



Structural Analysis of The Poem “희망이 외롭다- Hope Is Lonely” [Hi-Mang-I We-Rop-Da]

By Kim Seung Hee

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Article Info	Abstract
Received: 2026-04-07 Revised: 2026-05-19 Accepted: 2026-09-18 Keywords: <i>Inner Structure; Kim Seung Hee; Poetry; Physical Structure; Structural Analysis.</i> DOI: 10.24256/ideas.v14i2.12091 Corresponding Author: Amanda Alya Nabila amandaalya2904@upi.edu Pendidikan Bahasa Korea, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Jawa Barat	<i>This study aims to analyze the physical and inner structure of the poem 희망이 외롭다 [Hi-mang-i we-rop-da] 'Hope is Lonely' by Kim Seung Hee, and the relationship between the two structures in constructing meaning. The research employs a qualitative descriptive method with a structural approach based on the theory of Richards as adapted by Waluyo, using reading and note-taking techniques, followed by data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Results show that five of six physical structure categories produced a total 89 data points. Diction data include cross-domain vocabulary, uncertainty markers, and colloquial words. Imagery data include visual, kinesthetic, tactile, auditory. Concrete word data include medical objects, natural objects, bodily substances, and formal terms. Figurative language data include paradox, metaphor, personification, simile, irony, and hyperbole. 5 non-conventional typographic elements, while no fixed meter or rhyme was found in versification due to the poem's free-verse form. In the inner structure, identifies hope as a paradoxical condition that is both torturous and inescapable. The feeling marked by sincere, non-judgmental empathy alongside genuine inner conflict, while a tone is a whispering, confessional register placing the poet on equal ground with the reader. The message urges acknowledgment of hopeless conditions while affirming that even the smallest reason suffices to endure. These findings suggest that physical elements consistently give concrete form to the abstract meaning within the inner structure. Together, supporting one interpretation that resolves the title's paradox: the poem</i>

suggests hope feels lonely because its persistent presence compels the individual to survive and bear that burden alone. Beyond describing the poem itself, this study contributes to structural analysis of contemporary Korean poetry by demonstrating one mechanism through which linguistic form and existential meaning interact, offering a model that may be of use in analyzing other Korean poems that similarly draw non-lyrical vocabulary to represent inner experience.

1. Introduction

Poetry is characterized not only by the beauty of its language but also by its unique structure, and as a medium for conveying the implicit messages poets embed within their work (Anjelita et al., 2023; Hidayati et al., 2023; Lafamane, 2020; Utama et al., 2023). In the context of modern Korean literature, the tendency to use poetry as a medium for critical reflection is very strong, and Kim Seung Hee is one of the poets who uses poetry as a medium to express her anxieties and reflect on the realities of life. She is known for her sharp, provocative style, and her bold exploration of themes of existentialism and femininity (LTI Korea, 2022). This tendency is closely connected to the development of modern Korean poetry as a genre that provides poets with greater freedom of expression.

The emergence of 자유시 [jayu-si] in the early twentieth century, following the introduction of western literary forms during Korea's modern literary period, marked the birth of modern Korean poetry written in 한가체 [Kwon & Fulton., 2020]. Unlike classical forms such as 가사 [gasa] and 시조 [sijo], modern Korean poetry adopted the Western free-verse tradition to create new forms of harmony and express emotions in a more poetic manner (Youngmin et al., 2020). One of the monumental works in this genre is the poem 희망이 외롭다 [Hi-mang-i we-rop-da] 'Hope is Lonely' by Kim Seung Hee. This poem attracted widespread attention for its bold reinterpretation of “hope” that typically viewed positively into an artistic representation filled with the contradictions between optimism and human suffering. Although interest in modern Korean poetry has continued to grow, it is hindered by readers' low appreciation, as they struggle to understand the deeper meaning of the texts. Through this poem, Kim Seung Hee seems to want to break down our common perception of hope, which for her is a kind of 'life sentence' that must be carried in silence.

From this explanation, structural literary analysis emerges as a tool for revealing the depth of meaning objectively. Ismaidini, et al. (2024) notes that structuralism views a literary work as a self-contained structural unity, in which its meaning depends heavily on the reciprocal relationships among its internal elements. The application of the structuralist approach emphasizes an in-depth

textual analysis to dissect how each intrinsic component functions in building the foundation of a literary work as a whole. Examining and analyzing the structure of a poem is crucial for objectively understanding its aesthetic beauty and the power of poetic language. Richards (1929) originally proposed the general distinction between a poem's outer, formal properties and its inner, experiential meaning, Waluyo (1987) later operationalized this distinction into ten specific analytical categories used in this study, dividing the structure of the poem into two parts; physical structure and inner structure.

