‘Hoi, hoi!’

‘Hoi, hoi!’ An analysis of the portrayal of the female divers of Chejudo in the book *Mom is a Haenyeo* by Koh Hee Young

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Abstract

In recent years the female divers of Chejudo, Haenyŏ, have been featured in various media. The purpose of this study is to examine how Haenyŏ are portrayed in a children’s book particularly focusing on them by analysing the book *Mom is a Haenyeo*. The method used for this study was a qualitative method using analysis questions to facilitate the process of analysis. The findings show that Haenyŏ are portrayed accurately and in a positive light, but also that there were aspects that were slightly romanticised.

Keywords

Haenyŏ, Sumbisori, Chejudo, Tewak, Muljil, Children’s literature, Chamsu, Korea

Sammanfattning

Under senare år har the kvinnliga dykarna från Chejudo, Haenyŏ, presenterats i diverse media. Syftet med denna studie är att undersöka hur Haenyŏ framställs i en barnbok som i synnerhet har dem i fokus genom att analysera boken *Mom is a Haenyeo*. Metoden som tillämpades för denna studie var en kvalitativ metod där analysfrågor användes för att underlätta analysprocessen. Resultatet visar att Haenyŏ framställs på ett verklighetstroget och positivt sätt, men även att det fanns aspekter som var något romantiserade.

Nyckelord

Haenyŏ, Sumbisori, Chejudo, Tewak, Muljil, Barnlitteratur, Chamsu, Korea
초록

최근들어서 다양한 미디어를 통해서 제주도의 해녀가 비추어졌다. 이 연구, 조사의 목적은 어떻게 해녀가 묘사되는가. 또한 어린이 책 "엄마는 해녀입니다"에서 특별한 시각인 그들의 초점에서 분석하는 것과 그 조사안에서는 이 방법이 사용되어진다. 질적 연구방법론용법 분석 질문을 이용했다. 이것은 보여준다 해녀가 묘사되는 것을 정확하게 그리고 책안에서 긍정적인 방향으로 그리고 또 조금은 낭만적인 측면으로.

주제어: 해녀, 숨비소리, 제주도, 테왁, 물질, 어린이문학, 잠수, 한국
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1 Introduction

Through analysing texts one can study the important aspects that create the perceptions people have of society. These perceptions influence relations between different groups of people and contribute to maintaining and creating certain identities. People’s perceptions of minority groups and their culture is heavily influenced by the media. (Hammer 2007, 7) In other words, the media has the ability to shape perceptions of reality, culture and identity. Commonly, members of different social groups live separate from one another and infrequently interact. When this is the case, their main source of knowledge and perceptions of other groups come from the media. (Hammer 2007, 7) Media can therefore be used for social groups to learn about each other, and could aid in creating a more tolerant society. For this reason, it is important that minority groups are represented in the media, but also that they are accurately so and not by stereotypes, which can affect them negatively. Representing minorities in media will empower them, but negative representation will have a weakening effect on them. Minorities will be able to retain their identity and culture the more frequently they are represented in media in a positive manner. (Hammer 2007, 7)

After discovering the children’s book, *Mom is a Haenyeo*, written by Koh Hee Young, I began to wonder how Haenyŏ are perceived and what perceptions this book contributes to in the array of different media about Haenyŏ. Haenyŏ can be likened to a minority group due to the specific cultural aspects that can only really be found in the Haenyŏ communities (Ko 2013, 58-60; Ko et al. 2014, 31-32; Lee 2016, 104). It can therefore be important even for them to be represented accurately to preserve their identities and culture, but also to empower them with positive and accurate perceptions.

1.1 Purpose
The purpose of this essay is to analyse how Haenyŏ are portrayed in a children’s book that has put them in the centre of narration.

1.2 Research question
In what way are Haenyŏ portrayed in the book *Mom is a Haenyeo*? And how may this contribute to the overall perception of Haenyŏ?
1.3 Method
To analyse the book *Mom is a Haenyeo* by Koh Hee Young I have chosen a qualitative method. Because there are numerous different aspects that can be analysed in a text (Boréus 2015, 161) I decided to use analysis questions that would aid me in the process of examining and interpreting the book. The following analysis questions were used to guide through the analysis work:

- What is stated explicitly?
- What is understood between the lines?
- What persons are mentioned and are they active or passive?
- What are the roles (distinguish the key characters described)?
- How are the characters in the book presented/portrayed?
- How are relationships between people categorised differently?
- What key words and expressions are used?
- Which events follow each other (distinguish the events described)?

The analysis questions work as a foundation from which the text can be further analysed and interpreted (Boréus 2015, 162). For this reason, I started by reading through the book and then section by section breaking down how the book may be interpreted with the help of the analysis questions. Each question helps build on an understanding from the previous ones. From there on I categorised my findings into sections to get a better overview and to easier narrow down what is relevant to my research question.

1.4 Notes on Transcription and Translation
The transcription of the Korean used in the essay will be according to the McCune-Reischauer transcription method, with exception to specific names, titles and words that are more frequently used in other transcription methods and therefore more well-known. Alternative transcriptions have been displayed in footnotes for clarification. Author names displayed in the bibliography conjointly will be transcribed according to McCune-Reischauer transcription method, unless the source has an accompanying English translation, in which case the names will be transcribed as they appear in the translation to facilitate accessibility to the source. ‘Koh Hee Young’ is the author’s used transcription of her name in the book, as such I will continue to use this transcription.

Translations of passages and excerpts from the book have been compared with the translations featured at the back of the book, as well as checked by a native speaker for legitimacy and
accuracy to ensure that the content is as precise as possible. Translations of titles of articles and books in the bibliography are also checked by a native speaker, unless an English translation is already featured, in which case this will be used for ease in finding the source. I am by no means an expert in the language and am myself not a native speaker, therefore alternative interpretations of wordings and phrases may apply.

1.5 Sources
Many of the sources used for this essay are articles from academic journals, written by both Koreans and non-Koreans. I made a careful attempt at including works written by scholars and people with expertise in the field. To name a few, I included research from Ko Chang Hoon, who is a professor at Cheju National University, Park Chan Sik who was a lecturer at Cheju National University and David J. Nemeth who is a professor at University of California. Many of the authors referenced had the same or similar information regarding Haenyŏ, which I deem strengthens the authenticity, since many of them are experts within the field. Help with interpretation was kindly given to me from a native speaker for the sources that were written in Korean to ensure that there would be no misinterpretations. For the overview of the author and illustrator, I used the information that is presented at the end of *Mom is a Haenyeo*.

1.6 Structure and Scope
In the upcoming chapter I will cover the background information that is important to give the reader a better understanding of the island on which the Korean female divers reside, about the divers and their historical context, as well as some context to the book that is the subject of this essay. Thereafter, I will present the theoretical framework which will cover how the divers work, the divers in the modern day and a brief mention of representations and portrayals of the divers in various media and in Korean society at large. Finally, I will discuss my interpretation and analysis of the book in the analysis chapter, which will be followed by a conclusion and final discussion.

