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Cindi Textor

Radical Language, Radical Identity:
Korean Writers in Japanese Spaces and the Burden to “Represent”

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Abstract

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This dissertation examines literary texts by colonial Korean writers in the Japanese empire and the post-war “Zainichi” Korean minority in Japan. Whereas colonial Korean literature and Zainichi literature have typically been considered separately, I analyze them as part of a single trajectory, noting continuities in how Korean writers on both sides of the 1945 collapse of the empire struggle to avoid the dual traps of essentialism and assimilation. That is, in the face of pressures to assimilate into (post)imperial Japan, these writers grapple with the question of how to assert Korean particularity without reproducing stereotyped notions of Korean difference which were generated by the same imperial hierarchies. This overdetermined position—arising from the dual impulse to deconstruct essentialist difference and to avoid

collapsing productive difference into a hegemonic mainstream—may be called the double bind of identity. The central focus of this project, then, is whether and how marginalized writers are able to overcome particular versions of this critical double bind through the medium of literary text. It further attempts to rethink the frameworks applied to these authors and texts, including modern Korean literature, modern Japanese literature, and even groupings like Zainichi literature that attempt to resist strictly national models, by shedding light on their participation in such overdeterminations.

Looking closely at how writers work within and around the various constraints imposed on their writing, I argue that the hybrid language of these texts, located in the interstices and imbrications of Korean and Japanese spaces, is a potential site for radical representations of a particular “Korean” identity. The space of literary text offers a medium for representing identities less prone to falling into essentialist traps precisely because it is imaginary and undecidable. This radical language makes possible an escape from the double bind of identity faced by these writers: to simultaneously “represent” and transcend Korea. In this way, reading Korean writers in Japanese spaces not only offers a basis for critiquing ethno-national literary frameworks, but also has the potential to open up new possibilities for coping with difference, contributing to broader debates on intersectionality and identity politics. To that end, this dissertation takes up the particular intersectional circumstances of four Korean writers and their negotiations in hybrid literary texts: the queer language and subjectivities of Yi Kwangsu's *Mujŏng*, Ch'ae Mansik's ambiguously satirical repent for pro-Japanese collaboration, Kim Sŏkpŏm's invention of an imaginary Korea within the space of the Japanese language, and Kin Kakuei's attempt to “speak” through a narrator who stutters.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

This dissertation starts from a critical impasse in the study of underrepresented literatures.¹ This impasse, which I will refer to as the double bind of identity politics, arises from the dual impulse to break down the essentialist difference assigned to an underrepresented collectivity and its literature and to avoid collapsing or assimilating that difference into the hegemonic mainstream, maintaining a productive particularity in the process. The question becomes, what to do with difference? How can difference be practiced without reproducing the imperialist discourse that created such difference in the first place? Or, to frame the question another way, how can identity—a concept fraught with essentialist pitfalls, but also, I will argue, with radical possibilities—be deployed, performed, or represented to productive and liberating effect?

With these questions in mind, this dissertation takes up literary texts by Korean writers working in the Japanese empire and its vestiges, including the “Zainichi”² Korean minority in Japan. It attempts to rethink the frameworks applied to these authors and texts—modern Korean literature, modern Japanese literature, and even groupings like Zainichi literature which attempt to resist strictly national models—by shedding light on their participation in the creation of this double bind. Then, looking closely at how writers work within and around the various constraints imposed on their writing, I argue that the tense language of these literary texts, located in the interstices and imbrications of Korean and Japanese spaces, is a potential site for radical

- 1 I am using this term as a catch-all for categories like minority literature, Third-World literature, and (post-)colonial literature, all of which could be applied—though not unproblematically—to the texts I am dealing with here. The advantage of “underrepresented” as a term, to my mind, is that it places the focus squarely on the question of representation, which will be at issue in this project.
- 2 I use the term “Zainichi” with more than a little discomfort. Whereas in English it is, along with “Resident Korean,” the standard designation for Koreans in Japan, in Japanese it is practically an ethnic slur when used outside more pointed terms like “Zainichi Kankokujin” (Resident South Korean). Its meaning and utility are so contested that it is rarely used outside brackets anymore in academic discourse. Each instance of “Zainichi” here can be assumed to be bracketed as such. See Chapter 4 for further discussion of this category and its fraught history.

representations of a particular “Korean” identity. This radical language makes possible an escape from the double bind faced by these writers: to simultaneously represent and transcend Korea.

This double bind refers to two equally compelling but apparently incompatible critical impulses in the process of coming to terms with identity or identities and the politics that govern them. One of these impulses is an anti-foundationalist move toward the erasure of essential difference, the deconstruction of identity categories like race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and disability. The other is an insistence that whatever their politically charged and arbitrarily constructed origins, no matter how historically fluid and contingent, these categories still adhere in the real world today and are not unproductive in the fight against the hegemonies that create them.