As explained by Arwis, et al. (2022), the elements included in the physical structure of a poem are diction, imagery, concrete words, figurative language, versification, and typography, while the inner structure of a poem consists of theme, feeling, tone, and message. Physical structure is the structure that is visible in its form and tends to be observable visually; it is considered a tool used by a poet to express the essence and nature of a poem through its visual appearance (Ginting., 2020), while inner structure relates to the meaning of the author's inner expression, in which everything presented by the poet carries meaning, and the ability to deeply understand the inner structure allows readers to appreciate the meaning the poet intends to convey (Dirman., 2022).

Studies of literary works using a structural approach have been conducted extensively from various perspectives. A number of previous studies that used a structural approach to analyze poetry (Anggini et al., 2025; Herlambang et al., 2025; Ismaidini et al., 2024) generally show that the interrelation among intrinsic elements forms a cohesive meaning. In addition, there are also studies focusing on the application of the theory of physical and inner structural analysis (Adriatik, et al., 2022; Fadli and Salsabila, 2020; Hidayati & Junadi, 2023; Simbolon, et al., 2023; Utama, et al., 2023), which conclude that the coherence of physical structure is highly crucial in reinforcing inner structure and building the meaning of a work. Several in-depth studies on Korean poetry have also been conducted, and some have compared Korean poetry with Indonesian poetry (Maulidyarsih et al., 2021; Wibowo and Imaniar, 2021). The results of these comparative studies generally reveal similarities in themes of humanity and longing, while also highlighting differences in aesthetic characteristics influenced by the cultural backgrounds of each country.

Although several studies have analyzed structure in poetry using this framework, previous work has generally examined either single Indonesian poems (Anggini et al., 2025; Herlambang et al., 2025; Ismaidini et al., 2024) or thematic comparison between Korean and Indonesian poetry (Maulidyarsih et al., 2021; Wibowo and Imaniar, 2021), none of these studies has examined how the physical and inner structure of a single Korean poem interact to construct a paradoxical conceptualization of an abstract theme such as hope, particularly in the work of Kim Seung Hee.

Paradoxes compel readers to look beyond the surface logic of language to

discover a deeper emotional truth, something that cannot be reached through a literal reading. From a literary studies perspective, this also demonstrates how form and inner meaning can create contradictions that actually enrich the depth of a work. Based on the above explanation, the researchers feels the need for a more in-depth analysis and wish to further explore the structure of the poem 희망이 외롭다 [Hi-mang-i we-rop-da] as it depicts two conflicting emotions between ‘hope’ and ‘loneliness’ within its central theme.

The contribution of this study therefore lies not simply in its choice of understudied poem, but in its attention to the specific mechanism by which physical structure elements and inner structure elements interact to construct this paradox. This study seeks to contribute to structural literary studies of modern Korean poetry among Korean language learners. By examining this poem through a structural approach, this research is expected to elaborate the elements that build the poem in order to reveal the meaning behind its contradiction as a whole, and also to provide new interpretations of how hope and loneliness are interconnected with each other. Specifically, this research aims to answer the following research question: (a) what physical structures are found in the poem? (b) what inner structures are represented in the poem? (c) how do the physical and inner structures interact to construct the poem’s paradoxical meaning of hope?

2. Method

This study employs a qualitative descriptive design to analyze the physical and inner structures of the poem 희망이 외롭다 [Hi-mang-i we-rop-da] ‘Hope is Lonely’ by Kim Seung Hee. According to Anggini (2025), the qualitative descriptive method is an in-depth approach to exploring complex phenomena through the collection and analysis of non-numerical data. In line with this, the qualitative approach in this study is applied to explore the interweaving of implicit meaning and the aesthetic depth of the text through an analysis of the relationships among the elements that build the poem. The choice of this method is based on the textual nature of the research data, which requires a comprehensive understanding and interpretation to uncover the hidden dimensions of meaning behind the linguistic structure and literary typography.

The primary data in this study consist of the text of the poem entitled 희망이 외롭다 [Hi-mang-i we-rop-da] by Kim Seung Hee by Kim Seung Hee, sourced from the poetry anthology of the same title published by 문학동네 [Mun-hak-dong-ne] in 2012. The selection of this research subject is based on its value as an artistic manifestation that represents Kim Seung Hee’s aesthetic in expressing the contradiction between the optimism of hope and the reality of human suffering, while also containing a strong sociological context regarding the existential anxiety of modern humans during that decade. Meanwhile, the secondary data include Korean-language dictionaries, reference books, and related literature on structural poetry theory, which are used as a theoretical foundation to strengthen the depth of analysis and the validity of the data.

