

Original article

Madang: Journal of Contextual Theology  
(Madang J Contextual Theol) 2025 December  
Vol.44, 125-137  
<https://doi.org/10.58302/Madang.2025.44.9>

**Received:** November 20, 2025  
**Revised:** December 19, 2025  
**Accepted:** December 22, 2025  
**Published:** December 30, 2025

# Posthuman Intervention in the Concept of Minjung

Soonyang Choi

Adjunct professor, Ewha Womans University

Correspondence to Soonyang Choi, Email: [soonyangc@gmail.com](mailto:soonyangc@gmail.com)

## Abstract

This paper aims to reexamine the concept of Minjung through an intersectional perspective, drawing on insights from critical posthumanism and posthuman feminism. Neither traditional nor modernist ideas of Minjung clearly include women and non-human beings. We need the perspectives of posthuman feminism to understand who, as Minjung, already existed as such—like women and non-human beings—but were not recognized for it.

I want to understand why women were left out of Minjung concept in its treatment of signifiers, following the Western metaphysical dichotomy. The modernist idea of Minjung did not thoroughly examine masculinity and femininity as ‘signifiers.’ I want to point out that relying on this dichotomous distinction made it hard to include women and non-humans within the idea of Minjung. By applying postmodern analysis to the study of the Minjung concept, I aim to show that the dichotomy between subject and other, male and female, has existed within Minjung. Additionally, by using a posthuman perspective, I want to break down the boundaries between men and women, humans and non-humans, in the Minjung idea, and argue for rethinking them as diverse beings.

To do this, I will analyze Rosi Braidotti’s view of women as nomadic subjects. In doing so, this paper aims to understand women not as beings with fixed identities but as entities of change and connection. After exploring Rosi Braidotti’s perspective on women and non-humans as nomadic subjects, I also examine Judith Butler’s argument linking humans to bodies deprived of certain qualities. Through Judith Butler’s concept of “solidarity bodies,” we seek to see people not simply as human or non-human, male or female, but as beings characterized by “vulnerability” and “deprivation.”

If we see Minjung as interconnected bodies and nomadic subjects due to deprivation, the concept of Minjung expands to include women and non-human beings. This broader view of Minjung links to the resistance movement of Korean women in their 20s that has developed over the past 20 years, helping us imagine a new people’s movement through the potential of this movement.

## Keywords

Critical post-humanism, Posthuman Feminism, Rosi Braidotti, Judith Butler, Nomadic Subjects. The Deprived Body, Connection of Vulnerabilities

## 1. Introduction

This essay aims to explore the concept of Minjung by connecting it to the ontology of critical posthumanism. Two primary goals guide this effort: I want to highlight that women and non-human beings were not truly included in the idea of Minjung. Instead of updating the current understanding of Minjung, this paper seeks to demonstrate that women and non-human beings are already recognized as Minjung, even if they are not part of the traditional definition. Although this paper cannot fully explain why women and non-human beings were excluded from the concept of Minjung, it emphasizes the Western metaphysical dichotomy embedded in



pISSN: 1738-3196 eISSN: 3091-7824

© 2025 Author(s)



This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons CC BY 4.0 license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

the idea of Minjung as a subject and aims to address its limitations.

While recognizing that dichotomous distinctions and the view of men as the norm also exist within the concept of Minjung, I will analyze Rosi Braidotti and Judith Butler's ideas about Minjung to demonstrate that women and non-humans are already included in Minjung. Rosi Braidotti's perspective on women as 'nomadic subjects' challenges not only the difference between humans and non-humans but also the boundary that separates them. By applying the idea of Minjung as nomadic subjects to the concept itself, we can understand why women and non-humans, although part of Minjung, have not been acknowledged as such.

Expanding the concept of 'Minjung' in Minjung theology beyond just humans does not mean excluding the 'Minjung' within humanity. If Minjung is understood as the 'exploited body,' then the suffering of delivery workers who are denied rights under harsh labor conditions can be linked to the bodies of food animals that are constantly sacrificed for human consumption. Although not equal in size, they should be seen as entities that our critical awareness must recognize from the perspective of the 'exploited body.' A perspective that redefines Minjung as an exploited body can benefit from Judith Butler's discussions of vulnerability and dispossession. To expand this view, the concept of 'Minjung' should not be limited to an abstract human existence but should include diverse bodies that live, face disrespect, or are deprived, and should explore why these injustices occur.