In a 1988 lecture entitled “Unspeakable Things Unspoken: The Afro-American Presence in American Literature,” Toni Morrison summed up the issue—at least as it applies to race—as follows:

Suddenly (for our purposes, suddenly) “race” does not exist. For three hundred years black Americans insisted that “race” was no usefully distinguishing factor in human relationships. During those same three centuries every academic discipline, including theology, history, and natural science, insisted “race” was the determining factor in human development. When blacks discovered they had shaped or become a culturally formed race, and that it had specific and revered difference, suddenly they were told there is no such thing as “race,” biological or cultural, that matters and that genuinely intellectual exchange cannot accommodate it. In trying to understand the relationship between “race” and culture, I am tempted to throw my hands up. It always seemed to me that the people who invented the hierarchy of “race” when it was convenient for them ought not to be the ones to explain it away, now that it does not suit their purposes for it to exist.³

Though Morrison is of course speaking specifically about the situation of black Americans as it relates to discourse on “race,” the problem she identifies is just one example of a more broadly applicable pattern. Morrison is obviously not suggesting a return to a deterministic, biological

3 Toni Morrison, “Unspeakable Things Unspoken: The Afro-American Presence in American Literature,” The Tanner Lectures on Human Values, delivered 7 Oct 1988.

conception of race, but at the same time she insists that the complete erasure of racial identity is problematic, and in the end serves the same hierarchical status quo. Confronted with this paradox, all that remains is to “throw one's hands up.”

Moreover, as Morrison emphasizes here, we must not fail to recognize where this push to deconstruct race and other markers is coming from. Shu-Mei Shih, building on a similar push-back on post-structuralist rhetoric by Nancy Hartsock, suggests that the move toward erasing difference is unconsciously if not insidiously motivated by the desire to keep existing power centers and hierarchies intact:

The center's rejection of difference amounts to rejecting the political and other gains of critical multiculturalisms. The timing of the emergence of a postdifference ethics in France (where minority issues are becoming more and more visible) is suspicious. Nancy Hartsock once questioned, "Why is it, exactly at the moment when so many of us who have been silenced begin to demand the right to name ourselves, to act as subjects rather than objects of history, that just then the concept of subjecthood becomes 'problematic'?" One can adapt Hartsock's query to ask, why is it that, exactly when so many of us have begun to mobilize productive and nonreified forms of difference for political struggle, just then the concept of difference becomes problematic?⁴

This anxiety over where to draw the line between an irreconcilable and ultimately hierarchical difference versus a bland and equally hierarchical sameness is among the most salient debates in the humanities today, reaching far beyond the confines of Korea or Japan.

On the other hand, the particularities of this corner of the globe may offer a fresh angle on the politics of identity, difference, and especially their representation in language, which is my focus here. Given the history (and frighteningly near total success) of Japan's assimilation policy in Korea, the continuing trend toward naturalization in the Korean minority community in Japan and its reconstitution of the assimilation project, and the tenacious myths of homogeneity present in both Korea and Japan, these spaces offer a productive arena for exploring the various

4 Shu-Mei Shih, “Global Literature and the Technologies of Recognition,” *PMLA* 119, no. 1 (January 1, 2004): 28. Internal citation is from Nancy Hartsock, “Rethinking Modernism: Minority vs. Majority Theories,” in Abdul JanMohamed and David Lloyd, eds., *The Nature and Context of Minority Discourse*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1990: 17-36.

possibilities and impossibilities of sameness and difference. Furthermore, the complex language politics of the empire and its dismantling in the post war, in addition to the contradictions arising from a shared culture of Chinese characters between the purportedly irreconcilable Japanese and Korean languages, allow for a particular set of representational possibilities. Hence, in the general sense, these texts are a rich source base for raising questions of identity, difference, and the radical possibilities for their representation in literary text.

However, there is a more specific, much thornier sense to the question of why take up these texts, which is, why this grouping of texts? In other words, what factors link these authors into a coherent set, and how is that set defined? Indeed, one of the major difficulties of this project is that of laying out the boundaries of its field of inquiry and, yet more vexing, searching out a way of referring to it that is neither overly cumbersome nor crudely oversimplified. Part of the difficulty lies in the border-crossing nature of this inquiry, and part of it arises as a result of turning a critical eye toward the existing categories themselves: how to name this group of writers and establish the conditions for its constitution, when the construction and application of such frameworks is precisely what is at issue here?