The poem 희망이 외롭다 [*Hi-mang-i We-rop-da*] 'Hope Is Lonely' by Kim Seung-hee was analyzed using structural theory sourced from Richards (1929) and operationally adapted by Waluyo (1987) serves as the analytical framework in this study. This framework is used as a tool to systematically identify and dissect the elements that build the poem, both in terms of physical structure, which includes diction, imagery, concrete words, figurative language, versification, and typography, and in terms of inner structure, which includes theme (sense), feeling, tone, and message (intention). In its application, the theory is used as an analytical lens to dissect the poetic text, while the poem itself serves as the data source that is examined and explained through the categories formulated by Richards and Waluyo.

This framework was chosen because its structural design is capable of revealing both the visually apparent layers of linguistic form and the implicit layers of meaning hidden behind the poem's structure as a whole, making it suitable for uncovering the contradiction in meaning between hope and loneliness that lies at the core of this poem. In this research, Waluyo's (1987) adaptation of Richards (1929) framework is applied in full and is not further modified by the researchers, since the ten elements it formulates, across both physical structure and inner structure, are considered sufficiently comprehensive and relevant to fully reveal the meaning of the poem 희망이 외롭다 [*Hi-mang-i we-rop-da*] without the need to add or reduce any elements from Waluyo's adapted framework.

In this study, the data collection technique used was a literature review employing the reading and note-taking method, which was conducted in three stages. In the first stage, the reading technique involved reading the poem 희망이 외롭다 [*Hi-mang-i we-rop-da*] in depth and repeatedly to gain a comprehensive understanding of its content and form. In the second stage, the note-taking technique involved identifying and marking the physical structure elements found in the poem, namely diction, imagery, concrete words, figurative language, versification, and typography, as well as the inner structure elements of the poem such as theme (sense), feeling, tone, and message (intention). In the third and final stage, all the data that have been identified are collected and organized as material ready for further analysis. By combining the reading and note-taking techniques, researchers can obtain accurate and detailed data to analyze the physical and internal structures present in the poem.

The data analysis process in this research is carried out in a gradual and systematic manner through three sequential stages. The first stage was data reduction, in which the researcher selected and focused on data from the poem 희망이 외롭다 [*Hi-mang-i we-rop-da*] that was relevant to physical and inner structures. The second stage is data presentation, in which the researcher first analyzes the elements within the physical structure; diction, imagery, concrete words, figurative language, versification, and typography, presented in table form for ease of understanding. The researcher then proceeds to analyze the findings

from the physical structure to uncover the elements of the inner structure: theme (sense), feeling, tone, and message (intention). The third stage involves drawing conclusions and verifying them based on this analysis. The conclusion consists of findings the physical and inner structure of the poem, as well as the relationship between the two, to reveal the meaning of the paradox and the message Kim Seung Hee intends to convey. These conclusions were then checked by cross-referencing them against the available data to strengthen the credibility and interpretive consistency of the research results.

For the purposes of this study, one data point is defined as a single word, phrase, line, or typographical feature that instantiates any of Waluyo's (1987) ten structural elements. The study employs a multi-coding system, allowing a single textual expression to be categorized under multiple elements simultaneously if it serves multiple functions. For instance, the clause 희망은 종신형이다 [*hi-mang-i jong-sin-hyeong-i-da*] "hope is a life sentence" is counted separately under diction, figurative language, and theme.

Consequently, the overall summary of data points reported in the Results reflects the total frequency of identified structural elements rather than distinct textual lines. All English translations of the Korean poetic excerpts cited in this study are drawn directly from the published translation by Brother Anthony of Taizé, hosted by the Poetry Translation Centre. While these authoritative English renderings are utilized to facilitate accessibility for non-Korean readers, all structural and semantic analyses in this study remain strictly grounded in the original Korean text. All analytic claims in this study are based on the original Korean text rather than on that published translation.

To ensure credibility and interpretive transparency, this study employed three validation procedures: cross-referencing ambiguous expressions with Korean dictionaries, comparing researchers' interpretations with Brother Anthony's published translation. Because this study was conducted by three researchers, the initial coding of the poem was carried out independently by the first author, who identified and categorized the 89 data points according to the coding rule described above.

The second and third authors, both of whom have expertise in the Korean language, then reviewed the coded data to verify the accuracy of each categorization and the correctness of the Korean-language interpretation underlying it. Any expressions considered inaccurately categorized, or interpretations felt to be incomplete or in need of further nuance, were discussed among all three researchers until consensus was reached. This division of labor allowed the coding process to draw on the second and third authors' linguistic expertise as a form of expert verification, strengthening the credibility of the final coding sheet and having the coded data verified by the second and third authors based on their expertise in the Korean language.