There are some limitations to this study. I was curious to find out how Haenyŏ are portrayed in a children’s book about them and how it may affect the overall perception of them, however, because of the limited scope of this Bachelor’s essay and time to work on it, I was not able to analyse other children’s media or other media about Haenyŏ to compare with. For
this reason it is not possible to make in-depth discussions about other works and draw any broader conclusions about the portrayal of Haenyŏ in media or society. Despite this I think it is interesting to see how Haenyŏ are portrayed in this children’s book. I also had no contact with the author. Had it been possible, then her intentions could have been compared to my own interpretation to see if it would align and could have contributed to a more detailed discussion. Another limitation to this study is the lack of time and financial resources. I was not able to travel to Korea to meet and interview the Haenyŏ, which could have given me more insight into their culture and community. Instead this essay will rely on research from scholars with expertise in the field.
2 Background

Before the analysis of the literary work presenting Haenyŏ it is necessary to bring up the context surrounding the cultural phenomenon and its history. First, I will present a description of the island, Chejudo, on which the practice is said to have emerged and the effects the barren landscape had on this phenomenon. Second, there will be a brief presentation of the history of Haenyŏ. Third, I will present an overview of the author and the illustrations present in the book. This is to give a better understanding of the author’s background and affiliation to Haenyŏ. Last, I will introduce a synopsis of the book.

2.1 Description of Chejudo

Chejudo (제주도)\(^1\) is an island located on the south coast of South Korea. Today it is also its own self-governing province. (Jwa 2002, 54-55; Nemeth 1987, 43) It is a volcanic island with a large volcano called Hallasan Mountain (Jwa 2002, 56). This has made most of the soil on the island stony and barren (Nemeth 1987, 43). Due to the depleted soil farming has been difficult for the locals to achieve (Lee 2016, 74-75; Soon 1976, 18-19; Yoo 2014, 17). Despite this, some farming has been possible, such as the growing and harvesting of large citrus fruits similar to mandarins (Gwon 2005, 127; Soon 1976, 19).

The island has been divided into three major habitual zones in which villagers have settled. These habitual zones are ‘coastal’, ‘plains’ and ‘mountain’ habitats (Hall 1926, 62-63; Nemeth 1987, 55). The people of the three zones belonged to different socioeconomic classes in the past. In the coastal habitat the land was more barren forcing the villagers habituated there to combine farming with fishing. (Hall 1926, 63; Lee 2016, 75; Nemeth 1987, 55) In the plains, on the other hand, the soil was more susceptible to growth, as it was not as barren, which enabled them to farm and keep larger livestock. For this reason, the villagers of the coastal habitat were considered belonging to a lower socioeconomic class than the villagers from the plains. In the mountain habitats there were mostly hunters and gatherers living, not forming villages. (Nemeth 1987, 55)

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\(^1\) According to the 2000 ROK romanization, also transcribed as ‘Jejudo’.
As Nemeth (1987, 129-130) mentions, Neo-Confucian ideals and ideology were spread throughout the land, but shamanistic beliefs remained with the people living in the coastal habitat (Soon 1976, 14). The culture of Cheju differed from the traditional Korean Confucian ideals (Ko 2013, 59), where the male had a more dominating role in society (Ko 2013, 58-59; Soon 1976, 14). Although the coastal villagers rigorously adhered to Neo-Confucian social ideals and convictions there were certain everyday activities where these ideals could not be followed (Nemeth 1987, 130). Nemeth and Cho (1987, 130) also argue that the shamanistic beliefs were dominant over the Neo-Confucian in the daily life of the villagers. Unlike on the Korean Peninsula the two ideologies and societal norms coexisted on Chejudo.

Chejudo is the name of the island itself, but also the province consisting of approx. 62 islets in the surrounding area (Nemeth 1987, 43). In this report, Chejudo will be used interchangeably to mean both the island and the province.

### 2.2 Historical overview of Haenyo

Haenyo (해녀, 妇女) sometimes also called Chamsu (잠수, 잠수) or Chamnyŏ (잠녀, 잠녀) are freediving women mostly present on the island of Chejudo in the south coast of South Korea (Ko 2013, 58; Lee 2016, 10). Haenyo bears the literal meaning ‘sea women’ (Joo 2014, 19), while Chamsu and Chamnyŏ similarly translates into ‘diving woman’ (Lee 2016, 168). In this essay, only Haenyo will be used to refer to the female divers for consistency and clarity.

These women live in coexistence with nature (Ko et al. 2014, 30; Lee 2016, 13; Yoo 2014, 17), whilst diving for marine products such as abalone, octopus and seaweed which are later sold (Gwon 2005, 117; Ko 2013, 58; Soon 1976, 17), making this their main means of earning a living, although many also conduct farming as well (Hall 1926, 63; Nemeth 1987, 55; Soon 1976, 16). Although freediving women are not exclusive to Korea, the Haenyo on Chejudo have had a long history on the island (Ko 2013, 58) that has had a significant contribution to

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2 Also commonly transcribed as ‘Haenyeo’.

3 The Haenyo practice can be found on the eastern, western and southern coasts all over the Korean Peninsula. However, in popular and even in scientific publications, they are singularly attributed to Chejudo and are often described as having originated from that island.

4 Japanese Ama are also well-known freediving women similar to Haenyo.
the culture as whole (Ko 2013, 60). Such cultural contributions include Sammu spirit or Samyu tradition5 (Ko 2013, 60) corresponding to that of Sam-da-do6. In addition to that, the Haenyŏ divers have developed their own culture to include traditional folk songs7 sung by Haenyŏ on the island (Ko 2013, 67). The Korean researcher Yoo Chul-in even claims that Haenyŏ are such a big part of the society on the island that many inhabitants have a connection to Haenyŏ through a mother or grandmother (Yoo 2014, 17).

What characterises a Haenyŏ from other divers is their ability to dive without any support from oxygen tanks and modern day diving equipment (Gwon 2005, 117; Hong and Rahn 1967, 34; Yoo 2014, 14), meaning they completely rely on their ability to hold their breath underwater when they conduct what they call Muljil (물질) or “underwater diving” (Lee 2016, 12). Another characteristic of the Haenyŏ is that they are exclusively women (Gwon 2005, 115; Hong and Rahn 1967, 34; Soon 1976, 16-18) and in recent times a majority are of an older age (Ko and Jung 2018, 333-334). Most Haenyŏ work for as long as they are able to (Yoo 2014, 17) making it an occupation of a lifetime. Believed to be originated on Chejudo (Hong and Rahn 1967, 34), the diving tradition of Haenyŏ is difficult to pinpoint to an exact date of origin. Some scholars (Gwon 2005, 117; Hong and Rahn 1967, 34; Jwa 2002, 55; Ko 2013, 57) say that the practice of Muljil originated over 1,000-1,700 years ago, while Lee (2016, 124-25) estimates over 2,000 years ago. Therefore we can conclude that Muljil activities probably begun sometime around 1,000-2,000 years ago. However, according to Yoo (2014, 14), the first records that mention the divers have been found from the 17th century, the Chosŏn dynasty8. At that time freediving was not exclusive to women and fishermen known by the name of Pojak (鮑作, 포작 or Pojagin 鮑作人, 포작인) were also active (Park 2004, 138; Park 2016, 29-30; Yoo 2014, 14). Sometime from late 17th century to the early 18th century it is believed that women took over (Hong and Rahn 1967, 34) and there are several different theories as to why it became a job exclusive to women.