I take the liberty of calling them all Korean writers, because they have identified as such (though again, what that entails is a central question of this dissertation). But it is worth pausing to question the assumptions embedded in the application of that label, and it must be noted at the outset that “being Korean” entailed an entirely different set of meanings and consequences at the specific times and spaces occupied by each individual writer. For now, suffice it to say that the writers discussed in this dissertation—Yi Kwangsu, Ch'ae Mansik, Kim Sökpöm, and Kin Kakuei—all grappled with their own set of identity constraints, some of which were imposed by the figure of Korea, others by identifications along other axes, such as sexuality and disability.

Of course, Korea for them was never “Korea” at all, but rather “Chosŏn,” “Chōsen,” “Kankoku,” “Hanguk,” “uri nara,” or any of a number of different entities subsumed by the English “Korea.” That is to say, Korea already fails as a logical condition for grouping these writers, not to mention the inevitable failure of such a small sample of authors to represent an entity as contingent, nebulous, and vast as “Korea.” This is not, then, a study of “Korean” literature.

Nor is it a study of “Japanese” literature, though these texts all grapple with “Japan” as well. In fact, one could perhaps distinguish this group of writers by their writerly, readerly, and political contact with Japan, though at the same time it is a bit difficult to pick out a Korean writer from this period without such contact. At the same time, it is no less arguable that their being Korean is not sufficient criteria to exclude these writers from Japan or Japanese literature. From the start, then, this dissertation is indebted to a growing body of scholarship from Japan, Korea, and the English-language academy making these two important observations about the intertwined and mutually dependent relationship between modern Korean literature and modern Japanese literature, and, further, exposing the violence inherent in the national literature model, with its circular logic of a mutually constitutive nation and its literature, both externally bounded, internally homogenous, and transhistorically consistent.⁵

Over the past twenty years, but particularly within the last decade, the fields of Japanese and Korean literary studies have seen an outpouring of studies moving outside the narrow boundaries of their respective national literature frameworks. In Japanese studies, this turn toward the colonized and marginal, directing attention toward a highly diverse array of texts from the writings of *burakumin* authors to Okinawan and Zainichi literature and many other genres, takes as one of its foundational texts Oguma Eiji's *Tan'itsu minzoku shinwa no kigen*

5 On the contingency of what has been called modern Japanese literature in particular, see Edward Mack, *Manufacturing Modern Japanese Literature: Publishing, Prizes, and the Ascription of Literary Value* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

(Origins of the myth of ethnic homogeneity, 1995).⁶ In this seminal work, Oguma sets out to deconstruct the then dominant and even now persistent myth of Japan as an ethnically homogenous nation-state. His work brings attention to groups, like Zainichi Koreans, whose presence in Japan throughout its history contradicts the general understanding of Japan as a unified and homogenous whole, populated with Japanese people all sharing Japanese blood, speaking the Japanese language, and pledging allegiance to the Japanese state. In *Yuragi no Nihon bungaku* (Japanese literature in flux, 1998), Komori Yōichi applies this line of thinking to the study of Japanese literature as a national literature connected with this kind of ostensibly ethnically homogenous nation-state.⁷ He traces the ways that the Japanese ethnicity, nation-state, language, and culture (literature) all constitute one another, leaving no foundation underneath these pillars by which to define Japan itself. In other words, culture, ethnicity, nation, and language exist in a circular relationship, each tautologically defining and defined by the boundaries of the others. Thus, exclusion of various “others,” like the marginal literatures so in vogue today, becomes the basis on which Japanese literature is defined, with the entire circular apparatus there only to conceal the violence done by the mutually dependent national literature, *tan'itsu minzoku*, and Nihonjinron frameworks. It is with this in mind, then, that most studies of Zainichi literature and the literature of the Japanese empire are put forth. This relatively recent wave of scholarship brings added exposure and legitimacy to previously overlooked authors and texts, and writes them back into the history of Japanese literature and culture, in many cases arguing successfully that they have played a central rather than marginal role in shaping our concept of Japan in these contexts.⁸

6 Oguma Eiji, *Tan'itsu minzoku shinwa no kigen: "Nihonjin" no jigazō no keifu* (Tokyo: Shin'yōsha, 1995).

7 Komori Yōichi, *"Yuragi" no Nihon bungaku* (Tokyo: NHK Press, 1998).

8 In English, for example, see Christopher Scott, "Invisible Men: The Zainichi Korean Presence in Postwar Japanese Culture" (Ph.D dissertation, Stanford University, 2006).