3. Result and Discussion

This research reveals how the physical and inner structural elements interlock to produce the poem's complex meaning. The findings are organized into three sequential parts: the physical structure, the inner structure, and a final synthesis that draws the two together to explain how the poem constructs its paradoxical representation of hope. The following findings are described and interpreted in detail below.

Physical Structure

Based on the structural analysis referring to the theory of Richards (1929) as adapted and modified by Waluyo (1987), 89 data points were found. All of these physical elements work in one direction to convey the meaning of the poem as a whole, so that form and content become an inseparable unity.

Table 1. Summary of Physical structure findings

Category	Data	Textual Example	Interpretive function
Diction	30.3% (27)	아까워 'what a waste'	Transforming hope from a personal feeling into a condition that feels external and binding, by combining cross-domain vocabulary (medical, law, physics) with markers of colloquial and uncertainty. The choice of words makes hope sound like a verdict, not an emotion.
Imagery	21.3% (19)	파란 번개 같은 그 순간에도 'even at that moment like blue lightning'	The pain and contradictions in this poem are seen and felt physically by the reader rather than merely understood logically. Especially through what is withheld or left unsaid (silence) rather than through explicit descriptions.
Concrete words	20.2% (18)	선인장 'cactus'	Transforming abstract emotional suffering into the simplest everyday objects, so that the pain cannot be dismissed as someone else's story.
Figurative Language	22.5% (20)	희망은 종신형이다 'hope is a life sentence'	Paradox functions as the organizing device while metaphor, simile, personification, irony, and hyperbole

			elaborate it. Expressing the paradox of poetry directly through metaphors.
Typography	5.6% (5)	물에 피가 번지듯..... 'like blood spreading in water.....'	Non-conventional visual layout enacts the poem's paradox before it is read closely.
Versification	0% (0)	Free verse throughout the poem	No fixed meter and rhyme was found to formally reflect the conditions being depicted as something endless and unresolved, conveyed through a form that is also unstructured and incomplete.
Total	100% (89)		

Frequency counts in Table 1 are reported as a record of how many instances of each element were identified in the poem, not as a measure of their interpretive importance. In literary analysis, an element occurring only once, such as the poem's single instance of blue lightning or its one central metaphor 희망은 종신형이다 'hope is a life sentence' can carry more interpretive weight than an element that recurs frequently, since significance in poetry often depends on placement and function rather than repetition. This principle is applied throughout the analysis below.

Diction

Diction in this poem prioritizes honesty over pure beauty and the pattern in this poem is marked preference for words drawn from outside the conventional vocabulary of lyric poetry, diction operates as the mechanism that converts an inward emotional theme into something that reads as an outward. Diction represents the largest category in this study and is divided into three types: cross-domain vocabulary, uncertainty markers, and colloquial words.

These three types work together. Cross-domain words like 응급처치 [eung-geup-cho-chi] 'first aid', 중력 [jung-lyeok] 'gravity', and 종신형 [jong-sin-hyeong] 'life sentence' borrow the authority of medicine, physics, and law, so hope sounds imposed rather than simply felt. Uncertainty markers like 때로 [tae-ro] 'sometimes', 아마 [a-ma] 'maybe', and 간신히 [gan-sin-hi] 'barely' pull the other way, keeping that certainty in doubt. This tension between the two registers can be read as one source of the poem's paradox, well before the paradox is ever stated directly.

The clearest example is 아까워 [a-kka-wo] 'what a waste' in stanza 5, describing sunlight given 이유 없이 [i-yu-op-si] 'for no reason'. The word marks a reluctance to let something valuable go, and in context it can be read as the poem's

turning point: not a decision to keep living out of strength, but an inability to waste something given so freely. Placed against the poem's legal and clinical vocabulary, this ordinary word stands out by contrast. A closer look at the Korean text also reveals meaningful collocation patterns. The pairing of 중력 [*jung-lyeok*] 'gravity' with 평안 [*pyeong-an*] 'peace' through the possessive particle 의 in 절망은 중력의 평안이라고 할까 [*jeol-mang-eun jung-lyeok-eui pyeong-an-i-ra-go hal-kka*] 'Shall I say that despair is peaceful as gravity?' produces a combination that does not occur in ordinary Korean usage. This unusual collocation textually reinforces the paradoxical diction discussed above, showing that the contradiction is built into the language itself, not only into the ideas the words represent.