After working to understand women and non-human beings as Minjung—who were not explicitly recognized as Minjung despite being inherently part of the concept—I will examine the democratization process through which Korean women have participated to clarify why Korean women must become the new Minjung of Korea.

## 2. Reading the Body as Discourse - Connecting through the Body

This paragraph aims to clearly explain why women should be considered equal members of Minjung, not inferior to male Minjung, by portraying women as fluid, evolving beings.

Many signifiers that categorize humans tend to create labels first and then assign individuals to them, rather than reflecting actual existence. Gender classification overlooks the diverse and complex realities of bodies labeled as female and male, reducing them to just two sexes. Physical correction may even be performed to erase this complexity and difference, forcing individuals to be "male" or "female." Similarly, the binary division of Western and non-Western physical features follows a uniform standard that considers whiteness as the norm.

The idea that women and men are 'different' originates from the perspective that the Western white male is the primary subject. Traits that differ from his are regarded as feminine. A woman has been labeled the Other, deemed inferior and separate from the rational, logical subject. The supposed essential qualities of the 'subject' establish the standard, and the woman, as the Other, is also believed to possess inferior essential traits. This reinforces the idea that 'masculinity' and 'femininity'—sexual roles—are actually social constructs imposed on individual bodies. Susan

Suleiman described 'Gender' (social sex) as a social discourse layered over the human body: "The cultural significance of the female body is that it is not only a substance of flesh and blood... but also a symbolic construction... All that we know about the body exists for us in some form of discourse."<sup>1</sup>

The debate over common characteristics of the female body continues between essentialists and anti-essentialists, who claim "there is nothing essential to women." The issue of how to perceive the body might avoid this extreme debate if we see the body both as what we feel and possess in reality, and as a discourse to which meaning is attached as a signifier.

Cultural anthropologist Mary Douglas, in *Natural Symbols*, argues that 'social perceptions of the human body are not free from the cultural influence that interprets the body.' While the physical body acts and social interpretations are added, a constant exchange of meaning occurs between the physical body and the socially interpreted body.<sup>2</sup>

In this context, the gender identity that views women as 'beings of private care' and men as 'beings of public rationality' continues to portray gender identity merely as a social signifier. Therefore, this gender identity needs to be deconstructed and reinterpreted in more nuanced ways that align with how actual social roles function. For example, women can be understood not just as 'maternity,' but as complex individuals with diverse traits. The issue with limiting women to maternal roles is that even when women take on male roles, they are often still constrained by maternal expectations or pressures. Even when discussing labor issues, the experiences of female and male workers can differ, as women usually bear the dual burden of private responsibilities and public work.

Julia Kristeva pointed out that the interpretation of women's physical characteristics, and maternity, is like a 'monster' that represents the inferior aspect of the man who is regarded as the Same. "The mother's body is simultaneously sacred and defiled... arousing fascination and disgust."<sup>3</sup> Rosi Braidotti, who developed critical posthumanism, attempts to read the woman considered a 'monster' differently from Kristeva. She seeks to grasp women not as confined within the extreme dualism of essentialism or anti-essentialism—nor essentializing women as 'monsters' like Kristeva—but as a moving, becoming existence. To find new possibilities and subjectivity not contained within existing signifiers, she refrains from defining 'femininity,' instead continually enriching and allowing it to 'become,' while newly affirming femininity that has been negatively read as abnormal according to the standard of masculinity.

Braidotti believes it is better to incorporate new elements continually rather than cling to old definitions or view femininity as 'nothingness,' as if it never existed. "We must connect and find relationships where there seemed to be none." This involves moving by embodying and expressing women who live in reality and connecting with entities that show differences. Non-human entities that play feminine roles might also have a place here. Braidotti sees this as the

1 Susan Rubin Suleiman, *The Female Body in Western Culture: Contemporary Perspectives* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 2.

2 Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 65.

3 Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects*, Korean translation by Misun Park (Seoul: Yeoyiyouun, 2004), 141.

“epistemological nomadism” necessary for feminism. The reason women should be understood as beings who move across multiple positions rather than being fixed as the other based on biological differences is that women’s roles are often considered inferior to men’s.

Indeed, women have not been emphasized within Minjung because, even within the concept, there is a tendency to view women as ‘the other’ of men. Furthermore, if we see women as beings who hold various roles, we can understand women as entities connected to the oppression and discrimination faced by many others besides men. Seeing women as fluid beings this way allows us to naturally and convincingly explain why women should be recognized as part of Minjung.

