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Research Article

Ten Thousand Ways of Survival and Healing: Reading *Ten Thousand Sorrows: The Extraordinary Journey of a Korean War Orphan* as An Example of Minor Literature

Duygu Beste BAŞER ÖZCAN[1]

[1]Res. Assist., Hacettepe University, Faculty of Letters, Department of American Culture and Literature Ankara, Turkiye

ORCID: D.B.B.Ö. 0000-0001-8765-0134

Corresponding author:
Duygu Beste BAŞER ÖZCAN,
Hacettepe Üniversitesi, Edebiyat Fakültesi Amerikan Kültürü ve Edebiyatı Bölümü, Beytepe Kampüsü, Ankara, Türkiye
E-mail: duygubaserozcan@hacettepe.edu.tr
duygubeste2@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Not only did Elizabeth Kim never meet her American father who impregnated her mother during the Korean War, but she also witnessed the murder of her mother who was the only family member she had. After her mother's death, she was sent to an orphanage and was adopted by an oppressive and abusive American family who forced her to marry a man who turned out to be a schizophrenic and sadistic brute. Her traumatic experiences left permanent marks on Kim as she has suffered from prolonged depression and anxiety. *Ten Thousand Sorrows: The Extraordinary Journey of a Korean War Orphan* (2000) is Elizabeth Kim's only book in which she details her encounters with death, violence, sexual abuse and rape. This article will analyze Kim's memoir as an example of what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari have called minor literature which is defined by the deterritorialization of language, a work's political stance against oppression and its collective value. It will also discuss Elizabeth Kim as a deterritorialized character who eventually becomes a nomad. Taken through this framework, *Ten Thousand Sorrows* does not emerge as a cultural assimilation story, nor is it the breakthrough narrative of an oppressed minority woman. Rather, the book is Elizabeth Kim's attempt to heal the wounds caused by the constant physical and spiritual abuse she had to endure throughout her life.

Keywords: Elizabeth Kim, deterritorialization, minor literature, nomad, Deleuze and Guattari

Introduction

Ten Thousand Sorrows: The Extraordinary Journey of a Korean War Orphan (2000) is Elizabeth Kim's only book, which has been translated into eleven languages, including Turkish. In this memoir, Elizabeth Kim shares her traumatic experiences as a mixed-blood orphan who was born in Korea and brought up by a fundamentalist American family in the United States. By sharing her traumas with an invisible reader, the author attempts to come to terms with her past and heal her soul.

Elizabeth Kim never knew her American father who went to Korea to fight in the Korean War, impregnated her mother and abandoned the country. When she was presumably around five years old, Kim witnessed the death of her mother who was murdered by her brother and father. As she explains in the Prologue to the book, the birthday of the author is uncertain: "I don't know how old I was when I watched my mother's murder, nor do I know how old I am today. There is no record of my birth, or of my name. There is no record of my mother's brief life. No certificate records her death at the hands of her brother and father in an 'honor killing'" (Kim, 2000). After spending some time in an orphanage, Kim was adopted by an oppressive and abusive American family who relocated her to California. At the age of seventeen, they forced her to marry a man who turned out to be a schizophrenic and sadistic brute. Although she divorced her husband and built a life as a journalist independent from her family, the traumas of her past have continued to haunt Kim. Unable to form healthy and close relationships, she has suffered from prolonged depression and anxiety. As this article will illustrate, the author has attempted to recover from her traumas several times. The fact that the pessimistic tone of the book changes into optimism shows that writing her story has helped Kim to recover from the trauma caused by physical and emotional abuse as well as racism.

In their book entitled *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson suggest that the act of telling is therapeutic for narrators who suffer from traumatic memory because writing changes "the narrator and the life story itself" (2010, p. 28). Seiwoong Oh concurs with Smith and Watson's definition and analyzes Kim's memoir as a "transcript of a psychiatric therapy session during which the author/patient pours out her anger, resentments, and trauma of being a victim of racial prejudice, religious oppression and gender inequities" (2018, p. 194). As Riordan also puts forward, "verbally labeling and describing a trauma

through writing allows an individual to cognitively process the event and gain a sense of control" (2019, p. 263). In this regard, given the therapeutic effect of writing, the book serves as scriptotherapy, which Suzette Henke defines as "the process of writing out and writing through traumatic experience in the mode of therapeutic reenactment" (1998, p. xii). Smith and Watson also explain the term as "the process of speaking or writing about trauma in order to find words to give voice to previously repressed memories" (2010, p. 29). Then, *Ten Thousand Sorrows: The Extraordinary Journey of a Korean War Orphan* (2000) is a product of Kim's attempt to heal the wounds caused by the constant physical and psychological abuse she has had to endure throughout her life.