In this poem, precision of diction is achieved not through conventionally beautiful words, but through the deliberate use of everyday language chosen to momentarily lower the tension which, uniquely, makes the pain and emotion in this poem feel far more real and deeply felt for the reader. As explained by Saksaky (2026), one of the main changes in modern poetry is the increasingly free and varied use of diction. Poets can combine everyday language with formal language, or bring forth symbolic words laden with connotation. This diversity of diction allows poets to convey ideas more flexibly, whether to depict social reality, inner reflection, or social criticism. The use of words from every day or technical domains by poets in modern poetry creates a stronger effect because the unpredictability of context produces a tension of meaning that cannot be achieved by words already commonly used in poetry.

Imagery

Four types of imagery appear in the poem: visual, kinesthetic, tactile, and auditory. Overall, the imagery in this poem consistently avoids simple beauty or aesthetics, where jarring visual imagery destroys the visual expectation of beauty, kinesthetic imagery dominates through passive movement without resistance that occurs because emotion has already surpassed language, and auditory imagery works through its very absence, which builds the atmosphere of this poem. Functionally, the imagery in this poem does not serve to embellish the situation being described, but rather to bring that situation into the reader's body so that it is not only understood logically but also seen and felt physically. This matches Rahayu et al. (2026), who argue imagery makes a poem feel real by letting readers see and feel a speaker's mood directly. This poem reaches that effect mainly by withholding sensation rather than piling it on.

The clearest example is the shoes and chair scene in stanza 3 나란히 신발을 벗어놓고 의자 앞에 조용히 서 있는 [*na-ran-hi sin-ba-reul bo-seo-noh-go eui-ja ap-e jo-yong-hi seo in-neun*] 'after taking off shoes side-by-side, standing quietly by a chair' paired with the phrase 파란 번개 같은 그 순간에도 [*pa-ran beon-gae gat-eun geu sun-gan-e-do*] 'even at that moment like blue lightning'. Textually, the poem shows only two simple facts. First, shoes are removed and

placed side by side. Second, a figure stands quietly in front of a chair. What the scene suggests beyond those facts, such as a moment of resignation before an unstated next action, is an inference the poem invites but does not confirm. Because of this, it is presented here as just one possible reading rather than a settled fact about the poem. The unusual color choice in 파란 번 ‘blue lighting’ can similarly be read as marking a flash of awareness that is brief and involuntary, though this too extends beyond what the text states outright.

The use of imagery in this poem is not simply an aesthetic embellishment of language, but rather a projection of the poet’s psychological state and inner turmoil. Through imagery, readers are invited not only to imagine physical objects but also to immerse themselves in the emotional atmosphere and inner pressure experienced by the poet. In line with the findings of Istiramah et al. (2021), sensory imagery, particularly visual and auditory imagery plays a crucial role in visualizing emotional experiences, while also serving as a medium for projecting the poet’s deepest emotions, anxieties, and inner state.

Concrete Words

Several types of concrete words were identified which include medical objects, natural objects, bodily substances, and formal terms. Based on the analysis results, concrete words are found scattered throughout all the stanzas with a consistent pattern, namely transforming the most difficult psychological abstractions to put into words into the simplest, most everyday physical equivalents, turning inner experience into a corresponding physical experience. This strategy intentionally traps the reader’s emotions so that they do not regard the suffering in the poem as a distant story unrelated to themselves. Because the heaviest and most extreme conditions are housed within the most familiar objects, this forces that pain directly into the reader’s real life without any barrier.

The richest example is 선인장 [*seon-in-jang*] ‘cactus’ in 희망의 토tem 폴인 선인장 [*hi-mang-i to-tem-pol seon-in-jang*] ‘hope’s totem pole is a cactus’ from stanza 3 and 4. A cactus survives extreme dryness and carries thorns. These physical traits give concrete shape to a hope that endures while still causing pain to whoever holds it. This reading stay grounded in the plant’s actual traits rather than an arbitrary comparison, and it spares the reader from guessing what ‘lonely, painful hope’ might look like, since its pain and its persistence can be felt and understood directly.

The most striking pattern in the use of concrete words in this poem is that the simplest, most everyday and familiar words carry the greatest meaning. For example, 신발 [*sin-bal*] ‘shoes’ and 의자 [*eui-ja*] ‘chair’ which are the most common in their denotative sense yet become the most potent imagery, 햇빛 [*haet-bit*] ‘sunlight’ which is the most common everyday phenomenon yet becomes the sole reason someone does not give up and does not leave. This aligns with the findings of Yulia et al. (2025), which show that the use of concrete words based on real objects from daily life (such as wood, rain, leaves, and grass) does not merely

serve as an aesthetic element but successfully enriches symbolic meaning and brings visual imagery to life emotionally, while simultaneously simplifying the expression of complex feelings without diminishing the depth of the poem's meaning.