### **3. The Diversity of Minjung: Overcoming Essentialism and Feminism of Difference**

The issue with a perspective that supports anthropocentrism and emphasizes the differences between women and men is that it confines women to the private sphere—such as childbirth, parenting, and caregiving—by portraying these roles as if they are naturally assigned by society instead of genuine choices.

Without deconstructing the understanding of humanity rooted in Eurocentrism, people consciously or unconsciously believe that the Western white male is rational, logical, and better suited for leadership. Meanwhile, women are seen as irrational, emotional, and unfit for public roles. These dualistic, discriminatory ideas not only lead to understanding diverse subjects through collective concepts (male/female, West/non-West, civilized/primitive) but also foster the belief that those in the latter category are inferior and abnormal. The idea that the Western white male is a rational and spiritual being has reinforced the image of God as a ‘Western white male,’ leading to the belief, as Mary Daly argued, that “If God is male, then the male is God.” Due to this bias, women have long been excluded from religious leadership in Christian history.

Assuming that Western metaphysical dichotomies don’t influence the concept of Minjung would be a mistake. This example illustrates the point: when discussing labor issues, the typical male worker is often overlooked, which adds to the double burden female workers face—juggling the demands of working outside the home along with childcare and household chores. Even though we understand the concept of Minjung or labor issues, we haven’t been able to analyze the public-private dichotomy that separates men and women thoroughly.

However, this does not mean femininity must be eliminated. Removing femininity or viewing women as the same as men allows masculinity to remain the norm for humanity, excluding and negating those who do not embody it, including women. We need an understanding of existence that does not tie human sexual identity strictly to biological features but recognizes that diverse differences exist even within men and women. And the recognition that respects these differences can lead to the respect for the differences of non-human beings.

A theory is needed that explores how women and non-human others are objectified,

emphasizing that their objectification and oppression stem from a dualism that views the Western white male as the subject. This should be done without overgeneralizing the diverse experiences of women.

The discussion started with Womanism, which began to explore the differences among women. The term ‘Womanist’ was first introduced by Alice Walker in her collection of essays *In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens*. She pointed out that ‘Feminist,’ influenced by Western human rights movements, often had limitations related to class. Black women had to face issues of race, class, and sexism, while white women primarily saw sexism as the main problem. This indicates that white-centered feminism was criticized for focusing solely on sexism and ignoring other concerns like race, class, and poverty. Furthermore, viewing the ‘veil’ of Islamic women as naturally oppressive and criticizing Islamic culture and customs without question can originate from Eurocentric viewpoints reflected in feminism.<sup>4</sup>

This Feminism of Difference originates from various women asserting that they are not the same as white elite women. It began to promote the idea that the challenges faced by women of color, Black women, and working-class women should be recognized and viewed as interconnected. It is crucial to apply this development of Feminism of Difference to the changes and diversity within the Minjung concept. Braidotti’s proposed Posthuman Feminism deepens and complicates existing socialist feminism by exposing and criticizing the commodification and exploitation not only of exploited humans but also of all non-human beings.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, we should focus on Judith Butler’s discussion, where she argues that all humans are equal entities with diverse bodies when viewed through the lens of ‘vulnerability’ and ‘deprivation,’ without assigning superiority to any particular body. According to Butler, the ‘norms’ and ‘signs’ that define human identities do not honestly describe who someone is but instead determine who is worthy of life and who is not. Citing the example of the Israeli human rights organization Btselem, which exposes Israel’s war and violence against Palestinians—and was reportedly indicted for treason for accurately publicizing the number of victims—Butler raises questions about the power to decide who lives and who dies, and advocates for a politics of performativity that affirms the right to one’s own existence.<sup>6</sup>

Resisting the overthrow of norms that judge the value of existence by uniting as beings lacking self-determination can become a struggle involving connection and depersonalization. Butler’s attempt to connect humans horizontally as the ‘deprived’ and ‘vulnerable’ can also apply to non-human entities. Moving away from discourse that dichotomizes humans and focusing on existence as a body offers the benefit of helping us break free from the male-centered view inherent in the concept of Minjung, while also allowing us to see women, minorities, and even

4 Eunkyong Oh, “There Is No Islam or Women behind the Veil,” in *Feminism Differences & Interstices*, edited by Hee-won Lee, Myung-ho Lee, and Jo-won Yoon (Paju: Munhak-dongne, 2011), 184.

5 Rosi Braidotti, *Posthuman Feminism*, Korean translation by Jo-won Yoon, Hyeon-jae Lee, and Mi-seon Park (Paju: Acanet, 2024), 103-104.

