Hahn Moo-Sook is a writer with a formidable reputation. She made her debut as an author in 1942 with the prize-winning novel Tūngbul tūnūn yōin (A Woman with a Lantern) and has been a prominent presence in Korean literary circles ever since. Her five novels, three novellas, five collections of short stories, two plays, and three collections of essays have earned her recognition as a major contributor to modern Korean literature.

In 1958 the Asia Foundation presented Hahn Moo-Sook with its Freedom Literature Award for her short story “Kamjōngi innūn simnyōn,” translated as “In the Depths” in the English-language collection of her short stories under that title.¹ In the decades since, her fellow writers have called on her to serve as director of the Korean Writers Association, president of the Korean Women Writers Association, President of the Korean Catholic Writers Association, and in 1990, president of the Korean Novelists Association. She also served for more than twenty years, from 1962 to 1985, as executive director of the Korean chapter of the International P.E.N. Club. The larger Korean public showed its appreciation of her contributions and her accomplishments by naming her Korean Woman of the Year in 1973. In recent years, several awards have capped her distinguished career of almost half a century: in 1986 she became a life-

time member of the Korean Academy of Arts and Letters; in 1989 she received the Samil (March 1 Independence Movement Day) Culture Grand Prix Award for Fine Arts; in 1990 she became president of the Korean Association for Japanese Studies; and in October 1991 she was awarded the prestigious Korean Academy of Arts Prize for Literature. In 1986 Hahn Moo-Sook became only the fifth Korean writer to receive the Republic of Korea National Literature Grand Prix Award. She won that award for the novel you now hold in your hand, Mannam, translated here as Encounter.

In Encounter, Hahn has turned her formidable talents to a formidable task. She resurrects the inner world of men and women who lived in a social, economic, and political milieu radically different from the one that prevails in Korea today. For this literary resurrection to succeed, her characters must be both understandable to the modern reader and faithful to the values, motives, and assumptions that governed thought and behavior in a society long since swallowed up by history.

Encounter is not Hahn's first historical novel. In 1948 she published Yŏksanŭn hŭlunda (History Flows), in which she follows three generations of the same family through the turbulent years from the Tonghak peasant rebellion of the 1890s to Korea's liberation from Japanese colonial rule in 1945. In Encounter, she moves even further back in time, to the beginning of the nineteenth century, a century and a half and a multitude of epic changes into the past.

To make such a world come alive to the modern mind, to make the behavior of its inhabitants intelligible and their emotions believable, is no easy undertaking. Hahn rendered this task even more difficult by choosing real people, rather than unadulterated products of her literary imagination, to serve as the central figures in Encounter. Her major characters walked and talked on Korean soil long before they stepped onto the storyteller's page. Moreover, they were no ordinary actors in the drama that is history. One, Chŏngha-sang (1795–1839), was a canonized saint; another, Chŏngha Tasan (1762–1836), was a lionized scholar.

Chŏngha-sang became St. Paul Chŏngha-sang in 1984 when Pope John Paul II traveled to Korea to canonize him and 102 other martyrs of the Korean Catholic Church. Korean Catholics, of whom there are now more than two million, revere their St. Paul as a man
of extraordinary courage, dedication, and spirituality. They see him as a giant of their faith, a model of virtue and piety they should strive to emulate.

His uncle, Tasan, is widely revered by the Korean public at large, though more for his scholarship than for his religious life. A bronze statue of Tasan stands in the Seoul city park on Namsan; Tasan Road runs through Seoul; and literally hundreds of academic articles on various aspects of Tasan's thought rest on the shelves of Korean university libraries. Just as Ha-sang is considered one of the most important figures in the history of Korean Catholicism, Tasan is regarded as one of the most important thinkers in the history of Korean Confucianism.

To build a realistic novel around such icons, to give the heroes of *Encounter* the conflicting emotions, the moral frailty, and the moments of doubt that would make them fully human and thus enable ordinary readers to believe in them and empathize with them, would contradict the larger-than-life images of Ha-sang and Tasan most Korean readers bring to this novel. Yet a story that focuses solely on the saintly and sagely aspects of its revered protagonists' lives risks becoming lifeless and remote from the everyday concerns of its readers. Hahn escapes the horns of this dilemma by an ingenious borrowing from Korean tradition.