Figurative Language

Six types of figurative language were identified, including paradox, metaphor, personification, simile, irony, and hyperbole. Of all the figurative language identified, the paradox is the most dominant, serving as the logical framework that underpins the entire poem from the title to the final line. All the figurative language in this poem work together to construct a coherent and interconnected line of argument. The paradox (a contradictory statement) and metaphor serves as the primary foundation, while the other types of figurative languages function as explanatory elements that reinforce the details of the narrative and elaborate a single paradoxical claim rather than standing as independent findings.

The clearest instance is the direct metaphor 희망은 종신형이다 [*hi-mang-i jong-sin-hyeong-i-da*] 'hope is a life sentence' in stanza 5. 종신형 [*jong-sin-hyeong*] 'life sentence' is a specific legal term for imprisonment without possibility of parole, imposed by an external authority and unending. Read as a metaphor rather than a simile, the statement equates hope with that condition outright, which can be interpreted as recasting hope from something chosen or hoped-for into something imposed and permanent. Placed right before the closing line, which repeats the title, this metaphor provides a strong textual foundation for the final statement. Carrying something alone for a lifetime, with no possibility of escape, fits a definition of deep loneliness, even if the poem never states the equation outright.

In this poem, no figurative language is written just for decorative wording, rather each is deliberately chosen to prove a single statement that hope is something confusing, compelling, and, in fact, makes a person feel far lonelier than when they surrender to circumstances or are in despair. As explained by Rachman et al. (2022), figures of speech serve to enliven literary works and leave a profound impression on readers; their use also allows the author to express ideas, concepts, and feelings through the richness of figurative language, which is also serves as a mark of uniqueness and a characteristic of the poet's writing style.

Versification

No fixed rhyme, meter, or regular sound pattern was found. The poem is written entirely in free verse, unlike traditional Korean forms such as 가사 [*gasa*] and 시조 [*sijo*], which follow a fixed pattern (3-4-3-4). Line lengths and stanza sizes vary freely throughout. This should be read specifically as an absence of fixed meter and rhyme, not an absence of rhythm altogether. Aulia et al. (2025) similarly

find no strict versification pattern in the poetry they studied, with rhythm instead built through the repetition of words and sounds, which is also true here, through the hedge words and sentence endings discussed under diction and tone.

This open form fits the content of the poem. Hope described as an unending sentence, along with loneliness that offers no resolution, are conditions without inherent order or closure. A poem about something that never quite ends is arguably ill served by a form that feels neat and complete. Almohawes (2024) argues free verse gives poets greater freedom to choose a personal style of musical rhythms as well as a meter suited to expressing their emotional experience, which is consistent with what is happening here.

Typography

Five typography elements were found: the circular structure linking between the title and the closing line, a double ellipsis recurring at four points, stanza spacing, a shortened fourth stanza, and the isolated line 희망과 나 [hi-mang-gwa na] ‘hope and I’. According to Waluyo (1987) this counts as non-conventional typography, being free and irregular rather than following standard convention. Non-conventional typography with irregular stanza breaks and line lengths visually projects a psychological state that is chaotic, empty, and uncertain. It operates by intentionally disrupting the aesthetic expectations of readers accustomed to the neatness of traditional poetic forms. This physical absence of symmetrical structure or consistent pause patterns forces the reader's eye to experience a tension, disorientation, and lack of resolution that directly mirrors the poem's central theme of unending pain and hope.

The poem's typography works through structural framing and visual ellipsis to reinforce its central themes of unresolved pain and emotional limit. Its circular layout, created by repeating the title in both the opening and closing standalone lines, visually encapsulates the paradox of endless loneliness while its unpunctuated finish ensures the poem remains emotionally open rather than artificially resolved. Within the stanzas, devices like the double ellipsis in the fifth line 물에 피가 번지듯..... [mu-re pi-ga beon-ji-deut] ‘like blood spreading in water.....,’ serve as more than mere pauses, they physically project the slow diffusion of blood through water while marking the exact point where language falls short, deliberately leaving the heaviest psychological burdens unsaid. It can be read as the moment where language reaches its limit, where something is left unsaid on purpose. Read this way, the poem's layout supports its title's claim rather than as something that proves on its own.

Inner Structure

Based on a structural analysis drawing on the theory of (1929) as adapted and modified by Waluyo (1987), four interrelated and mutually supportive elements are identified: theme (sense), feeling, tone, and message (intention). In the theme element, a single main theme is identified: the paradox of hope as a

condition that is both torture and inescapable. The feeling element is dominated by deep, honest, and non-judgmental empathy, accompanied by a real inner conflict. In the tone element, a whispering, confessional tone is found that places the poet on equal ground with the reader, and in the intention element, two main messages are found that conditions that refuse hope must be acknowledged without judgment, and that the reason for persevering need not be grand, for even the small and simple are enough. Each element flows naturally and, together, answers the question in the poem's title.