At the same time, some recent South Korean scholarship in the humanities has turned away from the nationalist discourse that dominated most of its postwar history and has begun to question much of the knowledge generated within the framework of cultural nationalism.⁹ As in Japan, this has taken a number of forms, including rethinking the colonial period, especially the legacy of pro-Japanese collaboration, republishing and reexamining authors who were banned until 1989 for “going North” (*wǒlbuk*), and noting the damaging effects of a totalizing cultural nationalism on the “interior colonies” of colonized Korea, such as women and the working class.¹⁰ What is more complicated in the case of Korea versus that of Japan is its history of colonization. The project of questioning the totalizing discourse of the “nation” is more ambivalent in the context of that nation's history of deployment in the service of resistance to imperial domination. Incidentally, this catch-22—the need to critique a constructed and often violently homogenizing nation, but in so doing to risk falling into the trap of repeating imperialist rhetoric that sought to eradicate that nation—could be seen as one manifestation of the double bind of identity politics.¹¹

One strategy employed by many studies looking to work outside the ethno-national frameworks of Japanese and Korean literature is a switch from nation to empire. In fact, more or less without exception, recent projects looking outside the strict boundaries of the nation deal in some way or another with the Japanese empire. Many of these take cues from post-colonial and subaltern studies and apply these lines of thought to the case of the Japanese empire, situated in an asymmetrical, pseudo-colonial relationship to the empires of Europe and the United States, but eventually competing with them for control over its colonized Asian neighbors. Some of

9 One prominent and controversial example of this trend is the work of Kim Ch'ŏl. See Kim Ch'ŏl, *Teikō to zetsubō: Shokuminchi Chōsen no kioku o tou*, trans. Tajima Tetsuo (Tokyo: Ōtsuki Shoten, 2015).

10 See, for example, Yi Hyeryōng, “Shingminjuūi ūi naemyōnhwa wa naebu singminji: 1920-30 nyōndae sosōl ūi sekshuōllit'i, jendō, kyegūp,” *Sanghō Hakbo* 8 (February 2002): 269–93.

11 This double bind is only compounded by the intersectional nature of identities, and will necessarily be experienced differently depending on gender, sexuality, and other factors besides national belonging.

these books in what could be termed empire studies do more than others to cross and transgress the national boundaries formed during and in the aftermath of the empire, but all of them serve as reminders of the enormous impact of Western and Japanese imperialism both within Japan and on the continent, even as others have worked to trace its conscious and purposeful forgetting.¹²

Drawing on sources in both Korean and Japanese, and focusing on the interplay between the two languages, nations, and cultures, these studies give a clear picture of the empire as a multilingual, multicultural, hybrid space that belies the myths of homogeneity that survive in the postwar Korean and Japanese nation-states of today. Janet Poole and Chris Hanscom reconsider literary modernism in Korea with special attention to the imperial and fascist conditions under which its practitioners had to write.¹³ Heekyoung Cho looks at the role of translation—much of it mediated through Japanese—in the making of modern Korean literature.¹⁴ Kelly Jeong considers the complicated interplay of gender and nation in colonial context.¹⁵ Sunyoung Park resuscitates the long ignored and suppressed legacy of proletarian literature from the colonial period.¹⁶ Theodore Hughes unpacks the erasures that took place in the making of a firmly national South Korean literature in the context of the Cold War, which required the disavowal of a colonial history of collaboration and communism, as well as the literature of the North.¹⁷ Together, they paint a picture of a Korean literature that has its very origins and conditions for possibility in

12 Yoshikuni Igarashi, *Bodies of Memory: Narratives of War in Postwar Japanese Culture, 1945-1970* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).

13 Janet Poole, *When the Future Disappears: The Modernist Imagination in Late Colonial Korea* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014); Christopher P. Hanscom, *The Real Modern: Literary Modernism and the Crisis of Representation in Colonial Korea* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).

14 Heekyoung Cho, *Translation's Forgotten History: Russian Literature, Japanese Mediation, and the Formation of Modern Korean Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).

15 Kelly Jeong, *Crisis of Gender and the Nation in Korean Literature and Cinema: Modernity Arrives Again* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011).

16 Sunyoung Park, *The Proletarian Wave: Literature and Leftist Culture in Colonial Korea, 1910-1945*, 2014.

17 Theodore Hughes, *Literature and Film in Cold War South Korea: Freedom's Frontier* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

Japanese colonialism and its retroactive effacement, but remain focused on and grounded in the field of modern Korean literature.