This article argues that the memoir is an example of what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari have called minor literature, which is defined by the deterritorialization of language, a work's political stance against various forms of oppression and its collective value. It is further argued that Elizabeth Kim is a deterritorialized character who becomes a nomad and uses scriptotheraphy to heal her spiritual wounds. Kim's account of her life reveals that her trauma is multifaceted, caused not only by harsh and abusive parents/husband, but also by the deep-rooted racism embodied in American society. In this sense, *Ten Thousand Sorrows* does not emerge as a cultural assimilation story, nor is it the breakthrough narrative of a woman who belongs to an oppressed minority. Rather, it is a healing narrative categorized under minor literature which frankly discusses racism, oppression, abuse, depression and suicide. Kim's personal story also sheds light on the ostracization and mistreatment of those who have long been silenced in the United States.

Deterritorialization and Becoming a Nomad

Deleuze and Guattari are closely interested in a subject's relation to a territory, which ranges from the physical space to psychological, abstract, and literal spaces. According to the scholars, a subject is in a continuous voyage, which is "a process that engages him [the individual] in becomings, rises and falls, migrations and displacements" (1983, p. 84). Moreover, this voyage between territories is "a feeling, a series of emotions and feelings as consummation and a consumption of intensive quantities. . . .We pass from one field to another by crossing thresholds: we never stop migrating, we become other individuals as well as other sexes, and departing becomes as easy as being born or dying" (1983, p. 84-85).

This voyage, or the process of becoming, is possible through deterritorializations and reterritorializations of the individual. According to the scholars, deterritorialization and reterritorialization refer both to mental and physical condition of a character. They state that a person deterritorializes when s/he leaves the territory, which can be a physical territory or a state of mind; therefore, "it is the operation of the line of the flight" (1987, p. 508). In other words, deterritorialization is being off-territory and it is a state of not belonging. Then, a subject is repeatedly deterritorialized in the process of a voyage because she/he moves "from the center to the periphery" (1983, p. 258). Reterritorialization, on the other hand, is settling down and returning to territory, which does not have to be the same as the previous one. Therefore, the scholars argue that two terms are closely related to one another and the difference between them is indistinguishable "since they are mutually enmeshed, or like opposite faces of one and the same process" (1983, p. 258). The deterritorialized person searches for ways to reterritorialize, and thus becomes a nomad. As suggested by the two theorists, a nomad is "a clandestine passenger on a motionless voyage. To become like everybody else; but this, precisely, is becoming only for one who knows how to be nobody, to no longer be anybody. To paint oneself gray on gray" (1987, p. 197). Moreover, a nomad "reterritorializes on deterritorialization itself. . . . nomads have no points, paths, or land, even though they do by all appearances. If the nomad can be called the Deterritorialized par excellence, it is precisely because there is no reterritorialization" (1987, p. 381). Deleuze and Guattari also claim that the novel as a genre deals with lost characters, or nomads, who "no longer know their name, what they are looking for, or what they are doing, amnesiacs, ataxics, catatonics" (1987, p. 173).

In this regard, Elizabeth Kim is a deterritorialized character who eventually becomes a nomad as she never feels home and can never settle down. Kim is lost, she feels less than human, and she does not feel that she belongs to her body: "I hated every aspect of my face and body: my quasi-Asian eyes, my wide cheek-bones, and on down through each layer, to the skull beneath the skin" (Kim, 2000, p. 157). She is deterritorialized and she has an endless desire for acceptance and love, on which she can reterritorialize.