Theme (sense)

The theme identified is the paradox of hope as both a torment and something inescapable, stated at the poem's opening 나는 희망이 더 외로운 것 같아 [*na-neun hi-mang-i deo we-ro-un geot-gat-a*] 'hope is even lonelier to me' and confirmed at its close, where the final line repeats the title and is immediately preceded by 희망은 종신형이다 [*hi-mang-i jong-sin-hyeong-i-da*] 'hope is a life sentence'. This makes hope more than simply a mood or emotional state, it functions as an argument. The poem is structured to support the claim that hope, rather than despair, is the lonelier condition. The use of cross-domain diction is particularly important in this regard. Hope is initially described through legal and medical vocabulary before it is presented explicitly as an emotion.

The theme in this poem functions as the core conceptual foundation that unifies all emotional and visual elements into a single coherent understanding of existential suffering. It guides the choice of diction, imagery, concrete word, and typography so that every layer moves toward one central meaning: hope does not always bring liberation, but can instead become a lifelong sentence born entirely alone. Thus, the poem builds its theme through language and word choice before making that argument explicit, those word choices supply raw material that helps readers grasp how heavy, how binding, and what exact shape the pain referenced in the poem's theme actually takes.

Feeling

Feeling concerns the speaker's emotional stance toward that theme, or what the condition feels like from the inside. The clearest textual anchor is 아마 그럴 수 있네 [*a-ma geu-reol su in-ne*] 'perhaps that could be' together with 절망이 더 위안이 된다고 하면서 [*jeol-mang-i deo wi-an-i dwen-da-go ha-myeon-seo*] 'while saying that despair offers more comfort'. Both acknowledge a difficult, hope rejecting condition without correcting or judging it. This creates a feeling best described as nonjudgmental empathy alongside a genuine and unresolved inner conflict. The speaker does not resolve the tension between wanting to hope and wanting to stop, but instead remains within it. Importantly, this feeling is built primarily through imagery and concrete words rather than through diction alone. The stillness of 피 웅덩이 [*pi ung-dong-i*] 'Blood pool' and the quiet resignation

of the shoes and chair scene give the poem’s empathy its restrained and unforced quality. In this way, the feeling functions as the emotional counterpart to the theme’s argument rather than as a separate observation.

Tone

Tone, by contrast, concerns the speaker’s relational stance toward the reader or addressee, not what is felt, but how it is delivered. It therefore rests on a different textual layer from feeling. The clearest evidence is the sentence ending 나 [na] in 당신은 이제 병이 깊었나 [dang-sin-eun i-je byeong-i gip-on-na] ‘your sickness having grown deeper now?’, together with the sudden apostrophe that introduces 당신 [dang-sin] ‘you’, partway through the poem. While feeling is anchored in the acceptance of a condition, tone is shaped by how the poem addresses another person: quietly and indirectly, through a question that does not expect an answer rather than through a diagnosis delivered from outside. This shift from observation to direct address gives the poem its confessional and searching quality, placing the speaker beside the reader rather than above them. Because feeling and tone are grounded in genuinely different textual features, a hedging phrase in one case and a grammatical ending and shift in address in the other, they are treated here as related but structurally distinct dimensions rather than restatements of the same underlying mood.

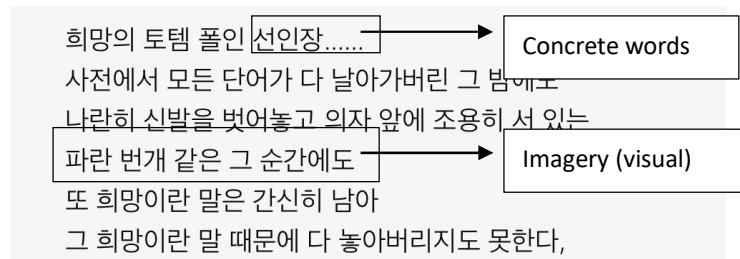
Message (intention)

Message concerns what the poem may suggest to a reader, rather than a claim about Kim Seung Hee’s own intention, since intention lies outside what a structural textual analysis can establish. Two messages can be read from the poem’s evidence. The first is that a condition that resists or rejects hope should be acknowledged rather than corrected, grounded in the same nonjudgmental phrasing discussed under Feeling. The second is that the reason to continue does not need to be large: 이유 없이 나누어주는 저 찬란한 햇빛, 아깜워 [i-yu eop-si na-nu-eo-ju-neun jeo cha-lan-han haet-bit, a-kka-wo] ‘that sunlight given without reason, what a waste’, suggests that an unconditional, ordinary thing, sunlight given to everyone for no reason, can be reason enough, both readings stay close to what the text supports.