5 ‘Three nothings, or three lacking things’ (no thieves, no beggars no gates).
6 Three abundant things’ (Stone, Wind and Women).
7 Haenyŏ folksongs have obtained the UNESCO status of Intangible Cultural Heritage (Lee 2016, 11-12) in 2016.
8 Also commonly transcribed as ‘Joseon’ or ‘Chosen’.
The reason why Haenyŏ have been predominantly female has been discussed by various scholars. It is well known that Chejudo has seen a shortage of their male population, i.e. an imbalance of female to male ratio demographic. The reason Soon (1976, 18) argues is that it is due to Cheju men’s forced departure from the island under Japanese Colonial rule as there was a demand for workforce in Japan. This together with the need for military service as well as high death rates during the Korean War has led to a reduced number of men, thus making the women the main source of income. Ko (2013, 58), on the other hand, claims that they were “more physically suited for the job than men.” Hong and Rahn (1967, 34), similarly believe that women are better suited for the profession than men. However, Joo (2014, 19) mentions that the reason for men leaving Chejudo was to avoid government taxation of certain sea products. The number of men on the island was therefore significantly lowered and women had to take up mens’ work. Lee (2016, 16) also states that the taxation on marine products caught by the divers caused men to leave the island. This created a family dynamic where the men took care of the children and the women earned the living (Soon 1976, 13-15). Although the men did work on the fields, diving was the main source of income for many Haenyŏ families. Other supplementary work such as work on fields were rarely the main means to make a living (Soon 1976, 16). Despite this, patriarchal structures were still present due to Neo-Confucian ideals (Soon 1976, 13-14).

Haenyŏ were ridiculed and disregarded (Joo 2014, 19; Ko 2013, 58) which might be due to these ideals. Another contribution to this view of them may be that they dived bare-breasted in the past with nothing else but cotton underpants (Heo 2014, 8; Hong and Rahn 1967, 34; Joo 2014, 19-20). Even some government authorities tried to forbid their lightly dressed diving activities because of the Confucian norms (Ko 2013, 60). However, Haenyŏ supplied farmers with seaweed which aided in adjusting the land to enable better growth (Hall 1926, 67; Joo 2014, 20; Lee 2016, 75). Therefore the view of Haenyŏ might not exclusively have been negative.

2.3 About the author and the illustrator

The author of the book that is analysed in this study, Koh Hee Young (고희영), started out as a filmmaker and has several other works to her name. She was born and grew up on Chejudo, and thus has a personal connection to the region and Haenyŏ divers, who are a part of her
hometown (Koh 2017, 39). She says the following in the ‘author's words’ section of the book:
“In the sea of my hometown, there were haenyeos [Haenyŏ]. They would go out to the sea
and come back just like the sun goes up and goes down. Are they not afraid of the sea? How
can they stay underwater for so long without breathing? My longstanding curiosity became
the seed of my documentary film ‘Breathing underwater’.”

While filming her documentary, which was filmed during a span of 7 years, Koh met the
Spanish artist Eva Armisén who was also inspired by the women divers. They decided to
“make a children’s book to tell the children all over the world about the stories of haenyeos
[Haenyŏ]” (Koh 2017, 39). The children’s book about a Haenyŏ mother and grandmother told
from the perspective of a young girl is modelled after a real Haenyŏ called Jiae-Cha (Koh
2017, 39). The illustrations were done by Armisén. In 2016 she travelled to Cheju where she
drew pictures of Haenyŏ in action. The pictures she drew were published together with an
interview in a local newspaper. Koh saw the pictures and contacted Armisén. Armisén said
the following about being invited to draw the illustrations for the children’s book:

“Being invited to illustrate this book about three generations of Haenyeo [Haenyŏ] is a great
gift that has enabled me to be in Jeju [Cheju] and Udo⁹ with them for several months without
moving from my studio. I have tried to be as honest as possible and to shine full light on these
women I admire so much.” (Koh 2017, 40)

2.4 Synopsis of the book and description of illustrations
A young girl native of Chejudo is frightened by the large waves forming out on the sea.
Comforted by her mother she asks why her mother goes into it everyday. Her mother answers
that “Even though I look into the sea every day, I can’t read the mind of the sea.” The
daughter, however, keeps her eyes on her mother diving into the sea, only big orange floats
seen from the shore. She introduces her mother as a Haenyŏ, who dives for fish, abalone and
seaweed, yet she cannot understand how it is that her mother can hold her breath for so long
underwater. She also introduces her grandmother who is also a Haenyŏ. Yet another thing that

⁹ One of the many islands belonging to Chejudo.
the girl cannot understand is how the grandmother with smaller hands, shorter stature and weaker eyesight always has a larger catch than the mother.

Through the girls eyes we follow along and hear her mother's and grandmother’s explanations and stories about Haenyŏ divers. They answer her curiosity about them and their abilities which are things such as how they can hold their breath underwater and how come the grandmother can catch more than the mother despite her shorter, smaller body and weaker eyesight. They also tell her about how grandmother has never once left the sea while the mother, on the other hand, once became tired of the sea and moved to a city making her mind up to never come back again. However, this was short-lived and the mother too, soon started longing for the sea and the life as a Haenyŏ.

An accident, where the mother gets stuck in seaweed when staying a little too long underwater trying to catch abalone is also told to the girl. The mother felt her breath shortening and her chest tightening, however she succumbed to her own want of catching the giant abalone, which resulted in her getting stuck, unable to come up for air. She is then saved by the grandmother, who luckily was diving close by, but is reminded not to let her greed take over.

The illustrations are painted in a more Westernised style with a cartoon-ish feel to them. They are very colourful. The waves are personified as they are drawn with faces and arms. The illustrations complement the text, closely related the narrative. The grandmother and mother have a blue heart on their chests in some illustrations. This specifically appears when the text relates to their feelings towards the ocean or being a Haenyŏ.

3 Theoretical Framework

In this part I will talk about the Haenyŏ community and their day to day life in this profession. I will present the modern day Haenyŏ and the challenges they face. I will also briefly talk about how Haenyŏ are portrayed and represented in media and society.

3.1 Haenyŏ community and their day to day life

The women divers of Chejudo have developed a community and their own culture (Ko 2013,
58-60; Ko et al. 2014, 31-32). The Haenyŏ culture is filled with folklore, traditional rituals, and festivals where they celebrate (Ko 2013, 58-60; Ko et al. 2014, 31-32; Lee 2016, 104). The diving is conducted collectively starting with training at a smaller scale in groups. A mother or another experienced Haenyŏ will teach their daughters. (Soon 1976, 16)

Motherdaughter ties are strong through this collective work, which is also seen by a mother-daughter residence pattern in the past (Soon 1976, 15). Haenyŏ have, in other words, a communal culture where decisions about management, rights to fish and selling seafood are made together. The diving itself, however, depends on the Haenyŏ. (Ko 2013, 57; Yoo 2014, 16). It is also important for Haenyŏ to give back to their community. This is primarily done through the Haenyŏ Association (Chamsuhoe), where a donation is routinely granted to local improvements (Ko 2013, 59) such as funding public schools, village roads, facilities, etc. (Lee 2016, 111; Soon 1976, 18; Yoo 2014, 17).

