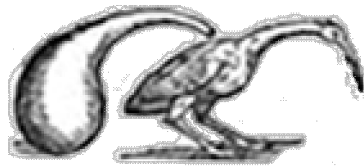


# Segue

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## SUCHOON Mo



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# **He Went to His Own Funeral**

he woke up  
got dressed  
brushed his teeth  
combed his hair  
drank a cup of coffee  
and went to the church  
it was his own funeral  
I never saw him since  
they must have buried him

## About the Work

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I shall start with the question of why and how I decided to write “He Went to His Own Funeral.” In *Siddhartha*, Hermann Hesse tells a story of Siddhartha in search of Siddhartha. “I” as a subject is unique and solitary; there is only one “I.” But what if there is another “I?” If these two “Is” meet each other, do they recognize each other? Siddhartha meets an old man by a river crossing. That old man is also Siddhartha (Buddha). If one is a Buddhist scholar, a philosopher, or a psychiatrist, he or she would say that such subject-object dichotomy leads to some kind of problem. Some Mahayana Buddhists use the word “Middle Vehicle” to allude to some unattainable state which is neither subjective nor objective. For an example, a Zen haiku about an empty fishing boat under the moon is attempting to exclude subjectivity of the poet from the poem. I have been trying to create, with a poetical or musical medium, such a state of existence.

“He Went To His Own Funeral” is written in that context. One may talk about “man in search of himself.” But if the man finds his “I,” that “I” is no longer “I.” It is someone else. This is the tragedy of searching for existential meaning. Also, the dissociation of self as unique existence is known scientifically. For example, being a psychologist, I know that there is a phenomenon known as “perceptual aberration.” A person feels strange towards his or her own body. If one believes that his or her leg is so strange that it is not his or hers but someone else's leg, then the problem is sufficiently grave enough to call for psychiatric intervention. Did Kafka truly recognize this kind of tragic loneliness? I don't think he did. It is not the case of metamorphosis of unique existence. It is the case of two identical beings not recognizing each other. A popular notion is that we are existentially unique because we are capable of locking up anything which contradicts such uniqueness, into a prison called “unconsciousness.” This kind of notion is blind to the possibility that we are utterly incapable of recognizing ourselves. For example, how do I sing a song which cannot be sung? I cite one short poem of mine to illustrate such question.

### Love Song

let the very silence  
of a solitary bird  
soaring in the sky  
over the frozen land  
be the song of love  
too painful to sing.

The creation of Korean alphabet by King Sejong of the Yi Dynasty gave Korean poetry its distinctiveness. Although I had a fair share of exposure to the classic Mandarin (Chinese) poetic style, I never felt at home with its stolid formalism. Korean vernacular poetry is not only to be read but also recited. It is truly lyrical in that sense. I believe that kind of cultural background enables me to let my poem engage in a dialogue with a reader. Consequently, I have no intention of

provoking the reader emotionally or intellectually. Perhaps, the right word is “evocation” instead of “provocation.”

I am attaching a recent music composition of mine [“Snow Covered Mountain Path.”](#) It is a kind of poem in music form, and it owes, to some degree, its rhythmic and tonal progression to such Korean vernacular poetry as Shijo.

As to my background, I was born in Japan and my first language is Japanese. I went to my "home land," Korea, as a teenager, and I was in the military before I came to the U.S. So, my second language is Korean, and my third language, English. It is a pretty mixed-up situation. On the other hand, English is a synergic hybrid language. That may be one reason why I feel affinity towards English.

## About the Author

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Suchoon Mo is a former Korean Army Lieutenant and a retired university academic living in the semiarid part of Colorado. His recent poems appear in *East and West*, *Bitter Oleander*, *Taj Mahal Review*, *Religious Humanism*, *Thunder Sandwich*, *Spillway Review*, *The Stylus Poetry Journal*, *Word Riot*, *Word Myth*, *Underground Window*, *Tryst*, *Subterranean Quarterly*, *Orange Room Review*, *Round Table Review*, *Strange Road*, *Feathertale*, *Dissident Editions*, *Snake Skin*, *Flutter*, *Poetry Cemetery*, and others. His music compositions appear in *Unlikely 2.0*, *Mad Hatters Review*, *Sage of Consciousness*, *Strange Road*, and *The Adroitly Placed Word*. He has no formal music education.

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