On the other hand, studies of the Japanese empire look to the literature of the colonies, almost always focusing on texts in the Japanese language, or images of the colonies through the eyes of Japanese writers themselves. Leo Ching, Faye Kleeman, and Robert Tierney examine the case of Taiwan and the Southern Pacific, all largely concerned with how the making of colonial “others” in these regions contributed to the production and maintenance of a Japanese “self” through their negation.¹⁸ Kimberley Kono explores these issues in the context of narratives of romance and family, paying particular attention to interethnic marriage and relationships.¹⁹ Mark Driscoll draws from literary texts among other materials as he traces the progression of imperialism on the Asian continent (though he focuses mainly on Manchuria) from its nascent stages to the period of full-blown fascism at its peak that he refers to as “necropolitics.”²⁰ Again, they offer an overwhelming sense of pre-1945 Japan as a diverse and consciously multicultural sphere, but their contributions are to a discourse on Japanese literature, rather than on the literature of its former colonies. In sum, studies of the empire coming from both Korean and Japanese studies portray a hybrid, fluid environment, demonstrating that the national models coinciding with the current states of Japan and South Korea were not inevitable.

And in fact, within the new space opened up by these studies, some of the most recent contributions to the discussion are doing exactly that: working across the strait, across languages, and also, importantly, across the 1945 divide. By doing so, they remind us that the conditions of

18 Leo Ching, *Becoming “Japanese” : Colonial Taiwan and the Politics of Identity Formation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Faye Kleeman, *Under an Imperial Sun : Japanese Colonial Literature of Taiwan and the South* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003); Robert Tierney, *Tropics of Savagery : The Culture of Japanese Empire in Comparative Frame* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).

19 Kimberly Kono, *Romance, Family, and Nation in Japanese Colonial Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

20 Mark Driscoll, *Absolute Erotic, Absolute Grotesque: The Living, Dead, and Undead in Japan’s Imperialism, 1895-1945* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

the empire did not disappear overnight, instantly calcifying into the so-called homogenous societies of Japan and Korea today. Part of this line of criticism is also a move toward recognizing those claims to homogeneity as spurious, and making visible the tremendous labor involved in untangling the respective nations and their literatures from each other and from their colonial origins, and in continuing to reproduce the national models. Aimee Kwon rethinks the “intimate” colonial interactions between Koreans and Japanese, drawing special attention to their purposeful forgetting by both sides in the aftermath of the empire.²¹ Samuel Perry, in a study of the proletarian movement in general, unearths forgotten interactions and collaborations between Japanese and Korean communists.²² Two recent dissertations by Christina Yi and Jonathan Glade look at the emergence and reorganization of literary categories under the conditions of decolonization, deimperialization, and US occupation.²³ Glade highlights the making of Korean and Japanese national literatures under Cold War occupation, whereas Yi traces the reassertion of ethnicity in the postwar, leading to the emergence of the category of Zainichi out of Japanese-language literature by colonized Koreans. In this way, Yi connects this new body of work on the empire to studies of Zainichi literature, which also question the hegemony of Japanese literature. Melissa Wender and Christopher Scott have opened up this field of inquiry in the English language, showing how the purportedly marginal writers of the Zainichi minority have actually been central to the production and reproduction of a Japanese national literature which labors to exclude them.²⁴

21 Nayoung Aimee Kwon, *Intimate Empire: Collaboration and Colonial Modernity in Korea and Japan* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015).

22 Samuel Perry, *Recasting Red Culture in Proletarian Japan: Childhood, Korea, and the Historical Avant-Garde* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2014).

23 Christina Yi, “Fissured Languages of Empire: Gender, Ethnicity, and Literature in Japan and Korea, 1930s-1950s” (Ph.D., Columbia University, 2013); Jonathan Glade, “Occupied Liberation: Transforming Literary Boundaries in Japan and Southern Korea, 1945-1952” (Ph.D., The University of Chicago, 2013).

24 Melissa Wender, *Lamentation as History: Narratives by Koreans in Japan, 1965-2000* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005); Scott, “Invisible Men: The Zainichi Korean Presence in Postwar Japanese Culture.”

It is this blurring of the boundaries of Korean and Japanese literatures, carried out by this wealth of recent scholarship, that lends my study some coherence as it attempts to bridge the Zainichi second generation to colonial period writers working in Korean. It no longer needs to be situated within the confines of one or the other, as the field(s) increasingly questions the coherence of these frameworks. However, if the difference between Korean and Japanese literature in the early to mid-twentieth century has been eroded or erased, these studies still acknowledge a difference between *being* Korean and *being* Japanese. To put it another way, the *identities* of colonizer and colonized are called much less into question—a direct result, I would argue, of the double bind of identity politics.

