

Korean Cultural Centre UK partners with Edinburgh International Book Festival

Exploring the Past and Future of Korean Literature from

Hwang Sok-yong to the Web Novel revolution with Dr. Seunghye Sun



The Korean Cultural Centre UK (KCCUK) and the Publication Industry Promotion Agency of Korea (KPIPA) will participate as official partners of the Edinburgh International Book Festival in August 2025, presenting a special programme showcasing Korean literature and publishing culture as a part of the 2025 K-Book Overseas Promotion and Exchange project.

Dr. Seunghye Sun, Director of KCCUK, said: "We are delighted that Korea has become an official international partner of the Edinburgh International Book Festival for the first time. Focusing on the role Korean literature has played in world literature and will continue to play in the future, we will strive to share the virtues of Korean aesthetics with global readers."

The Edinburgh International Book Festival, held from 9 - 24 August 2025, is the world's largest literary festival, with over 600 writers and scholars attending and more than 700 programmes taking place. The KCCUK and KPIPA will host opportunities that promote the uniqueness and depth of Korean literature to the world in Edinburgh, one of UNESCO's Cities of Literature. Held alongside Edinburgh's renowned International Festival, this festival is the UK's most important literary event.

This year, the festival invited the master of Korean literature, Sok-yong Hwang, for one of the main programmes on 19 August. The KCCUK participates as an official international partner of this year's

festival, sponsoring the programme to share the voice of Korean literature with readers worldwide. In his book talk, Hwang will discuss his masterpiece *Mater 2-10* and explore the literary resonance of Korean literature in a global historical context. Renowned for his vivid portrayals of complex Korean modern history through acclaimed works such as *Jang Gil-san* and *The Guest*, Hwang was nominated for the 2024 International Booker Prize with his latest work *Mater 2-10*, presenting a sweeping narrative that encompasses 100 years of modern Korean history.

Mater 2-10 is Hwang's life's work, taking 30 years from conception to completion. Through the life of a railway worker and his family, the novel penetrates Korean history from the Japanese occupation era to the present day. With its diverse and compelling characters and Hwang's unique wit, *Mater 2-10*, despite its length of over 2,000 manuscript pages, captivates readers with its dynamic narrative, satisfying those who crave a serious, emotionally intense epic. *Mater 2-10* has sold nearly 70,000 copies in Korea and has been translated and published in six countries, with 12 more countries preparing to publish it.

The Edinburgh International Book Festival described the event as "a special encounter with an author who transcends the boundaries of literature and history," calling Hwang's visit "a rare honour." The 2024 Booker Prize judging committee described *Mater 2-10* as "a comprehensive book about Korea rarely seen in the West, combining the historical narrative of a country with an individual's journey for justice." They also added: "This work is a magical realist novel that reflects the lives of modern industrial workers and is Hwang Sok-yong's greatest masterpiece, to which he devoted 30 years."

In addition, the Edinburgh International Book Festival will explore the potential of Korean web novels in global publishing trends. On 12 August, Dr. Seunghye Sun will present at the Edinburgh Book Festival's industry programme, "Global Ink: International Industry Day," participating in the forum "Born Digital – Web Novels and the Global Reading Revolution." Dr. Sun joins a panel discussion moderated by Alastair Horne, Professor of Publishing Studies at the University of Stirling, alongside Sean Xie, Head of the Beijing International Book Fair.

Dr. Sun will introduce the significance of K-Universe in web novels as a new era of Korean aesthetics. She will explain how web novels have evolved beyond a simple trend to become a core genre leading the global content industry, with Korea at the forefront of this innovation. The discussion will focus on changes in digital-based storytelling, the growth of fan communities, and intersections with traditional publishing, particularly in East Asia, to explore new possibilities for the future of publishing and storytelling.

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About Korean Cultural Centre UK (KCCUK)

The Korean Cultural Centre UK, opened under the aegis of the Embassy of the Republic of Korea in the United Kingdom, aims to enhance friendship, amity, and understanding between Korea and the UK through cultural and educational activities. From the KCCUK's central London location near Trafalgar Square, our dedicated team works to expand cultural projects, strengthen cooperation with major arts organisations and partners, and encourage cultural exchange.