Deleuze and Guattari stress that "anything can serve as a reterritorialization, in other words, 'stand for' the lost territory; one can reterritorialize on a being, an object, a book, an apparatus or system" (1987, p. 508). Elizabeth Kim also attempts to reterritorialize on various concepts: Her Omma, her American parents, animals, books, and her daughter.[1]

1 Omma is the Korean word for "mom." Kim refers to her biological mother as Omma throughout the book.

However, she is unable to form a sense of belonging to the United States, to Korea, to her family, or to her own body.

Kim remembers the days she spent with her Omma as a blessing: "We had little food, but I didn't know I was hungry. With Omma, a bowl of rice was a banquet. We were locked in isolation, but I wasn't lonely. In Omma I had mother, storyteller, playmate, confidante, and defender" (2000, p. 27). Therefore, Kim experiences her first deterritorialization after losing Omma as she is left unguarded and defenseless. Kim's recollections of her mother give her the strength to carry on in the United States, yet the authenticity of the stories she shares about Omma is questionable.

As Smith and Watson note, life writing requires remembering and it is the "reinterpretation of the past in the present" (2010, p. 22). Claiming that autobiographical subjectivity is complicated, Smith and Watson suggest differentiating "I" as: the real or historical I, the narrating I, the narrated I and the ideological I. The real "I" is the historical person whose name appears on the title page (2010, p. 72); the narrating "I" tells the "autobiographical narrative" and is "the persona of the historical person" (2010, p. 72). The narrated "I", on the other hand, is "the version of the self that the narrating "I" chooses to constitute through recollection for the reader" (2010, p. 73). Finally, the ideological "I"s "are possible positions for autobiographical narrators to occupy, contest, revise, and mobilize against one another at specific historical moments." Therefore, ideological "I"s are "multiple, mobile, and mutating" (2010, p. 78). In this regard, experiences of the past are interpreted as the narrating I distances herself/himself from the narrated I and reads her/his "experiential histories" (Smith and Watson, 2010, p. 33). This problematizes the authenticity of life writing because interpretation may distort what has happened or the narrating I might decide to leave out certain experiences whether intentionally or not. Smith and Watson also state that

> Any utterance in an autobiographical text, even if inaccurate or distorted, is a characterization of its writer. Thus, when one is both the narrator and the protagonist of the narrative, as in life writing, the truth of the narrative becomes undecidable; it can be neither fully verified nor fully discredited. We need, then, to adjust our expectations of the truth told in self-referential writing. . . . [A]utobiographical writing cannot be read solely as either factual truth or juridical model of truth and falsehood. (2010, pp. 15-17)

Considering Smith and Watson's discussion on the authenticity of life writing, Elizabeth Kim's early memories of her mother, their village and Korean culture should be discussed to better understand her reterritorialization attempt.

From the Prologue through Chapter 5, Kim delineates her experiences in Korea and recounts her life before and after her biological mother's death. Kim's detailed description of her Omma raises questions regarding the authenticity of her recollections since it might not be possible for a child of that age to remember her mother's personality or the details of their conversations. For instance, she describes her Omma as follows: "Omma was a problem from her childhood on. . . . [S]he really crossed the line of disobedience when she told her parents she wanted no part of an arranged marriage. . . . She was a free, creative spirit who struggled for expression" (2000, p. 12). When interpreting the past, Kim portrays the idealized version of Omma. She obviously shapes the way she remembers her biological mother and admires the image in her mind in order to cope with her loss. However far from the facts Kim's imagination wanders, the traumatic event she witnessed—the murder of her mother—remains an irrefutable part of her personal history. In this regard, by reimagining her mother, she attempts to reterritorialize on the memory of Omma, but fails.

Kim's later attempts to reterritorialize on her American family are also unsuccessful. Although she has been "willing to do anything to win their approval" (Kim, 2000, p. 69), everything she does to please them is misunderstood and perceived as an act of defiance against God and Christ. Therefore, she can never form a warm and healthy relationship with her fundamentalist American parents who have constantly reminded Elizabeth of her so-called flaws: "In Korea I was subhuman. Now I was sub-Christlike. I knew I wasn't good enough for anyone, and I felt complete despair. I couldn't measure up to anyone's standards" (Kim, 2000, p. 85).