To illustrate this point, take Serk-Bae Suh's *Treacherous Translation: Culture, Nationalism, and Colonialism in Korea and Japan from the 1910s to the 1960s*, perhaps the most focused and successful attempt to date at confronting and overcoming this issue.²⁵ Suh recognizes the importance of maintaining productive difference, which is crucial to his application of Levinas's schema of the other and its radical alterity. He cautions against the overextension of anti-essentialist theory to create false equivalences between colonizer and colonized, though again, in the grip of the double bind, this move risks perpetuating a reified hierarchical difference that is the very product of imperialism itself. To solve this problem, Suh proposes a conceptualization of this necessary alterity on the basis of history:

The separation between the colonized and the colonizer does not rest on such essentialist foundations as ethnicity, language, tradition, or culture. The difference between the colonized and the colonizers rather is situated in the history of colonial violence. It is the history of Japanese colonial domination, not any essentialist foundations of identity that posit the differences between Koreans and Japanese.²⁶

25 Serk-Bae Suh, *Treacherous Translation: Culture, Nationalism, and Colonialism in Korea and Japan from the 1910s to the 1960s* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2013).

26 *Ibid.*, xx.

Here Suh incisively locates the problem with the deconstruction of difference, namely the elision of the history of colonial violence. As Suh emphasizes here and throughout the book, the real difference between colonizer and colonized is not ethnic (racial), linguistic, cultural or otherwise essential to the identity of either party, but is rather simply political, arising from a power differential that relies on essentialized difference to justify its own existence. As any number of postcolonial theorists have demonstrated time and time again, Suh is right on the mark.²⁷ In fact, Suh, while more explicit on this point than most, is far from alone in his reproduction of what may be termed a narrative of Korean victimhood (被害, *higai/p'ihae*), and consequently a binary configuration with Japanese culpability (加害, *kagai/kahae*). Most of the studies mentioned above stop short of denouncing a sense of irreconcilable *difference* between the two sides on precisely these grounds, sharing Suh's apprehension that doing so will fail to acknowledge the culpability of the Japanese nation (whatever that is) for its morally reprehensible imperialism, especially when that history has gone unacknowledged or silenced for most of the post-war. Let me be clear that this way of understanding the history of the Japanese empire is vastly preferable to both the erasure of that history and its alternative, a narrative of Japanese imperialism as benign or even beneficial to its colonized subjects. The work of correcting this damaging and patently untrue narrative has proven itself valuable and necessary, and in fact is still called for, given the appearance of its echoes in right-wing Japanese-language media today.

However, what remains unsatisfying about this conceptual strategy is that the colonized—in this case Korea—is still defined, now not in terms of its mutually constitutive language, culture, and ethnicity, but instead in terms of its historical victimhood. The mark of difference, to

27 Homi K Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London; New York: Routledge, 1994); Edward W Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), for instance.

my mind, seems just as reified, just as difficult to overcome, just as problematic. It is perhaps even more so, as it robs the colonized of agency, which at least an essentialized nationalism provides, even if it “fails to offer radical resistance,” in Suh's words.²⁸ In fact, this echoes the first-world versus third-world binary employed by Frederic Jameson for which Aijaz Ahmad takes him to task.²⁹ Even though Jameson is very careful to avoid the essentialist language of difference produced by imperial discourse, and is very clear that the difference is grounded in “history” (just as Suh says), Ahmad still, not unfairly, finds the blanket categories totalizing and unproductive. As he says of Jameson and himself to conclude his essay, “we are not each other's civilizational Others.”³⁰

What, then, do we do with difference? Is there any room in our existing frameworks to be simultaneously politically empowered and wholly Korean? Is there no basis other than historical victimhood on which a given subject may assert a fully-realized Korean identity to liberating rather than subordinating effect? Is there no escape from this critical double bind? Are we left with no options other than, as Morrison says, to throw our hands up? These are the questions that motivate this project. It searches for what Dilleuze and Guattari call “lines of escape” from the double bind of identity politics.³¹ It does so by reframing identity as a critical tool, seeking a more affirmative conception of identity and its possibilities, one with radical potential to break loose from the hierarchies and constraints imposed by difference and sameness.

My aim in this dissertation is a critical rethinking of identity, first by problematizing it, and then by radicalizing it. Maintaining first and foremost that the meaning of identity—meaning

28 Suh, *Treacherous Translation*, xx.

29 See Fredric Jameson, “Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism,” *Social Text*, no. 15 (1986): 65–88; Aijaz Ahmad, “Jameson’s Rhetoric of Otherness and the ‘National Allegory,’” *Social Text*, no. 17 (1987): 3–25.

30 Ahmad, “Jameson’s Rhetoric of Otherness and the ‘National Allegory,’” 25.

31 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

in the sense of its semantic definition as well as in the sense of its political consequences—is never self-evident, I begin by examining and unraveling the complicated web of signification assigned to identity as a term deployed in discourse on belonging and difference. What is revealed in this process is a slippage in the usage of identity, which, absent critical reflection, strips a highly ambivalent and multifarious term of its radical potential, running the risk of collapsing its fraught cluster of meanings into a single uncontested concept that is pressed into service of the hierarchical frameworks that identity discourse sets out to dismantle, even as it conceals its own role in the reproduction and maintenance of such frameworks. By making visible this struggle over the meaning of identity, it becomes possible to probe more carefully the politics of representing identity.

