

## A Study on the Perception of the Tragic World in Kim Sung-han's novels *Five Minutes and Frog*

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### Abstract

*The purpose of this study is to study the tragic world perception that appears in Kim Sung-han's novels 'Frogs' and 'Five Minutes'. The main emotion that emerges in his novels in the 1950s is non-polarity. His novels "Frogs" and "Five Minutes" satirically express the relationship between God and humans, and the human figure in comparison to animals. In the 1950s, in Korean society, individual lives were distorted in postwar situations, and the relationship between individuals and society was inconsistent. Kim Sung-han wanted to create new ethical and social values through novels. In "Five Minutes" and "Frog," Kim Sung-han expresses and criticizes the crisis in Korea's post-war society as a tragic reality that God has no ability.*

*In the novel, Kim Sung-han criticizes the degenerate reality of humans without God and criticizes the slave grit of humans who cling to God. After all, what he wants to say in the novel is the perception of human free will and existence. In the two novels, the author talks about a tragic world perception that denies the realm of God, but finds out that there is no other world to live a new life that denies God.*

**Keywords:** Tragic world perception, Tragedy, Satire, God, Absence, Slave grit

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to study the tragic world perception in Kim Sung-han's short stories *Five Minutes* and *Frog*. The main emotion that appears in his novels in the 1950s is tragedy. His novels *Five Minutes* and *Frog* satirize the relationship between God and man, and the human figure compared to animals. It is meaningful to understand the meaning of the novel by examining the tragic situation experienced by the characters in the novel and the process of confronting them to overcome such reality.

As a result, many people pursue a life of healing, which permeates our lives in various ways. Various methods for healing are constantly being studied, but healing of emotions is still limited in scope. Therefore, we would like to analyze various studies on emotion-related healing from 2005 to 2020 and suggest ways to heal emotions.

The reality of Korea in the 1950s was that individual lives were distorted by war and the relationship between individuals and society was incongruous. Novelists of this period felt a sense of crisis about society and recognized the need to establish new values. Kim Sung-han's short stories were usually published in the 1950s, and at that time, he was in a devastated situation shortly after suffering from the tragedy of Japanese colonial

era, liberation, and fraternity, the Korean War. Extreme economic poverty confused individual and social values and led to moral corruption. It also dismantled traditional society and collapsed the existing order [1][2].

Despite various narrative methods and creative content composition, Kim Sung-han's novel has been devalued for failing to provide an alternative suitable for the gloomy postwar era. The researcher attempts to examine and analyze the tragic situation depicted in the novel and the resulting character's perception of the tragic world. Through this, I would like to contribute to enhancing the value of Kim Sung-han's novel

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The overall sentiment of Kim Sung-han's short story is tragic. Northrop Frye says that tragedy is one of the representative styles in literature, and this stylistic prototype, tragic drama, is also related to a certain social and historical foundation. Fry says that in the higher imitation style, tragedy is a mixture of heroic and ironic, and the protagonist's death is a social and ethical fact [3].

Lucien Goldman denies the tragic worldview in *Le Dieu Cashé* because God does not dwell in the corrupt real world. However, they say that there is no other place to live outside of such a world, so it is a human world perception that must live in a corrupt real world and pursue God or true values. The tragic worldview is the two demands that contradict each other, the truth of the ego, and the attitude of life that humans can think of in the falsehood of the world [4].

## 3. EMOTIONAL HEALING RESEARCH

### 3.1 Absence of God, Human Corruption - *Five Minutes*

Kim Sung-han's *Five Minutes* was published in 1955 in the Thought World and won the 5th Free Literature Award in 1958. It parodied the myth and expressed the sense of crisis toward Korean society in the 1950s with allegorical techniques. It describes the corrupt reality of humans in the actions and conversations of Prometheus and Zeus. The contents are as follows (Figure 1, Figure 2).