Kim also attempts to fulfill her desire to love and be loved through animals. Feeling Kim's loneliness, their neighbor brings her kittens to play with. However, believing kittens are unsanitary, her insensitive and intolerant parents send them away. As a child, Kim understands that "[a]nything [she] loved was taken away without [her] consent or understanding, just like Omma, just like [her] little troupe of toy animals. There was no warning given before and no comfort after" (Kim, 2000, p. 65). A few years later, Kim forms a bond with a dog which loves her unconditionally, yet her

parents take him to a pound where he would probably be locked in a cage and die. Kim agonizes over its (and her own) fate and she is deterritorialized once again.

Because she was ostracized at school, Kim attempted to reterritorialize on the books of famous writers such as Shakespeare, Dickens or Austen. As she spent most of her time reading, entering into the worlds of fictional characters who suffer as much as she does made her feel less alone. She describes her devotion to the books as follows:

> I loved Dickens. When I read him I felt as if he were talking just to me, and that he understood exactly how sad and lonely I felt. I was searching for an emotional road map that I could follow to help get me through the years of alienation. No one in real life had taught me how to deal with loss and abandonment, but I discovered that literature could connect me with something larger than my own life, and I was transported. (2000, p. 83)

Nevertheless, the fictional worlds could not save her from misery. Whenever Elizabeth shared her favorite lines from the books, she was either ridiculed by her friends or demonized by her family. Despite her teacher's encouragements to go to college and pursue a literary career, Kim leaves school and marries as her parents wished.

When her marriage becomes a prison because of her husband's abusive and torturous acts, Kim decides to reterritorialize on a child whom she could love unconditionally; therefore, she stops taking birth control pills without her husband's consent. Kim explains how she decided to reterritorialize on a baby as follows: "But oh, God, I was so lonely. I yearned for somebody to love. I ached to hold another human being and look at a face that looked back at mine tenderly, without revulsion. And I wanted someone who looked like me. I wanted to give my love to a person who had the same blood, the same features, as I did" (2000, p. 149). Consequently, the baby gives her the courage to get a divorce and for the first time in her life Elizabeth feels free on the night she runs away with her baby, Leigh.

For some time, Kim devotes all her time, love and energy to her daughter, and they spend quality time despite financial problems. However, Kim continues to suffer from nightmares and feels she does not have the will to carry out her life. She finds

the solution by reterritorializing on death. Planning how to do it in detail, she continuously contemplates on suicide: "The fantasies about suicide, which had always been present, were becoming my only daydreams and my only comfort . . . . I knew exactly what I was going to wear, what I looked and smelled like, what the surroundings were" (2000, p. 180). She shares her desire to die with Leigh and even prepares her for it. Although she admits having overcome this desire to die, Kim is still unable to reterritorialize:

> Letting go of my love affair with suicide was very difficult. I still think about suicide, even today, but not with the longing and romanticism that I once did. In many ways, losing my lust for suicide was like losing a lifelong lover . . . . The thought of suicide reassured me that no one would ever leave me again—I'd be gone first and out of the reach of earthly pain, abandonment, and heartache. (2000, p. 215)

De- and reterritorializing throughout her life and the narrative, Kim becomes a nomad. The book ends as the author reterritorializes on hope, but it is not certain whether she will succeed or not considering her position as a nomad who is not yet settled.

As the discussion so far has demonstrated, having become a nomad after various deterritorializations, Kim turns to writing with the hope to heal her wounds by sharing them in the form of a memoir, which becomes a tool for scriptotherapy. The final product turns out to be an example of minor literature as Kim's traumas are closely related to being culturally, socially and linguistically dislocated.

Ten Thousand Sorrows and Minor Literature

In their book *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (1986), Deleuze and Guattari discuss the term "minor literature" with respect to the works of Franz Kafka, a Czech Jew writing in German. Having scrutinized the form and content of Kafka's oeuvre, Deleuze and Guattari explain that minor literature dwells on the need to find resistance and it speaks for the crowd. In this respect, minor literature is characterized by three distinguishing features: First of all, "[a] minor literature doesn't come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language." Secondly, everything personal in minor literature is connected to the political whereas in major literatures "the individual

concern . . . joins with other no less individual concerns." Finally, everything in minor literature has a collective value (1986, pp. 16-17).