To begin with, the word “identity” is used in a wide variety of senses, both in common parlance and in academic discourse. At the most basic level, “Kim's identity” is equivalent to “who Kim is,” but as trivial as this definition seems, it raises as many difficult questions as it answers. If Kim's “identity” is the answer to the question, “Who is Kim?” then its substance will change depending on any number of contextual factors—including the identity of the one asking the question. Etienne Balibar establishes the stakes of this question, writing that “identity is never a peaceful acquisition: it is claimed as a guarantee against a threat of annihilation that can be figured by 'another identity' (a foreign identity) or by an 'erasing of identities' (a depersonalization).”³² In other words, the question of identity is at once the product of discourses of exclusion or assimilation and a tool for defending against the same. It might not be going too far to say that identity *only* comes into being the moment it comes into question. It cannot exist

32 Etienne Balibar, “Culture and Identity (Working Notes),” in *The Identity in Question*, ed. John Rajchman (New York: Routledge, 1995), 186.

outside its context, which is almost always a high-stakes context of establishing difference or commonality, what Cornel West calls “a matter of life and death.”³³

One of the more potentially problematic senses of identity is that of one's true identity, who Kim *really* is. The problem with this sense of identity, at least insofar as it overlaps with the term's more general usage, is that it suggests a reified and immutable person or essence behind an implied mask. Only when this outer disguise is removed can the true inner subject—the subject's identity—be revealed. And indeed, this is often what is entailed by the term “identity” as it is applied to entities like nations or cultures, and even to individual human subjects subsumed by these categories: that identity is a fixed and knowable object, which can be stripped bare of that which would obscure it and revealed in its true essence. In other words, the copula in the statement “Kim is Korean” implies a greater internal stability than identity can possibly attain. Identities are confronted, formed, transformed, discarded, and escaped in a broader social and political context that belies the innate, essential quality such a simple statement of identity suggests. And yet, saying “Kim is not Korean” is not to be preferred. Not only is it most likely less true in any politically meaningful sense, we have stripped Kim of his identity, now in another sense of the term, identity as a meaningful part of one's self-understanding.

This latter sense is also akin to the verbal form, “to identify (as).” When we say “Kim identifies as Korean,” we avoid the problematic equivalence of the former construction and deliberately destabilize Kim's identity, or what Kim is. Now it is by Kim's own will that he becomes Korean, and in fact, he *is* Korean only insofar as he understands himself as such. Perhaps no validation from the outside is even required—Kim's identity is his own affair. The problem here is that, again, identity does not function in such a simple way. This turn of phrase

33 Cornel West, “A Matter of Life and Death,” in *The Identity in Question*, ed. John Rajchman (New York: Routledge, 1995), 15.

creates a voluntarist fiction of an entity standing outside itself, looking at itself, and telling itself what it is. The positing of identity as the result of an action—that of identifying *as* something—presupposes a fully-formed and autonomous self that is prior to or independent of its identity, which is impossible on its face.³⁴ Even if Koreanness or Japaneseness or other identity markers were something that individual subjects could choose to accept or reject (and they are demonstrably not so volitional), the choices would still be finite and always determined by an external politics, the same external politics that inscribes Koreanness on Kim in the first place. We end up back where we started, except perhaps worse off for the illusion of autonomy.

Nevertheless, considering identity in its sense as a partially volitional action is useful in that it prompts us to think about identity as an ongoing process, one that involves constant negotiation of emotional and political terrain. Indeed, it is not uncommon to see identity discussed in the context of identity formation.³⁵ However, rather than probing the process of a given individual subject's journey toward, through, and beyond intersecting identity categories, inquiries into identity formation usually refer to identity on the collective scale—that is, the process by which the categories of belonging themselves come into being. So-called identity politics is similarly removed from the individual subject level, referring instead to the collective politics of groups bound by a given social identity, most often race, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and so on. In this sense, identity is less the answer to the question of “who Kim is,” but rather “what Kim is,” often among a set of limited and prescriptive options.