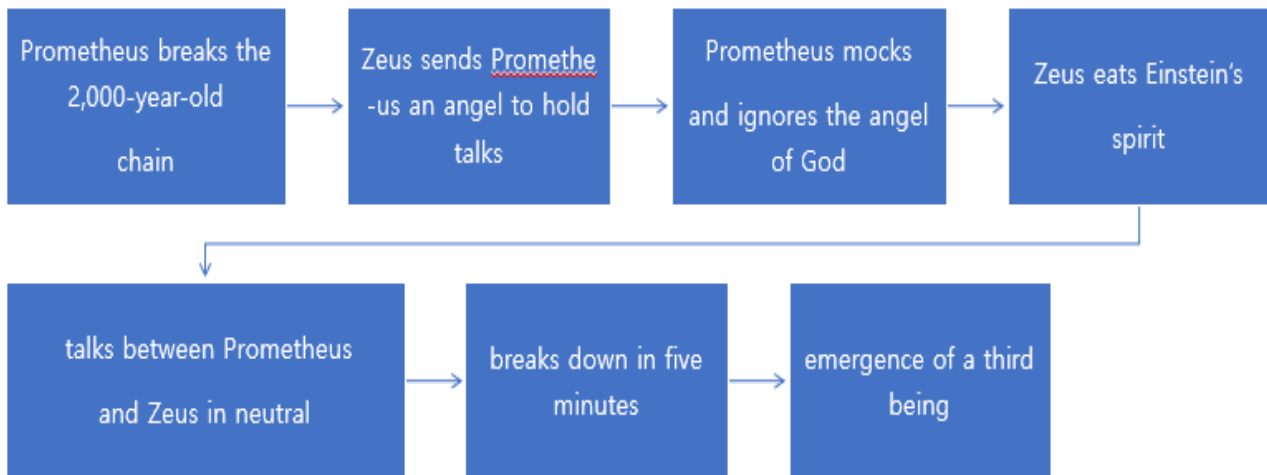
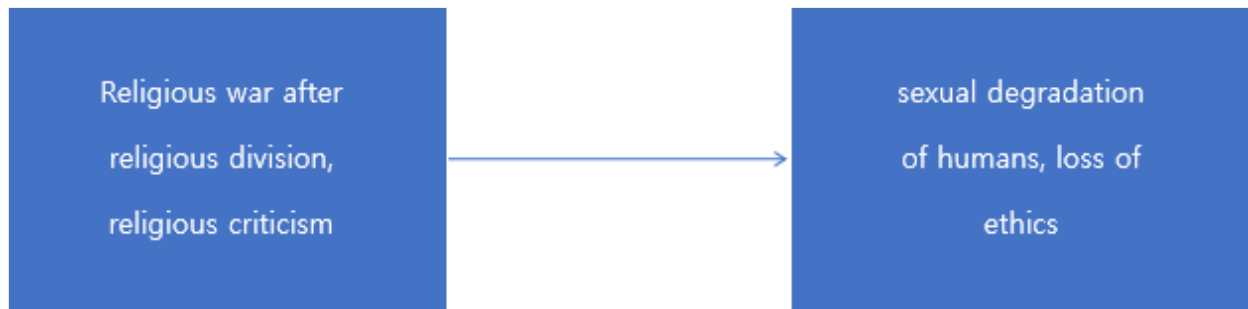


Figure 1. Prometheus and Zeus



**Figure 2. The human world**

In *Five Minutes*, human history is the history of the struggle between Prometheus and Zeus, and the struggle is now at its limit. Prometheus symbolizes Logos, a scientific and rational human intelligence, and Zeus symbolizes universal absolute standards. Zeus is old and powerless, and has no ability to govern Prometheus and man. It is an age when God cannot exert his power. In *Five Minutes*, God is incompetent.

Lucien Goldman denies the tragic worldview in *Le Dieu Cashé* because God does not dwell in the corrupt real world. However, they say that there is no other place to live outside of such a world, so it is a human world perception that must live in a corrupt real world and pursue God or true values. The tragic worldview is a life attitude that can be thought of by two conflicting demands, the truth of the ego and the falsehood of the world, and a hopeless perception [5].

In the era when there is God, but God is incompetent and loses power, and God cannot present universal standards to humans, it is a society where values are confused and morality has collapsed. *Five Minutes* refers to the postwar Korean society as a chaotic society in which universal absolute standards have collapsed. The fact that Prometheus bacteria are swarming in the human world predicts that the infinite development of human intelligence will lead to indiscriminate development and degradation, leading to the end of mankind.

The human world continued to explode due to the diversity and divisional confrontation of knowledge, reaching its limits, suggesting that further development is a threat to human survival. In the end, the meeting between Zeus and Prometheus ends in five minutes. Zeus, who waits only for the emergence of a third being in the void of chaos, is no longer a god who saves mankind. The corrupt reality in which God is denied is a tragic world, but humans have no other space to live outside the world without God, so they have no choice but to live in that corrupt real world and pursue God or true values.