Clearly, Hahn Moo-Sook is capable of creating realistic characters with the insecurities and foibles characteristic of ordinary men and women. In fact, through her earlier writings, she earned a reputation for weaving introspective, psychological tales of egocentric characters suffering from loneliness, melancholy, or alienation brought on by their own mistakes or failings. In stories such as “Taeyŏlsogesŏ” (Among the Marching Columns) and “Ch’ŏnsa” (The Angel), for example, she focuses more on what her characters feel than on what they do. And what they feel is unhappiness, nihilism, and despair. The disillusioned former anti-Japanese nationalist in “The Angel” is emblematic of this early fiction when he states, “I was entirely wrong to believe that there was some meaning and significance in our lives.”2 Hahn paints the mental state of the student revolutionary in “Among the Marching Columns” in equally

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dark colors, describing him as "forever tormented by skepticism, a sense of alienation, remorse, groping, and unjustifiable rebellion."³

No such feelings are attributed to Chŏng Ha-sang or Chŏng Tasan, nor could they be. Catholic saints are not skeptics. And Confucian sages are not nihilists. Besides, Encounter is more an epic drama than an emotional portrait. The encounter Hahn writes about is not a narrow, individual encounter between two lonely people, but a multifaceted encounter within and between individuals, on the one hand, and within and between cultures, on the other.

Encounter is the story of what happened after Roman Catholicism was smuggled onto the Korean peninsula two centuries ago and the impact that imported religion had on the people who encountered it, the persecutions and the piety it aroused. It is the story of an encounter between a scholar of Confucianism and the God of Christianity, and between Tasan's personal moral integrity and his pragmatic survival instincts. It is the story of an encounter between the beliefs and the believers of different faiths—Buddhist, shamanistic, Confucian, and Catholic. It is the story of an encounter between two cultures, two competing worldviews, one Eastern and one Western. It is also, in its literary form, an encounter between contemporary Korea and its past and, in this English translation, an encounter between Western readers and the spirits, beliefs, values, rituals, and history of the Korean people.

The proper form for such a monumental drama is not a realistic character study but an operatic theatrical pageant. Larger-than-life characters in a larger-than-usual situation demand a larger-than-normal stage. Hahn is familiar with the dramatist's stage: early in her career she wrote two plays, Maŭm (The Heart) in 1943 and Sŏlíg-got (Winter Flowers) in 1944. For Encounter, however, she reached beyond the conventions of westernized modern Korean drama. For an epic tale set in Korea, with Korean heroes, she adapted an older Korean form. Her novel transforms into a literary format many of the modes and themes of the Chosŏn dynasty's one-man opera, p'ansori.

P'ansori is Korea's version of the solo oral drama performed by wandering storytellers in cultures the world over. In p'ansori, a single singer, accompanied only by a drummer, alternately sings and narrates a story of virtue triumphant and evil defeated. The

singer performs all the roles in the story and also regularly steps outside these characters momentarily to become a narrator who provides the audience with asides and descriptions of the settings in which the characters are appearing. With one person playing all the roles, it is impossible to develop fully formed realistic characters. Instead, each major character represents one particular personality trait, such as filial piety, loyalty, duplicity, or foolhardiness.

In the early twentieth century, Koreans wanting to match the spectacle of Peking opera and Japanese Kabuki created an enlarged version of p’ansori called ch’anggūk. Ch’anggūk today looks like a cross between Western opera and p’ansori, with a large troupe of actors and actresses, each assigned only one role, filling the stage. Yet the stories ch’anggūk tells are p’ansori stories rewritten. Ch’înhyang, the faithful courtesan, and Simch’ông, the filial daughter, remain perennial favorites, whether in p’ansori or in ch’anggūk. And both formats utilize an omniscient narrator, providing a narrative bridge between episodes and voicing for the audience the moral judgment it is expected to make as the tale unfolds.

Such is the format Hahn borrows for Encounter. Her major characters, both historical and fictional, are dramatic personifications of such admirable virtues as piety and chastity or such despicable vices as treachery and lust. Both Paul Ch’ông, drawn from history, and Maria Kwŏn, drawn from Hahn’s imagination, are paragons of religious faith, never wavering in their commitment to Catholicism even when it brings great suffering and then death to themselves and their families. Not for them the questioning that in real life often leads to a renewed, stronger faith. They quite literally display the pure and unconditional piety of saints.