Within this context, Deleuze and Guattari do not use "minor" as a degrading term, but as a divergence from the standard definitions and the norm. Kafka, according to Deleuze and Guattari, rejects fixed definitions and he uses language as a tool both to embrace multiple possibilities and to talk about the process of becoming. As the scholars put forward, "Kafka marks the impasse that bars access to writing for the Jews of Prague and turns their literature into something impossible—the impossibility of not writing, the impossibility of writing in German, the impossibility of writing otherwise" (1986, p.16). Therefore, including impossibilities as well as difficulties, minor literature emerges out of necessity. Subversive by nature, it seeks a breakaway from oppressive norms. In this regard, not only does minor literature allow the writer to comment on the political, but it also provides a ground to discuss the consequences of oppression and marginalization—such as trauma.

Kim's narrative shows the devastating ramifications of the Korean war, which is the main reason for Kim's traumas. To compensate for the destruction it caused in Korea, the United States initiated the adoption program, yet it has brought more misery and trauma to Kim's life, a point which will be discussed later in the article. The book also comments on the ostracization of women and the racial body both in Korea and the United States. As a mixed-blood woman, Kim faces racism in both countries because she is neither Korean nor American enough. Miseli Jeon also asserts that Kim's traumas stem not only "from cultural displacement and racism, but also from the omnipresent misogynist ideology." The scholar further states that Kim draws attention to the "atrocities practiced worldwide in the name of cultural, religious, and racial purity" (2004, p. 147). Within this context, the memoir is a testimony to the traumas caused by political and cultural structures.

Taken through this framework, *Ten Thousand Sorrows* is political because Elizabeth Kim comments on the aftermath of the Korean War which affected the lives of children the most, details the hypocrisy in the practices of Christianity and criticizes rigid gender roles. As Tracy Dianna Wood states, a great number of children either died or were sent to orphanages in the first year of the war. More than 150.000 Korean children were adopted transnationally during or after the war. Among them, 100.000 have been adopted by white, middle-class, Christian American families (2008, p. 1). Wood

also points out the interest of media in these Korean adoptees. TV shows or films in Korea cover stories of successful and famous people who were once adopted by Americans and "[rationalize] their adoption as not only necessary but beneficial" (2008, p. 3).

In this regard, Elizabeth Kim refutes the idea that Korean orphans end up achieving success thanks to the opportunities provided by their *loving* American families. On the contrary, she felt neither successful nor worthy of a good life: "My grief was boundless, but my rage was directed at one person: me. There were two things I believed: My life was a terrible mistake, and I deserved nothing but suffering. My hatred of myself, born at my mother's death, nourished in the orphanage, grew with each passing year" (Kim, 2000, p. 39). Her American family has a pivotal role in Kim's low self-esteem and self-hatred. From the first moment she met her family to her adult years, both parents oppressed her continuously in the name of religious education. For instance, the family tape-recorded her childhood, many of which included scenes where Elizabeth is punished:

> The story would unfold—usually centered around my fear of something—and would progress through the reasoning, the pleading, the tears, and the denouement of my punishment and contrition. . . . Quite often [dad would] spank me while the machine was recording. Listening to tapes later, every slap would come through clearly, along with my sobs. In the background Mom could be heard saying something like "Now, aren't you sorry you were such a bad little girl? Don't you want to ask Jesus to forgive you?". . . . They got played over and over as I was growing up, and we sat in the living room and listened. . . . During the scenes where I was screaming or begging, my parents would chuckle and shake their heads at me. (Kim, 2000, pp. 78-79)

Her family was blinded by the teachings of Christianity and failed to see the needs of a child whose mother died in front of her eyes, nor could they understand the adaptation problems she was facing and the general anxiety that comes with being an adoptive child. Instead, they blamed Elizabeth for not being grateful to God for saving her from the terrible conditions in Korea. As the following quote demonstrates, rather than giving her love and affection, her parents instilled fear and guilt, which evoked a strong sense of self-loathing and resulted in a loss of self-respect:

> I was told over and over how blessed I was to have been adopted by my parents and taken into a Christian family, out of Korea and the orphanage. "All those other children died, and God chose you to live," my parents told me. "Of all the orphans there, He led us to adopt you. God has a very special plan for your life, and you must always obey and honor Him." I trembled when I thought of how I was letting God down every minute. He should have chosen someone else. (Kim, 2000, p. 77)

Kim's descriptions of the double standards in the culture and religion are inextricably intertwined with gender oppression. In this sense, the criticism of gender inequality is another aspect that makes the work political. Commenting on her uncle and grandfather's cold-blooded murder, Kim states "[a] woman's life had little value anyway, so removing it for the greater good of expunging a family's shame was a long-accepted practice. Such deaths were not murder, they were honor killings, and therefore sanctified by tradition" (Kim, 2000, p. 31). Kim's grandfather and uncle could get away with their crime and they were not punished. She also states that the reports of honor killing are quite frequent in the newsroom she works at as they hear incidents from Korea, Israel, China, Iran, India, and many other countries. Kim comments on this as follows: "We cannot know the number of women who have been murdered for cultural transgressions, but we can imagine that there have been countless other children who watched their mothers die and blamed themselves; other people who grew up feeling faceless, soulless, less than human" (2000, p. 221).

Moreover, although Kim was beaten by her husband, she could not get a divorce because what matters for Christianity is being loyal to your spouse: "The Bible makes allowances for divorce if there's been adultery. . . .So my bruises meant nothing—I could chalk that up to the joy of being able to suffer with Christ—but adultery is a sin" (Kim 2000, p. 161). As Kim witnessed these double standards in religion, she lost her faith in God, Christ, or anything that promised salvation. Thus, along with Kim's personal experiences with gender, religion and adoption, their sociopolitical nature characterizes her narrative as minor literature.

The other characteristic of minor literature is its collective meaning. Kim's experiences as an orphan are not unique. Despite the Korean media's sugarcoated presentation of Korean adoptees, most of them are traumatized and they are subjected to racism: "I hated the way I looked. Whether in Korea or America, I thought my face was wrong. In

Korea my eyes were too American; in America they were too Asian" (Kim, 2000, p. 71). Since her childhood, Kim has continuously been reminded of the fact that she is different from her parents, friends, or the people in church,

> [M]y face was ridiculed all the time. And at home I was never allowed to forget how different I looked. ("Elizabeth, don't pull your hair back like that. You look much more American when it's fluffed around your face. Don't stay out in the sun. You look like a red Indian or something, not a pretty little American girl.") (Kim, 2000, p. 71)

As a result, Kim never felt she could fit in the family and the country although she was desperately in need of love. Thus, she identified herself with her grandmother's African American gardener who treated her like an equal unlike others in the community. The gardener enabled Kim "to see that even in America [she] was not the only one isolated and hated simply because [she] didn't look the same as people around [her]" (Kim, 2000, p. 97).

Kim's experiences as a woman are also shared by other women regardless of race. Like many other women both in the United States and around the world, she was forced to marry someone against her will. Despite the myth of marriage as a heavenly refuge, it becomes Kim's hell starting with the first day of her marriage:

> D. said that God expected a couple to "honor him in the marriage bed," even though there'd been no affection or caresses between us. But when D. couldn't consummate our marriage, I was punished. "This is your fault," he told me. "It's because of you." He slapped me as I lay, naked, on the bed, and while I looked at up him in shock he began punching me rhythmically. (Kim, 2000, p. 144)

Although Kim tried to keep docile as much as possible, everything she did was wrong for her husband who always ended up beating or insulting her. D. emotionally and physically tormented Kim as he forced her to sleep in the doghouse or used her like a slave to keep the house neat and clean. Furthermore, he jumped on her stomach when she was pregnant, and he had sex with another woman in the backseat of the car when she was driving. He made Kim feel worthless with his demeaning attitude and insulting remarks. D. repeatedly stated that she was ugly and told her that he

fantasized about other women when they had sex and that he was only aroused when Elizabeth was in pain (Kim, 2000, p. 154). The types of physical, psychological, and emotional torture may change, yet Kim's experiences resonate with many women who are subject to domestic violence.