6 Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou, *Dispossessions*, Korean translation by Eung-san Kim (Seoul: Jaum and Moeum, 2013), 168.

non-human beings — who were not depicted in the Minjung concept — as part of Minjung.

#### 4. An expanded Minjung that reveals women and non-humans as part of Minjung: Through the Lens of Critical Posthumanism

Posthumanism is divided into Negative Posthumanism, which strongly opposes the epochal change, and Positive (Technological) Posthumanism, which embraces it and is closely linked to capitalist interests. It holds an optimistic view that technological progress will significantly influence the future and development of humanity.<sup>7</sup> In contrast, those who neither reject nor fully accept this change but instead focus on caring for more beings (including non-human) and creating an equitable community are known as Critical Posthumanists. Rosi Braidotti is a prominent advocate of Critical Posthumanism.

Braidotti agrees with the postmodern idea that the Other—including women (such as sexual and racial others)—has always been viewed negatively and as inferior by the standard human (the so-called subject), which the Western white male represents. She argues that women need to give up this Other-defined identity and forge a new one. Braidotti urges women to be reborn as a ‘nomadic subject,’ emphasizing the differences women embody, which she sees as separate from the discriminatory differences that divide male and female or human and non-human in a dualistic way. The ‘Feminism of Difference,’ which recognizes and celebrates the differences among women and between diverse groups, promotes viewing women as both spiritual and physical beings. Braidotti explains that the ‘nomadic woman’ escapes the negative, Other-defined identity placed on women, which has been shaped in metaphysical terms. A nomadic subject isn’t someone with a fixed identity; instead, it strives to cross that boundary. It seeks to connect with and include the rich experiences of diverse women in a relay manner, rather than having one woman (like Western intellectual women) act as a stand-in. The nomadic subject “cannot be reduced to a linear, teleological form of the subject, but rather is a point of multiple connection,” emphasizing fluidity and multiplicity.<sup>8</sup>

According to Braidotti, discovering who women are is like ‘nomadic map-making.’<sup>9</sup> It involves mapping what existed in the past, but the map must be constantly redrawn, discarding the old and adding the new. A woman discovering and creating her identity like a nomad means understanding herself as a pluralistic existence of ‘interrelation.’ While femininity defined by signifiers may have single, one-sided traits, the woman in real life must be complex, contradictory, and diverse. Therefore, trying to contain this complexity and contradiction can be seen as the woman-as-nomadic-subject.

In our society, becoming fully human depends on conformity and normality. To be human is to have an identity defined by the signs that society imposes. A specific human ontology becomes the standard and norm for judging different types of humans. The ‘subject,’ the

<sup>7</sup> Jin-ho Kim, et al., *Humans Beyond Humans* (Goyang: April Books, 2021), 117.

<sup>8</sup> Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects*, 79.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 78.

Western white male, becomes the benchmark that defines sexualized, racialized, and naturalized others as beings with dualistic inferiority. Therefore, there is a need to reframe and recognize the uniqueness and difference of beings living in harmony in reality, regardless of the fictional identity assigned to this subject.

This dismantling of the dichotomy should also apply to the concept of 'Minjung' because 'Minjung' has historically centered on male human workers and male human farmers as its subjects. Only by breaking down the binary distinction between men and women and between human and non-human within the concept of 'Minjung' can women and non-human entities also be recognized as part of 'Minjung'.

There is a need to develop a new concept that represents knowledge and power, embodying resistance without adopting the standard male-centered, dualistic, Eurocentric, or singular subject. Braidotti's intended meaning of the subject includes this aim. This type of deconstruction is crucial to recognize beings called human who are not truly part of the human race. Similarly, women (and even non-human) living under systems of oppression and discrimination, but not recognized as Minjung, should be acknowledged through this deconstructive process.

Postmodernism has already challenged the idea of the subject as a Eurocentric being, leading to the understanding that there are many differences—such as race, class, and power—even among women. Braidotti builds on this postmodern critique, demonstrating that differences exist not only among humans and women but also among beings who are marginalized or discriminated against because they are considered non-human. This is because naturalized others (animals or the environment) have been epistemologically fixed to affirm the existence of the Same (the subject), which is presumed to be the Western white male, just as women are. In modern binary thinking, difference creates hierarchies, but for Braidotti, it exposes complex, scattered, and layered fractures. Real women cannot help but exist in multiple forms. They are fragmented and shaped through shared experiences.<sup>10</sup>

Talking about women as beings with differences means not categorizing them into simple dichotomies but recognizing their experiences and realities as unique to each individual. In the age of artificial intelligence, those on the dark side of technological development are not just women. Beings whose bodies are used as tools for capital can include 'surrogate mothers' among women but also encompass all beings sacrificed when organs or blood are sold, including various animals. Therefore, viewing women not as beings oppressed by 'femininity' but as 'exploited bodies' offers a useful perspective for understanding reality. They are easily exploited and sacrificed, seen as 'monsters' and abnormal because they produce other beings, and their bodies are transformed.