When diving some can hold their breath up to a 3 min at a time (Ko 2013, 57), resurfacing for brief breaths and rests (Hong and Rahn 1967, 34). The sound a Haenyŏ makes as she comes back up to the surface is called Sumbisori (숨비소리) which is a whistle sound that comes forth when air is released from the lungs (Hong and Rahn 1967, 36; Ko et al. 2014, 29). This technique\(^\text{10}\) enables Haenyŏ to stay out in the sea and dive at a depth of 15-20 metres (Ko 2013, 57). They dive for about 4-5 hours a day (Gown 2005, 117) and for 7-15 days a month (Gwon 2005, 117; Joo 2014, 20). However, although they are trained professionals at diving and catching sea products, they are not exempt from dangers lurking in the sea. There is always a risk of not being able to resurface when freediving (Heo 2014, 10; Yoo 2014, 17; Lee 2016, 161). Joo (2014, 20) describes the risk: “the specter of death always looms over them when diving. “ A Haenyŏ can easily get tangled in seaweed, caught in currents and tides, get too greedy and push herself past her own ability to breathe underwater during a certain period of time (Heo 2014, 6). During weather when the conditions are deemed too dangerous to dive they focus on work on the farms instead (Soon 1976, 17).

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\(^{10}\) Apart from this breathing technique, fishing techniques are one of the things relating to Haenyŏ that have received a UNESCO intangible cultural heritage status (Lee 2016, 11-12).
3.2 Modern day Haenyŏ

The modern day Haenyŏ conducts her diving activities almost exactly the way in which she did years earlier. The minor changes involve diving with wetsuits instead of cotton clothing (Joo 2014, 19-20; Yoo 2014, 16) something that has permitted extended diving due to the resistance against (Ko et al. 2014, 28; Lee 2016, 65; Yoo 2014, 17). Although they do not use oxygen-tanks, the divers carry numerous tools and equipment that assists them in their work.

One such piece of equipment is the T’ewak (테왁), or a float, which has the purpose of supporting the women when diving and returning to the surface for air, while also to carrying the net containing the catch. It was previously made out of gourd, but have since the 1960s been made out of styrofoam. (Yoo 2014, 15) The Chagŭnnun (작은눈 literally meaning small eye), or goggles are also equipment divers used which were replaced by K'ŭnnun (큰눈, literally meaning big eye), or diving masks sometime in the 1970s. (Hong and Rahn 1967, 34; Lee 2016, 126-130) Other equipment include Pitch'ang (빗창), a metal tool used to collect sea creatures which is attached to the wrist of the diver (Lee 2016, 130), Torhŏritti (돌허리띠), a weightbelt wrapped around the waist (Heo 2014, 8) and Mulgalk’wi (물갈퀴), diving fins (Lee 2016, 133). In spite of a few updates, the equipment, generally, maintains basic form (Gwon 2005, 117). Modernized tools and equipment are prohibited to avoid overfishing and to further sustain sea harvests for the future. It is a way to live in harmony with nature and its resources. (Lee 2016, 12-65; Yoo 2014, 17; Ko et.al 2014, 29-30) The Haenyŏ also take part in shamanistic rites and rituals, specifically to pray to the ocean goddess be safe as well as a large catch when diving (Joo 2014, 20; Ko et al. 2014, 30).

Although the women still catch sea creatures like in old times, performances for tourists visiting to see the divers first hand have also become a means of earning a living (Lee 2014, 23-25). After the 1970s, the tourism industry on Cheju Island soared and it surpassed that of the agricultural industry. (Lee 2014, 23-25) Today, modern Haenyŏ adopt the profession by choice and are no longer compelled to dive (Yoo 2014, 16). The number of Haenyŏ are on a decline. Ko and Jung (2018, 333-334) present this with data (자료 재구성, Charyo Chaegusŏng) from the Department of Fisheries in Cheju Provincial Government
Haenyŏ Hyŏnhwang). In the 1970s, 59.9% of Haenyŏ on Chejudo were aged 30-49 while only 13.8% were 50-70. In 2016 a merely 1.5% were aged 30-49 while the age group 50-70 is at a 98.5%, with the eldest (70 and over) being in the majority. According to Ko (2013, 65) there were approx. 23,000 Haenyŏ in 1965 and they declined to approx. 5,600 in 2002. That number has since gone down to about 4,500 divers in 2012 (Yoo 2014, 17) and recently 4,005 in 2016 (Ko and Jung 2018, 333-334). In other words, Haenyŏ have gone from being up to 14,143 in the 1970s to approx. 4,005 in 2016. The reason for this huge decline in numbers has been widely discussed. Some Haenyŏ started leaving their diving jobs in the 1960s and early 1970s when the mandarin trade expanded (Gwon 2005, 128). Subsequently, recruitment seems to have become increasingly more difficult as is evident from the data found at the Department of Fisheries of the Cheju Provincial Government (Ko and Jung 2018, 333-334). Gwon (2005, 81-129) speculates that “clean, prestigious employment” was something preferred by younger women instead. Gwon (ibid.) also claims that even some Haenyŏ do not want their daughters to pursue this occupation themselves due to “backbreaking labor, low social status and uncertain prospects.” Lee (2016, 81-2) argues that the reason for the drastic decrease in the number of Haenyŏ is partly due to improved educational standards and partly due to the dramatic increase in mandarin producing areas. Ko (2013, 65) similarly discusses that the future of Haenyŏ looks bleak considering the declining numbers. This due to the rapid development and modifications of the industry structure (Ko 2013, 65; Lee and Ko 2006, 429-434). The above mentioned reasons, along with other developments and transitions accompanied with modern society have affected the Haenyŏ community so gravely, that they are presumably a dying trade (Ko et al. 2014, 30). The ‘Haenyŏ’ tradition has been added to the UNESCO’s Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2016 (Lee 2016, 11-12). Efforts have since been made to rescue the dying trade of Muljil. One such effort is the opening of Haenyŏ academies and schools to educate future generations of Haenyŏ divers (Lee 2014, 22-23; Lee 2016, 182-83). The number of Haenyŏ are still, however, at a low rate.
3.3 Representation and portrayal of Haenyŏ in society and media

Haenyŏ have been portrayed and represented in various ways throughout the years. Not only have they been documented in recent times, but also as far back as the 17th century during the Chosŏn dynasty (Yoo 2014, 14; Park 2016, 28). Lee (2016, 166-181) presents literature and poetry from the Chosŏn dynasty which he claims primarily depict elements connected to their diving, such as ‘life and death’ and exploitation elements. In modern literature, Lee (ibid.) asserts, the divers are depicted in a more “exotic” and sexualised manner, as well as “professional divers amidst historical turbulence.”

In the 21st century, Haenyŏ have been extensively featured, represented and have been widely documented in various different types of media. They seem to garner loads of attention, especially in recent times. They have, for instance, been photographed by photographers such as Cho Ji-Hyoung and Lim Hark-hyoun for Koreana’s special edition on Haenyŏ, featured in books like “Haenyeo: Women Divers of Korea” by photographer Y.zin, the famous photo collection from photographer Hyung S. Kim that have been published in articles by The New Yorker to even being featured at The Maritime Museum and Aquarium (“Sjöfartsmuseet”) (exhib. 2018) in Gothenburg, Sweden. Photographs by David Alan Harvey for the National Geographic (2014) and collections by documentary photographer Jose Jeuland of women divers of Cheju have been exhibited in Singapore (2017). There have been documentaries such as “Haenyeo: Women of the Sea” (2013) by Alex Igidbashian, Daye Jeong and Kevin Sawicki, “Breathing underwater (물숨 Mulsum)” (2016) by Koh Hee Young as well as “Last Mermaids” (2013) by Kim Sa-gan and “Diving Women of Jeju-do” (2007) by


Barbara Hammer. Cartoon characters and animations such as “꼬마해녀 몽니 (Kkoma Haenyŏ Mongni Little Diver Mongni)”, “섬집아이 소중이 (Sŏmjibai Sojungi Island Kid Sojungi)” created by the Cheju animation studio “ARTPQ”\(^\text{13}\). They have also been depicted or featured in contemporary films like “My Mother, the Mermaid (인어공주 Inŏ kongju, 2004)”, “Tamra, the Island (탐나는도다 T’amnanŭn toda, 2009)”, “Swallow the Sun (태양을 삼켜라 T’aeyang-ŭl Samk’yŏra, 2009)” and “Canola (계춘할망 Kyech’un halmang, 2016).”