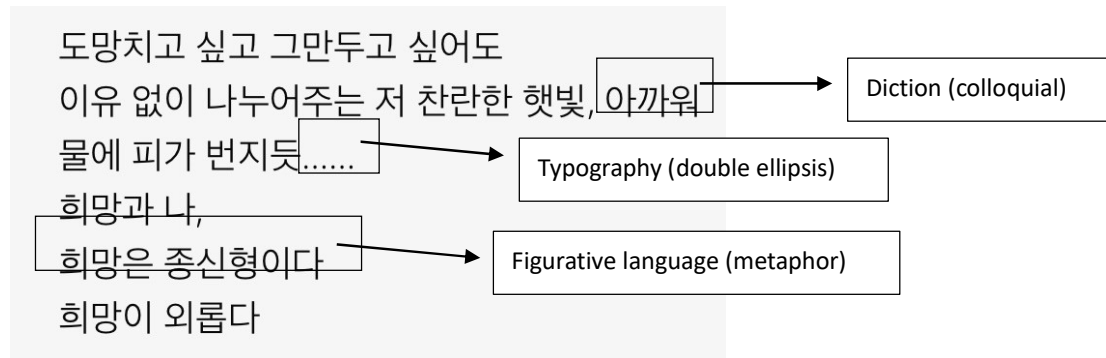
Synthesis

Read as a whole, the physical and inner structures of 희망이 외롭다 [Hi-mang-i We-rop-da] ‘Hope Is Lonely’ reveal that hope feels lonely because its presence forces endless endurance. Borrowed medical, law, and physics terms strip hope of comfort, recasting it as an imposed sentence rather than a choice. Withheld imagery and a circular structure formally enact this sense of entrapment. Consequently, the inner elements flow directly through this technical vocabulary, resolving the poem’s paradox by suggesting that survival relies on ordinary reasons rather than comforting optimism. Taken together, this reading suggests the poem

constructs hope not as optimism but as a paradoxical, structurally imposed condition, and that this meaning emerges from the interaction of its lexical, figurative, visual, and semantic layers rather than from any single element read alone. This mechanism, wherein institutional or technical vocabulary converts an emotional theme into a stated condition, may be useful for reading other contemporary Korean poems that similarly borrow non-lyrical registers to describe interior experience. This extends existing structural analyses of Korean poetry that treat physical and inner structure as mutually reinforcing without specifying how. Because this analysis covers a single poem, the mechanism is offered here as a hypothesis for further testing against Kim Seung Hee's other work, rather than as a settled claim about her style.



Picture 1. taken from part of the third stanza of the poem



Picture 2. taken from part of the fifth stanza of the poem

5. Conclusion

Based on the results of the analysis, 89 data points were identified across 5 of 6 physical elements, including 27 data points related to diction included cross-domain, uncertainty markers, and colloquial language, 19 imagery data consisting of visual, kinesthetic, tactile, and auditory imagery, 18 concrete word data covering medical objects, natural objects, bodily substances, and formal terms, 20 figurative language data consisting of paradox, metaphor, personification, simile, irony, and hyperbole, and no fixed rhyme, meter, or regular sound pattern was found in versification since the poem is written in free verse, and 5 non-conventional

typographic elements, all of which function semantically. In terms of inner structure, four elements were found working in an integrated manner: a single main theme in the form of a paradox of hope as a condition that is both tormenting and impossible to let go of; feeling dominated by honest, non-judgmental empathy accompanied by genuine inner conflict; a tone of whispered confession that places the poet on equal ground with the reader; and two main messages that a condition which rejects hope needs to be acknowledged as it is, and that even a small reason is enough to keep one going. The main finding of this research shows that each physical element gives form to what is conveyed by the inner structure, and together the two answer the paradox of the title: that hope is lonely not because it is absent, but because its persistent presence compels the individual to survive and bear that burden alone.

This research has limitations that need to be acknowledged, namely that this analysis is limited to a single poem out of Kim Seung Hee's entire body of work, so it cannot be generalized to represent Kim Seung Hee's overall poetic style as a whole, and the interpretation of its implicit meaning cannot be separated from the researcher's subjectivity in reading and translating the lexical and cultural connotations of the Korean language. Further research is recommended to expand the scope of study to other poems in the same anthology or other works by Kim Seung Hee, to consider a comparative approach with poems on similar themes by other poets, and to enrich the study with non-structural approaches such as literary psychology or feminism, in order to gain a more comprehensive and diverse understanding of Kim Seung Hee's works.

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