Sŭng Nak-ch’ong, on the other hand, embodies the unmitigated evil of a true villain. An apostate and an informer against the Catholics who reared him, Sŭng is also a thief and a would-be rapist. Sŭng is clearly a literary creation; few actual individuals would be so totally lacking in redeeming qualities. Yet Yi Chi-yŏn (1777–1841), the prosecutor of Catholics in the persecutions of 1839, appears on Hahn’s pages as equally depraved. Few readers of Encounter would recognize the Yi Hahn describes in the rigid Confucian moralist and scholar depicted in historical records. The actual Yi Chi-yŏn rose to the third highest post in the Korean bureaucracy, that of third state councillor, a position roughly equivalent to deputy prime minister.
in a Western parliamentary democracy. Yet in *Encounter* he is driven by lust, not by Confucian values. In fact, as one of the villains of Hahn's story, Yi is the only character in *Encounter* allowed to experience any sexual pleasure. More to the point, that pleasure is derived from sadistic homoerotic fantasies, aroused by the purity of Ha-sang's mind and flesh.

Just as Yi Chi-yŏn symbolizes the baneful influence sexual desire can have on human lives, Ha-sang, Maria Kwŏn, and several other of the more admirable characters in the novel symbolize the ennobling effect of the rejection of lust and the embrace of chastity. Teresa Kwŏn (1783–1819) and Peter Cho Suk (?–1819), for example, were forced to marry to conform to the conventions of the day and to avoid detection as Catholics. Yet they remained celibate, living as brother and sister rather than as husband and wife. Though there is historical evidence documenting their mutual forswearing of the normal conjugal benefits of marriage, such unusual behavior makes them appear more iconic than human.

Even Tasan is denied any real sexual feelings, though his biography and progeny make it impossible to attribute lifelong abstinence to him. Although Hahn gives Tasan a mistress to comfort him in his long years in exile, away from his wife, she takes pains to point out that he did not become involved with P'yo-nyŏ “because he lusted after her; the relationship had been consummated spontaneously as a result of their constant proximity.” A Confucian philosopher as revered as Tasan could not possibly be subject to the same sensual urges as ordinary men, at least not in any portrayal delineated with such broad strokes as the ones used in *p'ansori* or *ch'anggŭk*—or in *Encounter*.

Hahn employs the same broad strokes to plot the action in which these characters are involved. *Encounter* is filled with dramatic moments that might appear more plausible on the stage than in real life. In one chapter, for example, two women literally drop out of sight without a sound, as though they have disappeared behind a stage curtain. In other chapters, long-separated relatives cross paths without recognizing each other, and Catholics on the run break into prison to free imprisoned believers who reject rescue in order to stay in prison, “bearing witness to their faith and fulfilling the Christian responsibility of loving their neighbors.”
Hahn also describes rural markets and shamanistic rituals with such colorful detail that the scenes almost demand to be transferred to the stage or the silver screen. Long before she was an author, Hahn Moo-Sook was a painter, winning a prize at an International Children’s Painting Exhibition in Berlin when she was only eight years old. As a novelist, she retains her artist’s eyes. From the opening scene of a Buddhist cremation amid autumn colors to Tasan’s death amid the winter frost, Hahn recreates nineteenth-century Korea with a vividness a cinematographer would envy.

Colorful staging, iconic characters, and dramatic scenes are all features of ch’anggük that Hahn has transplanted into her novel. She has borrowed the device of setting minor characters with common human weaknesses against the ethereal perfection of her major characters. For example, the death throes of the monk Hyejang (1772–1811) contrast sharply with the saintly calm of the martyrs meeting their death. And Charles Cho Sin-ch’ol (1795–1839), who ultimately converts to Catholicism, appears first as a simple, good-hearted man with the humorous habit of calling out the Buddha’s name at the slightest provocation in a way none of the Catholics in the novel would call upon the Lord’s name. Moreover, many of the minor characters Tasan and Ha-sang encounter, such as old man P’yo and the innkeeper Matteo Hong, speak in countrified accents and act in unsophisticated ways. Unfortunately, English translation cannot do justice to their rustic dialect. But even in translation, enough of their language and rural manner survives to add a touch of humor to the story and to cast in relief the dignified bearing and careful diction of the saints and the sage.