The 'nomadic subject' described by Rosi Braidotti refers to beings who move beyond the traditional, autonomous idea of the individual in Western philosophy. They are embodied entities experiencing situations across various realities that are still not fully understood. To see

<sup>10</sup> Ye-eun Park and Mi-Ra Cho, "Female Subjectivity in the Posthuman Era," *Philosophical Investigations*, 56(2019), 179.



these diverse beings — not just women but also non-human entities, animals, and machines — as subjects, we need to ask: Who is sacrificed for humanity? And which humans are exploited and deprived by others? Understanding women and non-human beings through critical posthumanism helps us move beyond a male-centered ontology and recognize all beings as agents of social change.

If we understand differences, segmentation, and dispersion as parts of existence, we can reshape the concept of Minjung. This is because we begin to notice and recognize diverse beings, including women living oppressed lives in a society that is becoming more neoliberal.

## 5. Entanglement with Non-Human Beings: Minjung as ‘Abused and Suffering Bodies.’

Due to advances in science and technology, all living beings are easily commodified. Taking biotechnology or genetic engineering as examples, “living things are invested in, and profit is gained by, scientifically and economically controlling and commodifying them.”<sup>11</sup> Ecology and environmental movements have long warned that non-human natural entities are being exploited and losing their habitats due to human domination and abuse. They believe this is closely linked to anthropocentrism, which exploits and kills nature. All life has been destroyed and used for human benefit.

It is strongly recommended that we change our way of life immediately by abandoning anthropocentrism and recognizing the profound respect and significance of non-human beings. The exploitation and development of nature for human benefit, combined with capitalist market logic, have naturally resulted in the domination of diverse beings, including plants, animals, and lower social classes.

Rosi Braidotti emphasizes the ‘Ethics of Becoming.’ Applying Deleuze’s concept of the nomadic subject as a ‘becoming existence’ to feminism, Braidotti seeks to understand the links between mind and body, nature and civilization, and human and non-human as interconnected entities. The subject is formed more through experience than through conceptual construction.<sup>12</sup> Like a net, humans enjoy and shape the present while being influenced by objects, machines, and nature. Braidotti views the subject as ‘becoming’ to describe humans as beings constantly influenced by and connected with others.<sup>13</sup> She sees women as a becoming existence, highlighting their interconnectedness with non-human beings. Women can be seen as beings connected to machines and animals because their bodies are replaced or sacrificed in place of humans. Non-human bodies—such as animals and machines—are “abused and suffer” for human medical and scientific discoveries, and their bodies are misused as materials for “genetic recombination.”<sup>14</sup>

11 Braidotti, *The Post Human*, 81.

12 Rosi Braidotti, *Metamorphoses*, Korean translation by Eun-ju Kim (Seoul: Dream Books, 2020), 139.

13 Mi-seon Park, “Rosi Braidotti’s Politics of Ontological Difference and Nomadic Feminism,” *Women’s Theory*, 12 (December, 2001), 181.

14 Braidotti, *The Post Human*, 16.



Consider the example of ‘cloned humans,’ created from a desire to produce a superior, enhanced human. These clones are not studied through human experiments. Instead, animals that are easier to experiment on and discard are used as subjects. Dolly the cloned sheep endured years of experimentation before being euthanized. This serves as a clear example of humans using non-human bodies as biological materials to become stronger and more efficient, without feeling guilty. Thinking of humans as beings connected to non-human entities is not ignoring that ‘human’ as a category is in crisis, but recognizing that some humans are in more danger than others, and reporting the reality where the death of non-human life provides no warning to humans.