Even though her life changed for the better after her divorce, Kim continued to suffer as she was haunted by the traumas of the past. Due to her intimacy problems stemming from her fear of rejection, Elizabeth preferred to have relationships with married men, which put her at a disadvantage in society. To add insult to injury, she was raped, got pregnant and had to undergo abortion. Despite the fact that none of these is her fault, the sense of guilt never left Elizabeth who, like many women, was silenced and abused by men. Kim shares her feelings about these insults openly to form a bond among those who were subjected to the same treatment. She explains why she did not report to the police when an intruder raped her as follows:

> Much of my fear about bringing the rape out in the open was that my private life would be exposed. If my life had been spotless by the standards of that society, perhaps I wouldn't have been so silent about rape. But it wasn't. I couldn't have taken the witness stand and presented a virginal persona to the jury. I was ashamed. (2000, p. 176)

By sharing what is once unspeakable for her, not only does Kim attempt to heal her spiritual wounds, but she also encourages other women to speak up. As mentioned before, she states that there are countless numbers of women who have been murdered because they did not conform to the mandates of the society and there are other children who watched their mothers die. The stories of these women will not be heard and "the whole world is poorer because of it" (Kim, 2000, p. 221). Arguing that racism and sexism intersect in the lives of minority women, Kimberlé Crenshaw states that women of minority groups hide incidents of violence because of the "fear of embarrassing other members of the community, which is already stereotyped as deviant, and fear of being ostracized" (2005, p. 533). In this sense, Elizabeth Kim's personal story presents a larger picture of the lives of women and children of minority groups. Her story serves not only as scriptotheraphy, but also as a call for action. Kim hopes to reach out to women and children who have been silenced, abused, and traumatized so they would not feel alone.

Deleuze and Guattari also point to the linguistic aspect of minor literature and explain the necessity of deterritorializing the major language to challenge oppression. Therefore, the scholars call attention to the language problem experienced by minority groups by stressing that a great number of people today are forced to forget their native languages and use a language "that is not their own." As they state, "[t]his is the problem of immigrants, and especially of their children, the problem of minorities, the problem of a minor literature, but also a problem for all of us" (1986, p. 19). According to Deleuze and Guattari, then, language has a sociopolitical power and minor literature's function is to dismantle the ascribed function of language (1986, p. 24).

As Ronald Bogue also puts forward, writers of minor literature "makes a minor usage of language" to deterritorialize it by playing with the linguistic conventions (2012, p. 294). This requires either distorting syntactic, semantic, and phonetic rules, or subverting stylistic features of the narrative. Deleuze and Guattari posit that "[e]ven when it is unique, a language remains a mixture, a schizophrenic mélange, a Harlequin costume in which very different functions of language and distinct centers of power are played out, blurring what can be said and what can't be said; one function will be played off against the other" (1986, p. 26). In other words, the scholars ask the writers of minor literature to "[c]reate the opposite dream: know how to create a becoming-minor" (1986, p. 27).

English language is not a tool for the author to express her gratitude to the United States that has supposedly offered her various opportunities. On the contrary, she uses major language to voice the dysfunctional nature of politics that causes a lot of children to suffer. Kim was forced to abandon her native language and learn English when she was too young to understand cultural and linguistic differences. This left her deterritorialized as a child who was "bewildered" by people who were continuously scolding her in a language she was alien to: "What I had known was lost, and my life became something completely foreign. 'Mul' became 'water.' 'Pyonso' became 'bathroom.' I became 'Elizabeth,' a girl I did not yet know how to be" (Kim, 2000, p. 57). Only when she spoke and understood English, could her new parents seemingly accept her. However, learning the language does not mean learning how to communicate: "I looked at everything and said nothing. I had learned in the airport that these two people couldn't understand me, and I couldn't understand them, so there was no point in trying to communicate" (2000, p. 55). Even after she learns the language, Kim cannot please her parents. Her actions are not only misunderstood, but also punished.