Another feature distinguishing the heroes and heroines of this novel from lesser personalities is that, like stage heroes and heroines, the more admirable characters not only have more beautiful souls, they also have more beautiful bodies. The handsome Ha-sang, with his “supple, youthful flesh,” and the lovely Maria Kwôn, with her “alabaster face . . . like a masterpiece portrait by a supreme artist,” are typical of the saints. The villains—such as Sùng Nak-chong, with his “face white as paper, the irises of his eyes entirely eclipsed,” and Yi Chi-yôn, who twice conjures up in his dreams a vision of his own body ugly with blood and open wounds—are just as vividly and physically set apart. Hahn, true to the p’ansori and
ch’anggūk traditions, allows no ambiguity about who is to be admired and who despised.

Korea’s traditional drama shows its influence in what Hahn does not do as well as in what she does. Although many of the short stories that made her famous are first-person narratives in which the narrators dwell on their own emotions, often with a Buddhist slant toward the unhappiness personal changes can bring, she tells the story of Encounter from the standpoint of an omniscient, omnipresent observer. There are no stream-of-consciousness meditations, no solitary ruminations on the meaninglessness and absurdity of life, with its inevitable pain and loss. The characters in Encounter suffer just as Hahn’s earlier characters did, but here the narrator (and the characters) lets us know that suffering has a purpose. Instead of the story ending with the characters beaten down by “the total fatigue of a strenuous life,” as Mrs. Hong is in “A Halo Around the Moon,” in Encounter they achieve the glorious, and dramatic, reward of martyrdom. Action, not emotion, becomes all-important. Just as in p’ansori and ch’anggūk, plot overshadows psychology and the story receives more attention than anyone’s mental state.

The very nature of the tale Hahn chooses to tell, and the characters she chooses to populate it, make dramatic narrative more appropriate than psychological exploration. She restricts herself in another way as well. Since she builds her story around well-known historical figures, she has to work within boundaries defined by the historical records that tell what those figures thought and did.

Novelists such as Hahn Moo-Sook have greater flexibility than historians and other academic time travelers. Scholars are constrained by the data available to them; they must remain close enough to their data that the story they weave appears probable. Novelists, however, need only tell a plausible tale. In other words, as a writer of fiction, even historical fiction, Hahn does not have to worry about what probably happened as long as what she says happened possibly happened.

In that, she succeeds. She recreates an eighteenth and a nineteenth century consistent with the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries depicted in the letters and essays of Tasan and his contemporaries. Tasan lived almost seventy-five years. His lifetime spanned

4. “A Halo around the Moon,” translated by Chu Yo-sup, in In the Depths, 92.
the period when the old order was at the height of its glory and when the first inklings of its unraveling and decline began to appear. Tasan, like Charles Dickens, might have spoken of the best of times and the worst of times.

In the eighteenth century the Korean peninsula was able to feed more Koreans than it had ever fed before, yet Koreans were also dying at an ever-increasing rate, turning rapid population growth into rapid population decline. Factional battles over conflicting interpretations of Confucian ethics and ritual, battles that had distracted Korean politics for over a century, were subsiding just at the time when an even more deadly battle over the viability of Confucianism itself was about to start. Neo-Confucian philosophizing in Korea was reaching new heights of sophistication at a time when its arguments and its key concepts were becoming increasingly irrelevant. And beyond Confucian scholarly circles, a new self-confidence among the peasantry was expressing itself in small, tentative forerunners of the popular uprisings that marked the second half of the nineteenth century. These unsettling demographic, philosophical, and political changes were preparing Confucian Korea for a monotheistic revolution.

Before the nineteenth century, most Koreans did not believe in one Supreme Being. Instead, they believed in hundreds of supernatural entities, some of them playful goblins, some of them protective or malevolent spirits, and a few, such as the Buddha and Hanünim, wielding great, but not absolute, influence over the affairs of men. Even the Buddha had to admit shrines to local mountain deities within the confines of his mountain temples in recognition of the less-than-universal sway of his powers and authority.

Hanünim, "the Lord of Heaven," whose name is now borrowed by Korean Christians for the Supreme Deity, watched over the weather, individual fate, and political fortunes, but he had to share that power and responsibility with other deities. Under the guise of Ch'ŏnsin ("the heavenly spirit") or Okhwang Sangje ("the Yellow Emperor," the chief deity of Taoism), Hanünim was the object of some popular devotions, but he did not appear in shamanistic rituals nearly as often as certain long-dead Chinese generals, nor was he depicted in sacred portraits as frequently as the mountain spirit. He was just one powerful deity among many.