In children’s literature Haenyŏ have in recent times appeared in various works such as “애기해녀 옥랑이 미역따러 독도 가요 (Aegi Haenyŏ Ongnangi miyŏk ttaro Tokto kayo, Little Haenyŏ Ongnangi goes to Tokto to pick seaweed, 2015)”, “동군해녀와 신비한 복주머니 (Ttonggun Haenyŏ-wa sinbihan pokchumŏni, The older Haenyŏ and the mysterious pouch 2017)”, “꼬마 해녀와 물할망 (Kkoma Haenyŏ-wa murhalmang, The little Haenyŏ and grandmother goddess/water goddess, 2018)”, “내 꿈은 해녀 (Nae kkumŭn Haenyŏ, My dream is to become a Haenyŏ, 2016)”, “우도의 꼬마 해녀 (Udo-ŭi kkoma Haenyŏ , The little Udo Haenyŏ, 2014)”, “제주 해녀 간난이 (Cheju Haenyŏ kannani, Cheju haenyŏ 2015)”, “이여도로 간 해녀 (Yiyŏdo-ro kan Haenyŏ, The Haenyŏ who went to Yiyŏdo, 2006)”, “엄마는 해녀입니다 (Ŏmmanŭn Haenyŏ imnida, My Mom is a Haenyŏ, 2017)”.

It seems as if though the women divers of Cheju have, in many ways and mediums, been ascribed as a symbol of the culture and tradition of Chejudo and its people which likely impacts the way in which they come to have been perceived. They have, for example, been

\(^{13}\) These characters appear in animation shorts and in comic books. Merchandise with these characters are also sold. One can say that they are reminiscent of other popular Korean cartoon characters such as “Pucca”, “Pororo” and “Dooly”.
described as ‘mermaids’ (Jwa 2002, 55), ‘physical amazons’ (Soon 1976, 13), ‘symbol of strong women’ (Gwon 2005, 130), ‘spirit woman’ (Gwon 2005, 117) and ‘a symbol of the islands fortitude’ (Yoo 2014, 17).
4 Analysis

There are different elements in the book in which we can see how Haenyŏ are portrayed in the book. For this part of the essay I intend to discuss the portrayal of the characters, the accuracy of the book, as well as in which aspects Haenyŏ are romanticised. I will also discuss how the different sections tie into an overall sense of relatability that stems from the core depiction of the divers. Finally I will delve into the question how this impacts the way in which Haenyŏ can be viewed by the reader through such a depiction presented in the book.

4.1 Character portrayal

Something that is prominent in the book is the bond between the mother and the daughter. This is portrayed mainly throughout the whole story, but there are also elements of the illustrations where their bond is emphasised. It is an important theme as it reflects the community culture that surrounds Haenyŏ. Since only women are Haenyŏ (Hong and Rahn 1967, 34; Yoo 2014, 14) one can imagine how important the relationship between these women, the younger and the older generation, has been and might still be. Especially considering how many of the mothers teach the daughters the necessary skills needed (Soon, p.17; Heo 2014, 8). Through the story this bond can be seen in how involved the daughter is with the mother’s and grandmother’s activities. She is constantly present and observing, asking about the different things she encounters. The older women, in turn, answer any questions she has about the sea or the life of Haenyŏ. Although the daughter is not trained to become a Haenyŏ, she is still immersed in the culture and community due to her direct connection to the culture of Haenyŏ. Haenyŏ is part of her cultural heritage and it is through the young daughter’s discovery and interest of Haenyŏ that the occupation and the culture surrounding it is presented to the reader. The story is told from the child’s perspective and focuses on her relation to Haenyŏ, as well as the relation between her and her mother and grandmother. By reading from this perspective it may be easier for children to relate to them which might aid in a growing understanding of Haenyŏ.

The illustrations depict their bond as loving. In one part of the book the mother can be seen embracing the daughter on her lap as she explains her relation to the ocean. Physical affection is usually a strong indicator of a loving bond and a close relationship. Thus the scene gives the impression of closeness between the two characters. The dynamic is also likely to be similar.
to that of a parent reading the book closely to their child. This might further establish relatability for the reader. In another part of the book the mother can be seen hanging on her T’ewak amongst other Haenyŏ divers. While all the other Haenyŏ have the common orange coloured T’ewak floats, the mother has a flowery pink one so that the daughter can easily identify her amongst the others when she is observing her mother conduct muljil from the shore. The mother is seen waving towards the reader, where the daughter supposedly is standing. This highlights their bond as well, as the mother and daughter then share this connection between them even though the mother is far out at sea. On top of that, it also cements that readers may follow the story through the lens of the main character, thus deepening the relatability. In the final part of the book an illustration depicting the daughter embraced by her mother and grandmother, each with a small blue heart in their chest while holding a big one in between them can be seen. This blue heart is featured in other parts of the book, seen on the mother as well as the grandmother as a way to connect them to the ocean. Here, at the end, they are seen holding a bigger blue heart with the daughter, which could symbolise that she shares their community and cultural background, as well as the strong bond between the three generations. Overall this helps illustrate a positive outlook of the Haenyŏ and communicate to the reader the significance of the bond between the divers and their community.

The three characters in the book are portrayed in an overall positive light, through the words that describe them, as well as their personalities and actions. This with an air of relatability. One example is how the mother is described. The daughter presents her mother in the following way:

“엄마는 잠수대장이라서 돌고래처럼 헤엄을 잘도 칭니다.
(Ŏmmanŭn Chamsu Taejangirasŏ Tolgoraech’ŏrŭm Heŏmŭl Chaldo Ch’imnida)
엄마는 건지기 대장이라서 물고기를 잘도 건집니다.
(Ŏmmanŭn Kŏnjigi Taejangirasŏ Mulgogirŭl Chaldo Kŏnjimnida)엄마는 따기 대장이라서 전복을 잘도 탄니다.
(Ŏmmanŭn Ttagi Taejangirasŏ Chŏnbogŭl Chaldo Ttamnida)엄마는 줄기 대장이 라서 미역을 잘도 줍습니다.
(Ŏmmanŭn Chupki Taejangirasŏ Miyŏgŭl Chaldo Chupsŭmnida)엄마는 잡기 대장이라서 문어를 잘도 잡습니다.
Mom is a breath holding master who, like a dolphin, swims so well.
Mom is a spearing master who catches fish so well.
Mom is a picking master who picks abalone so well.
Mom is a gathering master who gathers seaweed so well.
Mom is a capturing master who captures octopus so well.”