The metaphysical hierarchy driven by Western white male centrism places the white European male as the standard and normal, viewing other entities (sexual others, racial others, natural others) as abnormal and monstrous. This ideology not only functions as a philosophical concept but also becomes a social norm that disciplines and controls diverse bodies in society.<sup>15</sup> Animals, deemed abnormal and inferior, have been killed countless times for human industrial development, and their exploitation has been justified. Elephant tusks, animal hides, wool, and fur have been exploited in various forms for human use. This appears unproblematic when supporting the dualistic norm that animals can be sacrificed for humans. However, a complex problem arises when it prompts the question: Why can the life of one being with the same body be exploited while the life of another cannot? We are faced with the serious, responsible question: Who are we, after all?

The perspective of Posthuman Feminism focuses on how sexualized or racialized beings are used as labor or genetic resources. It aims to raise awareness about exploited bodies, including complex issues like gene editing, bodies subjected to exploitation, and which species are endangered due to climate change. Critical posthumanism does not see only humans as objects of exploitation but also recognizes that various bodies (materials) are being exploited. This approach seeks to avoid viewing women as fixed identities while also considering their connections to the various oppressed beings of the posthuman era. Understanding women as exploited bodies can help us realize that not only women but also many other beings face exploitation. It is essential to recognize that various beings, including women, may encounter disrespect and discrimination, as well as an expanded sense of responsibility.

This critique of posthuman feminism also connects to Judith Butler’s effort to link diverse bodies through ‘instability’ and ‘vulnerability.’ Butler claims that living in a neoliberal society that expects individuals to take full responsibility for their own lives exposes many people to unpredictable threats. The instability caused by neoliberalism can only be addressed through solidarity among people with different identities. The fight against this instability must be based on the demand that our lives and livelihoods be treated equally and that everyone has the right to equal living conditions.<sup>16</sup> In this context, ‘we’ refers to people of various cultural and ethnic

<sup>15</sup> Braidotti, *Metamorphoses*, 236.

<sup>16</sup> Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*, 101.

backgrounds, without a fixed or specific identity.

The reason ‘we’ can unite isn’t because we share a common identity, but because we live disenfranchised and fragile lives. Even though we are in different situations and face different oppressions, if we can’t enjoy a ‘life worth living,’ we can resist together to connect. Butler asks us, looking at refugees and Palestinian victims, “Are those who suffer far removed from ourselves? Are we also part of them?”<sup>17</sup> Couldn’t this question also apply to non-human beings who are exploited and suffering? This is because the gaze that challenges the language of dualistic superiority—the distinction between male and female, West and non-West—and views beings as ‘vulnerable bodies’ is not necessarily limited to humans alone. Under the pressure of neoliberalism, humans are no longer the only ones experiencing exploitation and instability.

Humans often pursue scientific and technological progress at the expense not only of the female body, which is frequently seen as monstrous, but also of Earth’s diverse natural entities and even mechanical beings that lack life but possess agency. As Butler stated, the reality in which beings with different identities share vulnerabilities and instabilities will now extend beyond humans to various non-human entities in the posthuman era. If ‘becoming-woman’ is understood as a process of establishing a nomadic subject, it means that women also break free from a confined existence called ‘human’ and begin to see themselves as vulnerable beings connected to non-human entities that have been historically sacrificed. Standing as beings connected to all of existence within a posthuman worldview—which signifies the death of the white man, the death of the man, and the death of the woman—entails linking violence against humans with the exploitation of non-humans and taking responsibility.

Being sensitive to the suffering of different beings involves connecting with those who face various forms of exploitation. Calling the diverse beings who are exploited *Minjung* will make our resistance more responsible.

We must now understand Paul’s words to weep with those who weep (Rom 12:15), extending them not only to humans but also to various exploited beings.

## 6. Conclusion: Expanding the concept of *Minjung* through the Korean women’s democratization movement

Through the process of Korean women’s participation in democratization, we can broadly examine what kind of solidarity among *Minjung* with diverse identities, as I intend to say, can be achieved.

The participation of Korean women in their 20s and 30s as democratic participants is not a recent phenomenon. In Korea, civic movements began to emerge in the 2000s, unlike the activist-led movements of the 1990s, with the appearance of the ‘Candlelight’ protests. The Candlelight protests were particularly networked and can be defined as movements in which women were actively involved, such as the ‘Candlelight Girls’ (middle school girls participating) and the ‘Stroller Brigade’ (mothers participating with children).

<sup>17</sup> Butler, *Dispossession*, 191.

