (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2012), 287.

³¹ For example, in the case of *Long Road Home: Testimony of a North Korean Camp Survivor*, Barnes & Noble gives the author as “Yong Kim, Suk-Young Kim (with),” whereas Amazon.com indicates that the book is “by Yong Kim (author), Suk-Young Kim (contributor).” See <http://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/long-road-home-yong-kim/1123830175?ean=9780231147477> and https://www.amazon.com/Long-Road-Home-Testimony-Survivor/dp/0231147473/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1495326548&sr=8-1&keywords=Long+Road+Home%3A+Testimony+of+a+North+Korean+Camp+Survivor; accessed May 20, 2017.

³² I use parentheses here because of *Escape from Camp 14*. This book is technically a biography written by one author, Blaine Harden. However, when the book became controversial over claims about the authenticity of the testimony of Shin, the North Korean subject of this book, author Blaine Harden was not the target of criticism; Shin alone was. This reaction treated the book as a text situated at the boundary of autobiography and biography rather than as a work written by a single author. Unless we have access to the process of how the book was composed, we do not clearly know to whom to assign responsibility—the author of biography or the subject of the story.

³³ Blaine Harden is the only copyrighted author for this book, but according to Harden, he was able to take the initiative of the contents after he promised Shin “a fifty-fifty split of whatever it [the book] might earn”; Harden, *Escape from Camp 14*, 9.

³⁴ Jin-sung Jang’s case is exceptional. Jang, who used to be a writer in North Korea wrote several books after his defection. *Dear Leader* was first written in Korean and

then translated into English. The book was however published for the US readers first, and its Korean version was produced after it achieved success in the US market.

³⁵ The co-author, Maryanne Vollers, is known as the ghostwriter of Hillary Clinton's bestselling memoir, *Living History* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003).

³⁶ For the details of North Korean defectors' memoirs published in Korean, see Eun Ah Cho, *Unwelcome Home: Ethnic Ethos, Gender and Class of North Korean Refugees and Migrants* (PhD diss., University of California, 2017), 119–21.

³⁷ Harden, *Escape from Camp 14*, 9, 169.

³⁸ Lucia Jang and Susan McClelland, *Stars between the Sun and Moon* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2014), 279–80.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 277.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Sungju Lee and Susan Elizabeth McClelland, *Every Falling Star: How I Survived and Escaped North Korea* (New York: Amulet Books, 2016), 308–09.

⁴³ Heejung Yang, "A North Korean Defector, Sungju Lee's Autobiography Became U.S. Parent Association Recommended Book," *Radio Free Asia*, November 4, 2016, accessed April 25, 2017, http://www.rfa.org/korean/in_focus/human_rights_defector/award-11042016162930.html.

⁴⁴ Yong Kim and Suk-Young Kim, *Long Road Home: Testimony of a North Korean Camp Survivor* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), ix–x.

⁴⁵ As is frequently the case with books published by university presses, the copyright of *Long Road Home* belongs to Columbia University Press. The details on how Kim Yong and Suk-Young Kim reserve their rights, especially in terms of their portions of book sales, are confidential. However, both authors have assigned their copyright to the press, and the press does not differentiate between their contributions. Even though Suk-Young Kim identifies herself as a "translator and transcriber," in the legal sense she is a coauthor of this book. I am grateful to Jonathan Fiedler, a sales and marketing associate of Columbia University Press, and Yi Deng, a subsidiary rights assistant of Columbia University Press, for explaining the copyright of the book.

⁴⁶ Gillian Whitlock, *Soft Weapons: Autobiography in Transit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 1080–81, Kindle.

⁴⁷ Thomas Keenan's "Mobilizing Shame," in "And Justice for All? The Claims of Human Rights," Special Issue, *South Atlantic Quarterly* 103, no. 2–3 (2004): 435–49; cited in Whitlock, *Soft Weapons*, 1115.

⁴⁸ Whitlock, *Soft Weapons*, 1086–87.

⁴⁹ In *Soft Weapons: Autobiography in Transit*, Whitlock opens the chapter, "Testimony Incarnate: Read My Lips," with a quotation from Judith Butler's *Precarious Life*. Butler asks, "Who counts as human? Whose lives count as lives? And, finally, *What makes for a grievable life?*" She argues that there is "a hierarchy of grief." "Certain lives will be highly

protected, and the abrogation of their claims to sanctity will be sufficient to mobilize the forces of war. Other lives will not find such fast and furious support and will not even qualify as ‘grievable’; Judith Butler, *Precarious Life* (London: Verso, 2004), 20, 32.

⁵⁰ Judith Butler, “Precariousness and Grievability—When Is Life Grievable?” *Versobooks*, November 16, 2015, accessed on May 18, 2020, <https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/2339-judith-butler-preciousness-and-grievability-when-is-life-grievable>.

⁵¹ Walter Benjamin, “Experience and Poverty,” in *Selected Writings Volume 2: Part 2, 1931-1934*, eds. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 734.

⁵² Müller, *The Hunger Angel*, 258.

⁵³ Harden, *Escape from Camp 14*, 177.

⁵⁴ Whitlock, *Soft Weapons*, 1115–16.

⁵⁵ Rancière, “The Historian, Literature and the Genre of Biography,” 181.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ The word “speechwriting” refers to the act of composing someone else’s speech, especially in the political arena. For example, Sorenson was a ghostwriter as well as a speechwriter for JFK, and Ben Rhodes was a speechwriter for President Obama. In the case of verbal writing, the word indicates its intimacy with verbal language while implying its counterpart, nonverbal writing, through elements such as body gestures, signs, and drawings. In this paper I focus on North Korean defectors’ act of speaking out, thus using “vocal”-writing instead of speechwriting or verbal writing.

⁵⁸ Adriana Cavarero, *For More than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, trans. Paul A. Kottman (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 173.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 174.

⁶⁰ Franz Rosenzweig, *Philosophical and Theological Writings*, trans. Paul W. Franks and Michael L. Morgan (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2000), 271; quoted by Cavarero, 175.

⁶¹ *Chasōjōn*: 자서전(自叙傳)

⁶² Daum Dictionary, s.v. “敍 (sō, 서),” accessed July 5, 2020, <https://dic.daum.net/word/view.do?wor did=hhw000003759>; and “傳 (jōn, 전)” accessed July 5, 2020, <https://dic.daum.net/word/view.do?wordid=hhw00000388>.

⁶³ “Recent Status,” The Ministry of Unification, accessed May 16, 2020, <https://www.unikorea.go.kr/unikorea/business/NKDefectorsPolicy/status/lately/>.

⁶⁴ Seung-hyeon Ju, himself a North Korea defector and a PhD holder in unification studies at Yonsei University, discusses cases in which North Korean defectors return to North Korea in his book, *The Survivors: Those Who Belong to Neither South Korea nor North Korea* [조선자들: 남과 북, 어디에도 속하지 못한 이들에 관하여] (Seoul: Thinking Power Books, 2018), 183–89.

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