In this paragraph the mother is described as being able to hold her breath and swim like a dolphin. She is seemingly likened to a dolphin because of how naturally and skillfully she dives into the ocean. As to the word 대장 (taejang) which has several meanings (like leader or captain), in this case, I believe it would be better to translate it as “master” or “champion”, as it insinuates that she is exceptionally skilled at what she does. The word is repeated in each sentence, further establishing the mother as a skillful diver and Haenyŏ. Catching, using spear, picking, pulling etc. are all actions that are active verbs, displaying the mother as being active opposed to passive.

Another passage that further establishes the mother as being skilled is in the following excerpt:

“엄마는 어떻게 바닷속에 머물 수가 있는지.
아무리 생각해봐도 잘 모르겠다는 겁니다.
I cannot understand how it is that mother can breathe underwater. No matter how much I think about it.”

She cannot even imagine how the mother is able to do what she does which presents the ability the mother possesses and that the skill perhaps is not usual. And as the reader perceives the Haenyŏ through the perspective of the daughter, that might be something that the reader will also be amazed at and thus enhancing the view of the Haenyŏ as a skilled diver. The mother explains the technique used to stay underwater in the following extract:

“우리들은 그럴꺼야.”
She explains how they hold their breath until the moment, when they emerge from the water and then let out the oxygen and a sound escapes their mouths, just like a dolphin. Again emphasising their ability, not only through likening her to a dolphin, as in the previous passage, but also in the way that the breath holding technique is explained, which implies competence. The likeness to a dolphin does not only serve as a way to establish their abilities but to show how naturally they operate in the water environment. Such a comparison can cause the reader to automatically associate the dolphin with the diver and ascribing its abilities to her.

But it is not only the mother who is portrayed as being competent at what she does. The grandmother is also portrayed as an exceptionally skilful diver and catcher of sea creatures, despite her appearance and age. As the following passage states:
울리니는 엄마보다 키가 작습니다. (Halmŏninŭn Ŏmmaboda K'iga Chaksŭmnida) 태어나는 엄마보다 손이 작습니다. (Halmŏninŭn Ŏmmaboda soni chaksŭmnida) 태어나는 엄마보다 눈이 어둡습니다. (Halmŏninŭn Ŏmmaboda nuni Ĝupsŭmnida)

그런데 어떻게 태어나의 그물이 엄마의 그물보다 왜만날 더 늘어져 있는 걸까요. (Kŭrŏnde Őttŏk'e Halmŏniŭi Kŭmuri Ŏmmaŭi Kŭmulboda Wae Mannal Tŏ Nŭrŏjŏ Innŭn Kŏlkkayo)

엄마의 두 젖보다 훨씬 처져 있는 태어나의 두 젖처럼 말이지요. (Ŏmmaŭi Tu Chŏtpoda Hwŏlssin Ch'ŏjyŏ Innŭn Halmŏniŭi Tu Chŏtch'ŏrm Marijiyo)

Grandmother is shorter than mom
Grandmother has smaller hands than mom
Grandmother’s eyesight is not as good as moms
Then how is it that grandmothers net with catch always droops lower than mothers
Just like how grandmother’s breasts are drooping lower than mother’s.”

Despite the grandmother being shorter than the mother, having smaller hands and not being able to see as well as the mother, her net with the day’s catch is always drooping far lower than the mother’s. In other words, the grandmother is even more skilled than the mother, despite her physical “disadvantages”. Again, this also emphasises that the skills are not common and causes amazement, since the grandmother is older and shorter, which could be expected to be possible reasons for her to be less skilful or even unable to perform such tasks.

4.2 Accuracy
The book presents the women divers of Cheju island in a (to my outsider view of them) fairly authentic way in terms of equipment, technique, actions as well as terms used. One such example can be seen in the excerpt of the book mentioned above, where the mother explains the breath holding technique that Haenyŏ use to dive underwater. This is a real technique actually used by Haenyŏ when diving. The sound that comes out when the divers resurface is called Sumbisori, like in reality, and helps build up the authenticity.

Another accuracy can be found in the following text:
"Mom said she was different from grandmother.

Mom said she didn’t want to live like grandmother. She was tired of the ocean. She didn’t even want to see it. So she left for the city across the ocean. And chose not to come back to the sea again."

The mother was different from the grandmother, she did not want to live like her, and hated the sight of the ocean. She chose to leave the ocean and not come back, going to the city on the other side. Perhaps the author tried to demonstrate a real life shift in the Haenyŏ community, wherein the younger generations choose to not take upon the occupation and some even leaving the island and coastal villages altogether to pursue other occupations elsewhere. As has been discussed above, this has caused the Haenyŏ divers to decrease in recent times (Gwon 2005, 81-129; Ko 2013, 65; Lee 2016, 81-2). Reason for leaving are many, some just like the mother in the book are not interested in the life any longer, while some might now able to reject such a physically demanding occupation, many seem to choose less dangerous and less unsure occupations. (Gwon 2015, 81-129; Yoo 2014, 16).

The following excerpts depict accuracies in the risks and dangers the divers face:

”호이~ 호이~

(Hoi Hoi)
A strong sentence implying the risk of death when diving as hearing the sound signifies that the diver has resurfaced once again. It also suggests the idea of a possibility that the mother might not resurface, which instils the thought to the reader that there is a sense of death surrounding Haenyŏ.

Another instance that showcases the same looming sense of death, is in the following passage where the daughter expresses concern and fear of the sea:

“엄마, 파도는 너무 무서운 것 같아요.
(Ŏmma, P'adonŭn Nŏmu Musŏun Kŏt Kat'ayo) 애야,
바다는 더 무시무시한 곳이란다.
(Aeya, Padanŭn Tŏ Musimusihan Kosiranda) 근데
왜 매일 바닷속에 들어가나요?
(Kŭnde Wae Maeil Padassogel Tūrōganayo?)
매일 들여다봐도 안 보이는 게 바다의 마음인걸.
(Maeil Tūlyŏda Pwado An Poinŭn Ke Padaŭi Maŭmin'gŏl)

Mom the waves look so scary.
Sweety, the ocean is an even scarier place.
So why do you go into it every day?
It is because even if I go inside every day, I cannot see the mind of the sea.”
implies that the sea is dangerous and unpredictable as she cannot see the mind of sea, even if she dives every day. This sense of unpredictability demonstrates some of the hardships women divers of Cheju Island face on a daily basis (Heo 2014, 10; Joo 2014, 20) and that there is this sense of danger surrounding them.

Finally, one part of the book displays the life and death struggle far more explicitly and directly than any other event in the story. That is when the mother is caught in the algae, trying to catch huge abalone. She could feel her chest tightening and her breath becoming shorter but determined to catch the abalone, she ignored this. She gets caught and struggles to squirm away, but to no avail.

“이제 나는 죽었구나, 하는 찰나.
(Ije Nanŭn Chugŏtkuna, Hanŭn Ch’alla) 정신
잃은 엄마를 끌어올린 건.
(Chŏngsin Irŭn Ōmmarŭl Kkūrŏollin Kŏn)

“Now is when I die.”
The moment she thought to herself, almost losing her mind.”

Luckily, she is rescued by the grandmother who had been diving nearby.