The catalyst for the Candlelight Revolution, unlike the class struggle focus of 1990s activism, can be seen as resistance and a response to various threats signaled by neoliberalism. These movements emerged because the state failed to ensure its citizens' safety, as demonstrated by the Mad Cow Disease scare in 2008, the Sewol Ferry disaster in 2014, and the MERS outbreak in 2015. Especially after the MERS outbreak, attacks against specific women led to more defiant women's voices. A key feature of the Candlelight Revolution is the rise of "individualization" alongside active women's participation. The subjects of the Candlelight Revolution were individuals living in scattered communities, sharing information through networks, and expressing diverse voices of resistance that could not be unified.<sup>18</sup> Unlike early democratization movements, the women leading the candlelight vigils from 2010 to 2020 can be seen as waging a resistance movement rooted in the various instabilities of their lives. It was a critique of many factors preventing them from living a "worthy life," including gender inequality.

Women's consciousness was not focused on supporting a specific political party or goal. They generally did not gather and unite solely around particular issues. Instead, they showed resistance by coming together and dispersing to assert their individual rights and pursue equality in various settings. The reason women engaged in such diverse activism is likely because they faced different human rights and inequality issues in the 2000s, unlike the class-based perspective of the 1990s. An important factor was that even so-called progressive men displayed some non-progressive attitudes toward gender equality. It is clear that a 'misogynistic' tendency, at a similar level, appeared across both progressive and conservative groups.<sup>19</sup>

A sense of loss is growing among young men, who feel they have not only lost their patriarchal privileges but are also struggling to find opportunities in the job market. This awareness isn't expressed through analysis or resistance but manifests as anti-feminism and resentment toward women. In this social climate, women in their 20s and 30s began to understand feminism—not as a formal theory but through their daily experiences and consciousness. Although many opportunities existed, this trend was intensified by the "Me Too" movement. It became more noticeable during the limitations of the second Me Too movement (the exposure of Democratic Party officials). While the first Me Too movement quickly prompted social change and helped women join the progressive side, the second movement started to turn into a cycle of conflict between men, regardless of ideology or age, and young women. Through this process, a feeling of solidarity among women began to form, despite differences in their positions and realities.

The participation of young women has been ongoing since the 2000s and became more prominent during the 2024 Candlelight protests. On December 7, 2024, under the name 'Feminists united to save democracy in the Square,' women involved in anti-sex trafficking movements, disabled women's groups, sexual rights and reproductive justice initiatives, the Korea Sexual Violence Relief Center, the Korea Women's Hot Line, and others formed a solidarity

<sup>18</sup> Hong Chan-Sook, *Condensed Individuation and Cultural Change in Korean Society* (Seoul: Sechang Publishing, 2002) 124.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

group. Starting that day, the ‘Equality Rules’ were recited at the citizens’ march rally, and it became a pivotal moment for a diverse group of people—farmers, disabled individuals, youth, immigrants, and others—to speak on stage and share their gender identities and social positions. There were also ‘fans’ who introduced their favorite songs. A culture of empathy emerged, where people introduced themselves and shared their hopes for a more inclusive democracy from their own perspectives.

This process shows us that the resistance of different beings striving for a ‘life worth living’ is connected, even though their identities and classes vary, as I explained earlier by quoting Butler.

The participants, primarily women, who formed the ‘Namtaeryeong Candlelight Action’ or the ‘Kisses Corps’ to defend the protest site, did not have extensive political awareness or clear objectives. Most of them went to Namtaeryeong because they felt guilty for not being able to join others or because they were worried about protesters shivering in the cold. A college student, feeling they should take a ‘shift’ with the ‘Namtaeryeong people’ who were losing energy in the bitter cold, arrived at Namtaeryeong on the first bus at 7 a.m. These various feelings—compassion, regret, guilt, a sense of connection—came together to mark a significant turning point in political movements.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, the political actions of Korean women in their 20s and 30s represent a hopeful way of engaging with Butler’s questions, “How am I connected to the Other?” and “Am I truly unrelated to them?” through the solidarity of vulnerability. According to Butler, resisting gender inequality is closely linked to the larger societal human rights movement. The opposite of instability is not stability but rather the ongoing effort for interdependence in the pursuit of a livable life.<sup>21</sup>

The critical consciousness and political action that emerge from these experiences will not only address exploitation and violence among humans. They include people who feed abandoned cats in any weather and those with empathy who respond to those who stumble and fall. However, this hopeful reality was not the only one. ‘Old-fashioned progressive men,’ who tried to expand their own influence by gradually pushing women out of the square where women’s voices and those of diverse minorities grew louder, were also part of it. People completely lacking gender sensitivity, who questioned why the distinctions of sexual identity and gender inequality are issues that challenge capitalism, were also participants in the square.