Her attempts to form a family bond fail repeatedly and their rejection severely traumatizes Kim: "My adoptive parents gave me a clear message on the first day: We won't hear you unless you become like us; you have to talk our language if you want to communicate. So I tried to speak the other person's language. I picked up their mannerisms and jargon and agreed with just about anything they said" (2000, p. 216). However, Kim learns that she will not be heard even if she speaks the language, so she gives up trying to communicate with her parents and other people in her community. In other words, English represents oppression, trauma and miscommunication for Elizabeth. Therefore, she uses it to master the trauma by speaking the unspeakable. She demonstrates the suffering inflicted by her family and the country rather than glorifying the *opportunities* she has been given.

Distortion of linguistic rules is not observed in Elizabeth Kim's use of English. Unlike Kafka who could experiment with German since the German language in Czechoslovakia is intermixed with Czech and Yiddish, Kim was forced to forget her native language. As she has lost her ties with her motherland, Kim must write in English to speak what is unspeakable for the mainstream discourse in its own language. In other words, Kim's story can only be told by her and it can only be told in the language of the oppressive culture. Throughout her narration, in addition to the titles written in Hangul—the Korean alphabet, the only Korean word Kim uses is "Omma." Use of Korean not only gives the author a sense of belonging, but it also signifies a refusal of her identity as an "American" daughter, who is silenced and marginalized. That is, since Kim was initially traumatized by her mother's death, Korean language represents the author's devotion to her Korean mother and a desire to return to a healthy self.

Moreover, Kim disrupts the linear narration and complicates the reading process. The book is divided into four sections, all of which begin with a poem written by the author to set the tone of the following chapters. In addition, she employs idiosyncratic typography at the beginning of each chapter by using the visual layout of a poem. Kim also deploys other narrative strategies and finds new forms of expression. That is, she addresses her biological mother directly and she also allows her daughter to interfere with the narration. The daughter, Leigh, explains her mother's endless suffering from her own perspective: "I knew that my mother had frequent thoughts of suicide. . . . But then we made a pact that she would make it through my childhood, so that I would never be alone without a mother to care for me. . . . There is really no way to articulate what I felt" (2000, p. 203). As seen from the examples, techniques such as interweaving

poetry and prose or complicating the addressee and addresser enable the reader to witness the process of "becoming-minor" from multiple perspectives.

Conclusion

Loss of a mother, leaving Korea, rejection and oppression of her American family deterritorialize Kim and she loses a sense of belonging—to the United States, to Korea, to her American family and community, and to her body. As a deterritorialized subject, she becomes a nomad while looking for reterritorializations that would heal her, yet each of these attempts results in a new deterritorialization. Kim reterritorializes on her Omma, her American family, pets, literature, and her daughter, but neither of them gives her the comfort she looks for.

Kim eventually seeks reterritorialization and healing by writing her story because life writing allows the narrating "I" to observe and (re)evaluate the experiences of the narrated "I". Given the therapeutic effect of writing, the book serves a scriptotheraphy since Kim exposes her private life and traumas, demonstrating that sometimes it is not possible for individuals to make peace with their past, haunted by abandonment, loneliness, alienation, violence and oppression. Since Kim's story is closely intertwined with the issues of racism, sexism and gender oppression in the United States, this scriptotheraphy becomes an example of what Deleuze and Guattari call "minor literature."

Ten Thousand Sorrows exhibits the characteristics of minor literature because not only does the narrative comment on the politics of race and gender, but it also has a collective value since her individual story resonates with larger communities. Moreover, the narrative deterritorializes English language as it is the story of a minority constructed within the major English language. Kim uses the English language, which she forcefully learnt, to expose the hypocrisy in cultural, social and religious mandates as she discusses religion, honor killings, domestic violence, and rape. She also incorporates Korean into her narrative and makes use of different stylistic choices to deterritorialize the major language. In this regard, it is a becoming narrative through which Kim demonstrates that mastering trauma is possible when it is revisited, reinterpreted and shared. Thus, by vocalizing long-repressed traumas, Kim attempts to resist, challenge and overcome what has oppressed and traumatized her. Kim's hopeful tone at the end of the book shows she has resolved to reframe her past experiences and future aspirations. She ends the book with the following remarks: "Everything is possible, Omma told me. She

believed that someday I'd be a person, and people would smile at me and bow to me and look in my eyes. She believed that someday her child's life would be of value. Now her child believes it too" (2000, p. 228).

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