“바다는 절대로 인간의 욕심을 허락하지 않는단다.
(Padanŭn Chŏldaero Inganŭi Yoksimŭl Hŏrakhaji Annŭndanda) 바닥속에서
욕심을 부렸다간 숨을 먹게 되어 있다는.
(Padaksogesŏ Yoksimŭl Puryŏttagan Sumŭl Mŏkke Toeŏ Itanda) 물속에서
숨을 먹으면 어떻게 되겠느냐.
(Mulssogesŏ Sumŭl Mŏgūmyŏn Öttŏk'e Toegennyaya) 물숨은
우리를 죽음으로 데려간단다.
(Mulssumŭn Urirŭl Chugūmuро Teryŏgandanda)

The sea never forgives human greed.  
If you ever get greedy in the sea, you are destined to swallow your breath.  
What is going to happen if you swallow your own breath underwater?  
Breathing underwater takes us to the grave. “
This whole sequence illustrates the dangers of the Haenyŏ occupation. But the above lines, in particular, demonstrate the lingering possibility of death, which is something that is a constant danger for the women diving as they do not use oxygen tanks (Joo 2014, 20; Yoo 2014, 17).

Finally this sentiment is shown in the daughter’s willingness to observe her mother at work:

“나는 바다를 감시하러 나왔습니다.
그 큰 이로 엄마의 다리를.

나는 바다를 감시하러 나왔습니다.
가치가 발크iolet의 치아로
나의 다리를.

나는 바다를 감시하러 나왔습니다.
파도가
그 큰 이로 엄마의 다리를.

나는 바다를 감시하러 나왔습니다.
I came out here to monitor the sea,
To watch out for big waves that might grab my mom’s leg with its teeth like the claw of a crab and not let go.”

This passage demonstrates the daughter’s worries and fears towards the water and dangers that the mother faces when diving which is a common worry in the Haenyŏ community.

The equipment is also something that is accurately depicted compared to what Haenyŏ might use in real-life. One such example can be found in the following excerpt:

”바다 위에는 색색의 공처럼.

테와들이 동동 떠 있습니다.

Several T’ewak float atop the sea,
Like a bunch of colourful balls.”

This passage describes how the Haenyŏ float on the water with the help of the T’ewak floats, which is something that is actually done in reality (Lee 2016, 127-221). The word T’ewak is particularly explained in the book. Rather than only being mentioned in the story, it is described in a “footnote” as:
“해녀들이 바다에서 몸을 기대 쉬거나
(Haenyŏdŭri Padaesŏ Momŭl Kidæ Swigŏna)
잡은 해산물을 보관하는 그물을 매달아놓는
(Chabŭn Haesanmurŭl Pogwanhanŭn Kŭmurŭl Maedaranonnŭn) 동그란 모양의 튜브.
(Tonggūran moyang-ŭi t'yubŭ)

A round-shaped tube which the Haenyŏ use to float on when resting or to which they attach a net for storing their catch.”

This way the float or T’ewak is explained to readers who might not know what it is, helping to introduce special Haenyŏ words to the readers instead of simply using more commonly known words like Pup’yo (부표) which means float or buoy. They are also described as such:

“테왁이 꼭 호박처럼 생겼어요
(T’ewagi Kkok Hobakch’ŏrom Sanggyŏssŏyo) 속을 다 파낸 호박처럼 테왁은 가볍단다.
(Sogŭl Ta P’anaen Hobakch’ŏrom T’ewagŭn Kabyŏptanda)

The T’ewak looks like a pumpkin (gourd). Light as a gourd carved out of its insides.”

This description of T’ewak recalls a historical fact: Haenyŏ divers used to make their floats out of gourd, where the insides were emptied to make them lighter and able to float, just as they are described here (Lee 2016, 127). Other words for equipment used by the Haenyŏ community that are present in the book appear when the main character describes her mother’s and grandmother’s preparations for a day of catching sea creatures. These words are all explained in a footnotes. For example, the word “Mulgalk’wi (물갈퀴)” is used and described as:

“고무로 만든 오리발 모양의 신발.
(Komuro Mandŭn Oribal Moyangŭi Sinbal)”

Duck-feet shaped shoes made out of rubber.”
In other words meaning the diving fins they use in real life (Lee 2016, 133). “K’unnuni (큰눈이) literally meaning “big eyes” is described as:

”바닷속에서 해산물을 찾기 위해 쓰는 해녀들의 물안경.
(Padassogesŏ Haesanmurŭl Ch'atki Wihae Ssŭnŭn Haenyŏdurŭi Muran'gyŏng)

Diving mask used by haenyŏ to find sea animals underwater.”

Pitch'ang (빗창) is described as:

”끝이 뭉툭한 긴 칼 모양의 작업도구로 손목에 걸 수 있도록 고무줄이 달려 있다.
(Kkûch'i Mungtu'kh'an Kin K'al Moyangŭi Chagŏptoguro Sonmoge Kkil Su Ittorok Komujuri Tallyŏ Itta)

They use an elastic rubber band in order to attach the blunt edged long knife shaped worktool around their wrist.”

All these tools are used by Haenyŏ and are called by such special terms by the community, whereas different words might be used in other parts of Korea by diving or non-diving population. This helps immerse the reader into their world and might be the reason why the author chose to use them in the text instead of using more commonly well-known words.

4.3 Romanticization of Haenyŏ

In many different media there is a tendency to a romanticisation of Haenyŏ. In Mom is a Haenyeo I also find a tendency of this. The reader is quickly introduced to a fantasy view of the sea. The book introduces the ocean by describing the waves and its gleaming white teeth. It is accompanied by an illustration of the sea, drawn as a creature with arms, eyes and a white mouth. The illustration adds a more literal sense to the symbolic description of the ocean’s foam the texts presents. One could assume that it is a conscious choice both by the author and illustrator to emphasise that it is from the point of view of a young child, the daughter. In her mind the ocean is a living being, one which she seems to both equally admire and fear.

Another interesting aspect of the book is the way in which the Haenyŏ have been illustrated. The appearance of Haenyŏ in the book can be seen as romanticised through the way in which
they are depicted. The illustrations depict the female divers as conventionally pretty with rosy cheeks, clear skin, thin and tall bodies. The grandmother is even drawn with blonde hair. Both mother, grandmother and other Haenyŏ divers have the same body type as well and there is not much difference between them. This is, however, quite different from real life. The faces of many Haenyŏ have wrinkles, not only due to the age of the divers but also due to many years of constant contact with the ocean’s salt water as well as sunlight (Joo 2014, 19). They are also much more diverse in body types. Pictures taken of Haenyŏ by Kim Hyeongsun, for example, demonstrate this diversity of Haenyŏ. In a photobook with Kim Hyeongsun’s collected photographs made by Park Young-taik a diverse range of Haenyŏ divers from all over Chejudo are represented. Some are tall and some short, some thinner and some bulkier. Their hair is sometimes grey or white, sometimes black or dark black. Overall, the hard work they have done at sea can be seen on their bodies from head to toe. There might be many different reasons as to why the illustrator chose to portray Haenyŏ in a more soft and delicate way. One such reason might be that there was an intent to enhance the beauty of the Haenyŏ in the book, as it is not uncommon that the “good” characters in a story are depicted as more pleasing to the eye to communicate to the reader who is good who is bad by differentiating in this way (Vulovic 2013, 74). In my own experience, it is especially common in media directed towards children. However, this might not be the only reason, as there are no clear villians in the book, thus there is no need to distinguish between “good” and “bad”. Another reason might simply be a stylistic choice on the illustrator’s part.