What I learned from these women, who so readily connected with farmers despite living in different realities, was that even people with diverse identities can easily connect and unite in the pursuit of a better life and an equal society.

As the neoliberal era accelerates and society becomes one where technology-enhanced reality centers on the privileged, we must stand in solidarity with people of diverse identities. To incorporate the resistance and demands of diverse women who favor horizontal communication and empathy into the concept of Minjung and expand it, we should avoid understanding

20 “Lee Seul-gi’s News Twist: Why Did They Go to Namtaeryeong?” *Oh My News* (December 27, 2024), [https://www.ohmynews.com/NWS\\_Web/Series/series\\_premium\\_pg.aspx?CNTN\\_CD=A0003091708](https://www.ohmynews.com/NWS_Web/Series/series_premium_pg.aspx?CNTN_CD=A0003091708), accessed November 18, 2025.

21 Judith Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*, Korean translation by Eung-san Kim and Hyo-sil Yang (Seoul: Changbi, 2020), 103.

Minjung solely through class determinism, distinguish Minjung along dualistic gender lines, or limit Minjung to humans. To call women and non-human beings ‘Minjung,’ I suggest a connection between Braidotti’s nomadic subject and Judith Butler’s dispossessed body. The concept of a nomadic subject that includes diverse beings and solidarity with beings with dispossessed bodies can diversify resistance forces in the neoliberal era and seek to connect vulnerabilities.

Instead of categorizing Minjung by social status, gender, or whether they are human or not, understanding the different meanings of Minjung involves empathizing with the realities faced by beings—such as ‘vulnerability,’ ‘deprivation,’ and inequality, as well as escape and nomadism—and building connections and unity from that perspective. To argue that women and non-human beings are also part of Minjung, rather than defining the concept solely through identity, it is essential to connect Minjung through their experiences of deprivation and discrimination within a neoliberal society.

## References

- Braidotti, Rosi. *Nomadic Subjects*. Korean translation by Misun Park. Seoul: Yeoyiyoun, 2004.
- Braidotti, Rosi. *The Post Human*. Korean translation by Gyeong-ran Lee. Paju: Acanet, 2015.
- Braidotti, Rosi. *Metamorphoses*. Korean translation by Eun-ju Kim. Seoul: Dream Books, 2020.
- Braidotti, Rosi. *Posthuman Knowledge*. Korean translation by Jae-hee Kim and Eun-ju Song. Paju: Acanet, 2022.
- Braidotti, Rosi. *Posthuman Feminism*. Korean translation by Jo-won Yoon, Hyeon-jae Lee, and Mi-seon Park. Paju: Acanet, 2024.
- Butler, Judith and Athena Athanasiou. *Dispossessions*. Korean translation by Eung-san Kim. Seoul: Jaum and Moeum, 2013.
- Butler, Judith and Athena Athanasiou. *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*. Korean translation by Eung-san Kim and Hyo-sil Yang. Seoul: Changbi, 2020.
- Douglas, Mary. *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology*. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Hong, Chan-sook, *Condensed Individualization and Cultural Change in Korean Society*. Seoul: Sechang Publishing, 2022.
- Kim, Jin-ho, et al. *Humans Beyond Humans*. Goyang: April Books, 2021.
- Oh, Eunkyong. “There Is No Islam or Women behind the Veil.” In *Feminism Differences & Interstices*, edited by Hee-won Lee, Myung-ho Lee and Jo-won Yoon, 176-189. Paju: Munhak-dongne, 2011.
- Park, Mi-seon. “Rosi Braidotti’s Politics of Ontological Difference and Nomadic Feminism.” *Women’s Theory*, 12 (December 2001), 175-186.
- Park, Ye-eun and Mi-Ra Cho. “Female Subjectivity in the Posthuman Era.” *Philosophical Investigations*, 56(2019), 153-179.
- Suleiman, Susan Rubin. *The Female Body in Western Culture: Contemporary Perspectives*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985.
- “Explore the Link Between the Plaza and Feminism.” *ilda*. <https://www.ildaro.com/10114>. Accessed November 15, 2025.
- “Lee Seul-gi’s News Twist: Why Did They Go to Namtaeryeong?” *Oh My News* (December 27, 2024). [https://www.ohmynews.com/NWS\\_Web/Series/series\\_premium\\_pg.aspx?CNTN\\_CD=A0003091708](https://www.ohmynews.com/NWS_Web/Series/series_premium_pg.aspx?CNTN_CD=A0003091708). Accessed November 18, 2025.