Why the change, a change accurately portrayed in *Encounter*?
Why did large numbers of Koreans (over 20 percent of South Koreans today call themselves Christian) begin to believe in one God whom they should serve and obey, to whom they should turn in times of need, and to whom they should be faithful even unto death? A rising death rate may have been one factor. As Hahn points out, of Tasan's nine children, only three survived the early years of childhood. In the last quarter of the eighteenth century, this apparently was not an unusual survival rate for Korean families. The population of many villages and towns had grown dense enough to provide a fertile environment for the spread of such deadly childhood diseases as smallpox and measles. In addition, the growing use of irrigation reservoirs for rice farming may have bred malaria-infected mosquitoes, like the one that infected Tasan when he first arrived in the land of his exile. On top of that, cholera reached the Korean peninsula for the first time early in the nineteenth century. Whatever the cause, and historical records speak of increasingly frequent and virulent epidemics, a population that was 7.3 million strong in 1750 (according to official census figures) had grown to only 7.4 million in 1799. An increase of only 100,000 over the course of almost half a century, or an average increase of approximately 1,700 Koreans a year, is an appallingly low rate, even for a preindustrial society. The first half of the nineteenth century was worse. By 1850 census records counted only 6.4 million Koreans, a drop of a million in just half a century. This was well before the advent of modern birth control techniques. There were fewer and fewer Koreans not because fewer Koreans were being born but because more were dying young. The sight of children, relatives, friends, and neighbors dying before their time at a quickening rate must have frightened many Koreans and shaken their faith in old beliefs and values. Koreans were no exception to the general tendency of humanity to turn to religion in times of physical and mental distress. The shamanistic rituals in Encounter are compelling examples of the Korean use of religion as a medical strategy for coping with disease and death. However, the failure of shamanism to halt or even slow the accelerating death rate may have stimulated some Koreans to look beyond the traditional gods of the folk religion for a more powerful deity to rescue them from their misery. In the second half of the eighteenth century, specifically in 1758
and again in 1787, there were two instances of peasants' claiming to be the Buddhist messiah incarnate, the Maitreya, and temporarily attracting a large, rebellious following. Such Buddhist millenarianism was a new phenomenon on the peninsula; and it could have been the manifestation of an increasing desperation, a growing hunger for a God powerful enough to quell the evil forces bringing suffering and death into Korean homes. By the second half of the nineteenth century, that desperation brought forth Korea's first indigenous organized monotheistic religion, Tonghak ("Eastern Learning," so called to distinguish it from "Western Learning," i.e., Catholicism), founded in 1860.

The educated elite of Korea, represented in Encounter by the Chŏng and Kwŏn families, among others, recoiled from a belief in the spirits of Buddhism and shamanism, which they saw as expressions of ignorance and superstition. They preferred the more rational principles and values of Confucianism. However, developments within their Confucian tradition were driving them toward monotheism as well.

Hahn briefly alludes to a metaphysical debate within Korean Confucian circles over the relative priority of Principle and Material Force. Principle refers to the moral realm, to the universal pattern of selfless harmonious interaction which determines what should and should not be and what should and should not be done. Material Force, on the other hand, refers to the physical world, that world of bodies and individuals with their passions and their differences, which can hinder the smooth operation of Principle. For two centuries before Tasan's time, Korean philosophers vigorously debated how best to deal with the selfish impulses that Material Force generated, which often kept men from acting as selflessly and virtuously as Principle required.

This was no abstract academic debate. Confucian scholars believed that disorders in the natural world, such as epidemics, famine, and a rising death rate, were the direct result of moral disorder in the human world. More Koreans were dying and watching their loved ones die, the scholars argued, because the Confucian elite of Korea was insufficiently virtuous. Consequently, there was a growing demand in Tasan's day for a more effective way to enhance ethical power so that Confucian scholars could overcome the obstructions of Material Force and live in accordance with Principle,
improving life for themselves and the other people on the pen-
insula.

This growing frustration with moral frailty, with their own inabil-
ity to keep selfish desires consistently in check, may have led Con-
cucians such as Tasan to resurrect the Lord-on-High of the ancient
Confucian classics. Matteo Ricci’s True Principles of Catholicism
reinforced this tendency toward a theistic reformulation of Confu-
cianism. Fr. Ricci’s argument, that belief in a Supreme Being gov-
erning the universe would not only be faithful to the original mes-
sage of the Confucian sages of old but would also give humanity the
additional strength necessary to obey that God’s commands, struck
a responsive chord among morally frustrated Korean Confucians.
Some responded by converting to Catholicism. Others less bold
merely reinterpreted Confucianism to make room for God.