One could also argue that there is beauty in the way Haenyŏ look in reality. The photographs taken by Kim Hyeongsun mentioned earlier do not only depict the diversity and the work of divers but also show their own unique personalities and characters that shine through. So portraying Haenyŏ in this way would not necessarily paint them in a negative light. The age of the modern Haenyŏ is also something that, at least for me, is what has made Haenyŏ so interesting as an outside viewer and seems to be a defining trait, especially in recent times. In regards to earlier discussion about the accuracy, the illustrations, indeed, capture more of a cute image, rather than the visual reality of Haenyŏ.

The book suggests that there is an element of spirituality in the connection between Haenyŏ and the ocean. There are in particular two instances where this connection can be seen. One such instance is when the daughter ponders about how the grandmother is able to always have
a larger catch than the mother despite being shorter, having smaller hands, and not being able to see as clearly as the mother. The following conversation between the grandmother and the girl unfolds:

"그거야 바다님 말씀을 잘 들으면 되는 거란다.

(Kŭgŏya Padanim Malssŭmŭl Chal Tūrūmyŏn Toenŭn Kŏranda) 바다님 말씀이요?
(Padanim Malssŭmiyo?)
암 그렇고말고.
(Am Kŭrŏk'omalgo)
나는 알쏭달쏭 머리를 가웃داف니다.
(Nanŭn Alssongdalssong Mŏrirŭl Kyauttaessŭmnida) 할머니는 쟜글쪼글 입매에 미소를 머금었습니다.
(Halmŏninŭn Chogŏltchogŭl Immae Misorŭl Mŏgŭmŏssŭmnida) 마치 입속에 혼자만의 비밀 사탕을 물고 있는 것 같습니다.
(Mach'i Ipsoge Honjamanŭi Pimil Sat'angŭl Mulgo Innŭn Kŏt Kassŭmnida)

It is possible if you listen to the God of the Sea.
The god of the sea?
I rolled my head, wondering.
Grandmother smiled with a lot of wrinkles around her lips
Like someone who was secretly hiding a piece of candy in her mouth.”

Although the granddaughter cannot understand the grandmother has her own little secret, which demonstrates the Haenyŏ’s own personal connection to the ocean, which we us outsiders, just like the granddaughter cannot comprehend. She also mentions the Ocean God, God of the sea, which is a shamanistic deity that many Haenyŏ divers believe in (Joo 2014, 20; Ko et al. 2014, 30). Although it is accurate that the Haenyŏ community and its divers do have connections to shamanism, with shamanistic rites and beliefs as well as rites and prayers to the God of the Sea (Yoo 2014, 17), it does seem a little romanticised that there actually is a connection between ocean and diver on a spiritual level. Haenyŏ are also strategic in the way that they operate. They do not only entrust themselves in spiritual guidance but also use their skill and training as well as hard work. (Yoo 2014, 17; Ko 2013, 57; Yoo 2014, 16) Although
spirituality and shamanism is a core part of the Haenyŏ community, it does in a way erase their hard work and training that also plays a huge part in their abilities.

Another such instance is after the mother has decided she no longer wants to live her life as a Haenyŏ and leaves for the city where she works in a hair salon. She starts to miss the ocean and the following monologue unfolds:

“바다는 잘 있을까.
(Padanŭn Chal Issŭlkka) 파도도
잘 있을까.
(P’adodo Chal Issŭlkka)

Is the Sea doing well, I wonder?
Are the waves doing well, I wonder?

호오이 호오이.
(Hoi Hoi)

숨비소리.
(Sumbisori)

호오이 호오이.
(Hoi Hoi)

엄마가 살아 있다는 소리.
(ŏmmaga sara ittanŭn sori.)

The sound that lets me known that mother is alive.“

Here the mother asks if the ocean is doing well, and if the waves are doing well. This text is accompanied with an illustration of the mother sitting on a chair in her work clothes with a phone to her ear, her hair taking the form of the sea spreading from one page to the other which connects to the grandmother who is sitting on a rock in her rubber diving suit with a seashell to her ear. The illustration of the grandmother is accompanied with the second part of the text. This part also demonstrates a fantastical spiritual element between the Haenyŏ themselves but also with the ocean. Humanising and personifying the sea by asking if it is doing well, as one normally would do to a person. Then the line with Sumbisori is repeated,
the sound that shows that the mother is still alive, which could be hinting to that the mother does not feel alive unless she is diving.

Although this could be true to some Haenyŏ, it can be perceived to erase the harsh conditions of the work itself and the reasons why many young women of today do not take up this profession. It is not only a beautiful connection with the ocean that they simply cannot break, but they are also human and the need to adapt to current societal climate can be stronger than a spiritual connection. The reason why Haenyŏ became who they are to begin with was a mere will to survive. Here it seems as they are painted as having a connection to the ocean naturally. The book does bring up the possibility of death, but other than that it does not delve into how hard and straining the actual workload in a day to day setting actually can be.

5 Conclusion

From the analysis I can draw a few conclusions in relation to my research questions. Haenyŏ are overall in *Mom is a Haenyeo* positively portrayed in the way that they are described, the actions they carry out and the relations between the characters. The book is also accurate in regards to the dangers of the profession. Each time the Haenyŏ dive into the sea, they face huge risks that could even result in death, something that is brought up in the book. There are other accuracies such as the equipment used, who they are, the Haenyŏ breathing technique, as well as specific terms used by the community. Another finding from the analysis is that certain aspects of the Haenyŏ are slightly romanticised. Some of the aspects may be intentional to create a more interesting, fantasy-like story for children, whereas some aspects gloss over the reality of the Haenyŏ lifestyle. *Mom is a Haenyeo* could therefore be said to represent Haenyŏ in a positive manner, because it is portraying them in a positive and accurate way, but the slight romanticisation of their skills coming naturally from a spiritual connection to the ocean, could potentially diminish the perception of Haenyŏ’s hard work.
6 Final discussion

As mentioned in the introduction, the media holds a great power in the ability to influence perceptions of different social groups, especially minorities (Hammer 2007, 7). Therefore, it was of interest to me to examine whether *Mom is a Haenyeo* would contribute to a positive image of Haenyeo, and in the long run strengthen their identity and culture, or the opposite. As seen from the conclusion, *Mom is a Haenyeo* for the most part, if not completely, has the potential to give Haenyeo the positive exposure that they need to maintain their culture within their own community with their younger generation, but also the exposure needed for the majority group that are not part of Haenyeo to better understand them. It is of importance to make sure that their cultural traditions are preserved, as they are of cultural value and their activities are environmentally friendly in a world where it is becoming more and more important. By introducing the concept of Haenyeo at an early age through relatability and accuracy, the perception of Haenyeo identity and culture could remain positive and maintained in future generations.

Since this essay focuses on a specific book about Haenyeo, it is therefore difficult to draw any wider conclusions about the effects the portrayal of Haenyeo in children’s literature has on them as a minority group, as well as the perception of Haenyeo overall within the majority group. My speculations above are only specific to the effect of the book *Mom is a Haenyeo*. For further studies it would be interesting to use the results from this essay to compare with other works concerning Haenyeo to study the effects in a broader context.

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