*Five Minutes* is a novel that reflects the tragic reality of postwar society into the mythical world. In the novel, Kim Seong-han expresses the sense of crisis in society at the time by personifying and showing Zeus and Prometheus.

### **3.2 Tragedy of Consciousness - Frog**

*Frog* was published in 1955 in *Sasanggye*. At the time of its presentation, it was titled *Zeus' Suicide*, but it was later adapted into *Frog*. The problem that is noteworthy in the work is the satire of political folly. Kim Sung-han points out the foolish behavior of humans who give up freedom and cling to power through the main character "Spot". Through the setting of Zeus, it points out the wrong "consciousness" of humans, and condemns human foolish behavior due to the wrong "consciousness". It is also said that human wrong consciousness is the fundamental cause of unhappiness.

The contents of the manipulation of consciousness in the novel *Frog* are as follows (Table 1).

**Table 1. Contents of the manipulation of consciousness in the novel *Frog***

Division	Contents	The manipulation of consciousness
1	The appearance of an eagle king in a peaceful frog society demands a ruling order	Have a desire for power that is Spot
2	a plea to Zeus for a ruler	Zeus lamented the frog's "slavery grit" as "tragedy of consciousness."
3	Suffering from the tyranny of the stork	Desire for power leads to misfortune and destruction in frog society
4	Find Zeus and ask him to bring up the stork (Green & Nigger)	a self-centered delusion
5	Zeus said to spit and bite himself	The illusion of Zeus is destroyed, nihilism exposed

*Frog* can be divided into a part that shows the process of causing tragedy by manipulation of consciousness and a part that surfaces the subject of the work through Zeus'. With the appearance of King Eagle and King Lion in a peaceful frog village, frog society is in chaos. Spot claims to be a king in front of a group of frogs who don't know what a king is, but Green refutes that he doesn't need a leader and order that deprives him of 'freedom to grow up, freedom to nap, freedom to stand upside down' [6]. The stain, who is not trusted by his colleagues, goes to Zeus and begs the leader, and Zeus sighs their 'slave grit' as a 'tragedy of consciousness'. Kim Sung-han criticizes Zeus for saying, "The consciousness is not absolute, but variable, and you made it yourself".

Spot is an Alazon-like figure who is misled by the strict rule and order of the eagle king and the lion king, forgetting his freedom, dreaming of rule and order in a frog society in his imagination, and pretending to be king by mistaking his ability. Alazon, a type of tragic figure, is a self-deceiving person who pretends to be more than real or tries to be [7]. However, he is a self-deceiving person who demands a new ruler in the face of reality that does not recognize his ability. They want to ride on the new ruler to show off their power and gain power.

At the request of the frogs, Zeus sends logs as ruler, but when he is not satisfied, he sends storks as new leader. Storks prey on frogs and eat them as they see them, causing great confusion in frog society. Greene and Blackie, who were hiding in the water, see an opportunity and go to Zeus. He begs Zeus to bring up the stork again, but Zeus says he can't help himself because you wanted, acted, and achieved it. It is said that everything in hell and heaven is a manipulation of consciousness, and the source of the tragedy lies in consciousness.

Zeus orders Greene and Blackie to spit and bite themselves. Green and Blackie did what they were told to do and looked at Zeus, but there was nothing in front of them. He destroyed the illusion that Zeus. Everything is manipulated by consciousness, and tragedy is caused by consciousness manipulation.

It borrows the animal world of frogs and talks about the contents, but what the writer is trying to say through the novel is satire on various institutions and contradictions occurring in the human world. It emphasizes the negative aspects of characters to satirize the human world.

The criticism of the ritual presented in *Frog* is vain. If the false manipulation of consciousness destroys the imaginary consciousness, all that remains is vanity. There is no temple of Zeus in front of the green that destroyed the virtual image, but only wood, grass, and stones. Criticism of consciousness depicted in the novel does not reach a positive direction, and only criticizes the foolishness of humans that causes tragedy due to the manipulation of consciousness.