Both church and government documents from the nineteenth
century make clear that Ha-sang was the Catholic martyr Koreans
now so proudly claim him to be. Tasan’s faith is more problematic.
That Tasan believed in a Confucian Lord-on-High is undeniable.
That he was an active Catholic for a few years when he was a young
man is also indisputable. He admits as much in the epitaph he wrote
for himself near the end of his life. However, when Hahn shows
Tasan repenting of his youthful apostasy and returning to his Catho-
lic faith shortly before his death, she boldly plunges into a histori-
ans’ dispute whose final resolution is as yet undecided.

Before writing Encounter, Hahn spent years reading and re-
searching both primary and secondary sources on Tasan and on
the early years of the Korean Catholic Church. She consulted the
foremost authorities in these fields, from priests and nuns to philoso-
phers and historians. The evidence she uncovered for Tasan’s reli-
gious beliefs during and after the years of exile, which are the years
covered in Encounter, is ambiguous. She, along with many of the
scholars she consulted, is persuaded by nineteenth-century mis-
ionary reports that state unequivocally that Tasan was welcomed
back into the Catholic Church by Fr. Pacificus Liu Fang-chi, a
Chinese priest who had smuggled himself into Korea in 1833. Hahn
also assumes that Tasan’s frequent references, in his writings late
in life, to guilt and regret for past offenses must refer to the guilt he
felt for abandoning his faith and the faith of his martyred brother,
Yak-chong (1760–1801), for so many years.
Some scholars, more cautious, withhold judgment, noting that the French missionary claim of Tasan’s deathbed return to the Catholic fold is not echoed by any contemporary Korean sources. A few also point out that Tasan never says precisely what he feels guilty for, so it is less than certain that he regretted his early retreat from public involvement with the persecuted Korean Catholic community.

Tasan’s own copious writings fail to support a strong claim for a lasting commitment to Catholicism. They indicate, rather, that even though he was influenced by some Catholic teachings, he remained first and foremost a Confucian for most of his adult life. On the many occasions he argues for belief in a Confucian God, Tasan never uses the Sino-Korean term for the Catholic God (lit., “Lord of Heaven”); nor does he grant his God the roles of creator, savior, or judge so crucial to the Christian concept of the Supreme Being. In his commentaries on the Confucian classics, Tasan credits the Lord-on-High of Confucian tradition with implanting and managing the principles of selflessness and impartiality, which provide moral order in the universe. Unlike Ha-sang’s God, however, Tasan’s deity, as he appears in Tasan’s extant essays, is a moral force and nothing more. That makes him a Confucian God, not a Christian God.

If Tasan became a Catholic later in life, he does not tell us so in the hundreds of volumes of essays, commentaries, letters, and poems he wrote over the course of his lifetime. He may have feared putting his true beliefs down on paper where his enemies and the enemies of Catholicism could have found them. Nevertheless, as one Korean scholar, required by his professorial position to be more cautious than a novelist needs to be, suggests, “It is better to wait for some more definite proof before we give a final answer to [the] question . . . was he really a Catholic, or was he, after the age of 30, a regenerate keeping his Confucian conviction?”.5

It is therefore possible, but not certain, that Tasan was as Catholic as Hahn portrays him. It is, however, her novelist’s prerogative to portray him so. For Hahn’s purposes—and for the purposes of this novel—whether Tasan was truly a Catholic is no more significant than whether the three fictional Kwón sisters really existed. The

5. Kum Chang-t‘ae, “Tasan on Western Learning and Confucianism,” in Korea Journal, volume 26, number 2 (February 1986); 4–16 (particularly 15).
actual outcome of Tasan’s encounter with Catholicism is less important than the subjective rewards readers gain from their encounter with the world this novel evokes.

*Encounter* is an entertaining and stimulating work of fiction, not a scholarly study of history. Hahn uses the ambiguous evidence of Tasan’s beliefs and values, along with more solid documentation of the lives of canonized martyrs, supplemented by her own literary imagination, to bring Tasan, Ha-sang, and their contemporaries back to life. Her adroit marriage of *p’ansori* and *ch’anggūk* motifs with the narrative structure of the modern novel draws her readers into a resurrected past. With Hahn as a guide, it is a journey well worth taking.

Don Baker
The University of British Columbia