Asking for a new king in a free frog society where a god named Zeus exists is an act of acknowledging the

existence of God but denying God. This is because they want a world ruled by a king rather than a free world with God. He asked for the king and gave him a log, but he denied the log and sent down the stork for a new king, and all the frogs were killed by the tyranny of the stork. Green, who enjoyed freedom from the beginning and opposed the king, takes a Blackie to the god and begs to get rid of the new king. God says, "You have wanted, acted, and achieved it, so I can't do anything about it.", and says that God is incapable of rescuing the world. God says irresponsible things to those who worry about the fate of the Frogs: 'It will work out.' When asked if he felt sorry for the dying frogs, God said, "It's a self-centered delusion". "Did you think the sky and the ground would be overturned because thousands of frogs died and disappeared?" In addition, there is no heaven, and both heaven and hell are "manipulation of consciousness," and it is said that all the good things and bad things that frogs do are small things in the world's position. God says, 'Innocence is power. It is the iron law of Mother Nature to win over those who have no power.' suggests that God is incapable of governing the world, and that God exists, but God is only a negative being to those who want a new king. It is said that the human world, where adultery is the power, and it is the iron rule of Mother Nature for the powerful to beat the powerless, is a tragic society in which ethics and reason are lost and God is absent [8].

Without law and order in human life, everything becomes chaotic anarchy. However, humans love what is fundamentally vague and uncertain, and they crave freedom. Since humans have been trapped within the boundaries of law and order, humans have no choice but to crave freedom. Human life without freedom forms the wealth of the inner soul, hoping for everything uncertain with a constant longing for freedom. The more so, the more tragic the human reality is. The tragedy of reality forms a conflict between the self and the world, and human nature is internally depressed. This is because the reality that nothing is realized is a tragic reality of humans where everything remains a possibility.

Zeus says, "The source of tragedy lies in consciousness." [9]. It is said that God is like a poisonous mushroom raised in consciousness, and is only created by consciousness that exists in the form that everyone wants. Depending on consciousness, God may or may not exist. It is also said that God exists in the way he wants, and does not exist if he does not want to. In human consciousness, there is a slave grit that constantly clings to something and begs. Why? Humans are instinctively dissatisfied with reality and constantly desire new things. Therefore, for humans, reality is tragic. The time when this novel was published was the time of tragedy. In a chaotic society after the war, hope cannot be found, moral values are corrupted, society is rampant with corruption, and people with conscience cannot live in it. Kim Sung-han is an expression of his willingness to accuse this social situation after the war and to open his eyes to human consciousness. The author criticizes the appearance of human slavery and manipulation of consciousness creating 'ism' in the 20th century, denying God, and clinging to it. He points out slave grit in the appearance of a human being trembling in self-illusion and wants humans to escape from the manipulation created by consciousness.

In *Frog*, the Spot desires power, and the Green desires freedom. They all ask God for what they want, but God says that all of this is fabricated in rituals and comes from your slave grit. God denies his existence. Kim Sung-han expresses human desire by comparing human society to a frog society. In the end, humans recognize the contradictory existence situation between themselves and the world as a tragic reality, and they give up and live in the world knowing that there is no other world even if they escape from the tragic world. He recognized the tragic world.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Kim Sung-han's main emotion in the short story is non-polarity. In literature, tragedy is related to the foundation of social history, and the death of the main character is a social and ethical fact. The downfall of the social class becomes the beginning of a tragic worldview, and fear and compassion are the main emotions

of the main character in the tragedy. The catastrophe in which the main character is hit is the core of the tragedy, and the main character becomes a typical victim of misfortune.

Through *Five Minutes* and *Frog*, Kim Sung-han expresses the crisis in postwar Korean society as a tragic reality in which God is absent and humans have fallen. However, it does not stay in the tragic world by giving in to the tragic reality. It expresses its willingness to overcome the tragic reality.

Kim Sung-han describes a tragic reality in a number of novels and ends in a tragic situation. However, in this process, the main character does not hesitate to give in to the tragic reality and shows his willingness to overcome and confront his tragic situation. Especially in *Five Minutes* and *Frog*, it breaks the illusion of human God. The decisions of human life are made by the human self.

The two works deny the realm of God, but there is no other world to deny God and live anew. It refers to the tragic world perception of humans who know it. Recognizing this tragic world, humans do not give in or hesitate to this reality, but live against the tragic reality. This is a tragic human being living in a tragic world, and the lives of all of us.

Tragic humans never give up hope. It just doesn't put hope in the world. Therefore, neither the truth about the structure of the world nor the internal existence of the world can weigh down on humans. In the novel, Kim Sung-han criticizes the degenerate reality of humans without God and criticizes the slave grit of humans who cling to God. After all, what he wants to say in the novel is the perception of human free will and existence.

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