Identity politics, despite its frequently derisive usage, is useful in that it emphasizes the inherently political nature of identity. Thinking about identity as belonging to one or another category—categories always organized under a larger rubric like race or gender—inevitably calls

34 See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1990).

35 See, for instance, Stanley Aronowitz, “Reflections on Identity,” in *The Identity in Question*, ed. John Rajchman (New York: Routledge, 1995), 116–119.

to mind the power relations that carve out these categories that mutually coproduce the hierarchical political structures within which they are embedded, and which always inform discussions of identity. Still, this kind of conception of identity underemphasizes the difficulties and complexities of identity at the personal or affective level, and struggles with the nuances of intersectionality—the ubiquitous presence of multiple and always complexly entangled indexes of identity within a single subject. In Kimberlé Crenshaw's words, “The problem with identity politics is not that it fails to transcend difference, as some critics charge, but rather the opposite—that it frequently conflates or ignores intragroup differences.”³⁶ It is therefore useful to probe the politics of identity at the personal level. It is the only way the stakes of collective identity politics can be properly established, and the only way to prevent identity politics from becoming a servant to the very hierarchies it wishes to dismantle.

As we have already seen, however, identity at this individual or personal level is caught in the trap of being by turns falsely volitional and overly restrictive. Putting it all together, what identity seems to be, when its knotted web of meanings is untangled, is that which connects an individual's sense of self to a collectivity to which she belongs. If identity at the personal level is always treated as an affective phenomenon, and identity at the collective level is treated as a political one, then perhaps its slippery usage testifies to the inseparability of the two. In any case, identity is always located in a paradoxical space: the individual's identity always exceeds the collectivity, and the collectivity necessarily exceeds the individual. In this very tension lies identity's radical potential. In the same way, literary text embodies this paradox, as the words on the page always both exceed and are exceeded by what they purport to represent.

36 Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color,” in *Identities: Race, Class, Gender, and Nationality*, ed. Linda Martín Alcoff and Eduardo Mendieta (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 175.

This is what is meant by the burden to “represent”: the simultaneous obligation and untenability of representation. If an unproblematic identity is already impossible, then perhaps the more productive question is *how* do we identify, rather than who or what we identify as. That is, what specific actions, interactions, realizations, negotiations, and enunciations are undertaken by a given subject in the process of acquiring, maintaining, transforming, and expressing a given identity? More importantly, to what extent is there room within these processes to push against the various boundaries created by identity? What freedoms are available to counter the restrictions invariably imposed by a struggle against or within identity? To put it another way, how do subjects burdened to represent an identity find ways to be free in spite of these pressures?

Thus, this project conceives of literary text, broadly defined, as a possible site for productive moments of difference, for the creation of new modes of identity, for the very escape from the double bind of identity. The language of literature is that language which always already purports to represent more than what it is supposed to represent. Designating a text as necessarily literary if it contains this kind of linguistic play, the project asks, specifically, how innovative or non-normative uses of language in text create new spaces for identity. To my mind, the problem of identity is always a problem of space: what space is available, how that space is divided up, what happens when such spatial boundaries are traversed or transgressed.³⁷ I argue that the explicitly representational, imaginary space of literary text is a site for the practice of radical identity, precisely because it is not “real.” By setting out to represent that which is not real, it offers another dimension that infinitely expands the possible spaces available in the geography of identity, offering the potential to escape the double bind of identity politics.

37 “Space” here is not literal space so much as potential, the room to critically or linguistically maneuver. My use of space is informed by Clark Sorensen and Andrea Gevurtz Arai, *Spaces of Possibility: In, Between, and Beyond Korea and Japan* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2016).

I look for this kind of radical language in texts embedded in two types of linguistic environments. The first is a constricted linguistic space, one in which the lack of adequate language to allow free range of expression and representation is acutely felt. Korean writers in the Japanese empire and its aftermath face any number of situations of this type, including but not limited to the censorship regimes of Japanese colonial authorities, the US occupation, and authoritarian regimes in post-war South Korea, the attempted eradication of the Korean language in the colonial period, orthographic and stylistic restrictions imposed by standardization efforts, and the lack felt by writers unable to operate freely within the Korean language. The second type lies at the opposite end of the spectrum, in environments of excess or hybrid language. This refers largely to the multilingual environments and readerships encountered by writers of the empire and in the years after its collapse before the ideology of national monolingualism could be (re)enforced in the nation-states emerging from the empire's ruins, but may also include moments of non-standardized language use, translation, or non-verbal representation. Most of the authors in question worked in places and moments that saw the coexistence of both types of linguistic environment. Indeed, as the careers of these writers themselves demonstrate, a constriction of available language potentially motivates creative outlets that give rise to new and hybrid language.

It is also worth noting that both categories presume a normative quantity or quality of language from which to depart, itself a highly problematic notion. I will grant that framing these linguistic environments as lacking or in excess is an absurd proposition in that it assumes a quantifiability of language that is not only impossible but also has the potential to echo violent rhetoric that posits a standard language and marginalizes other languages as deviant or

“lacking.”³⁸ Language is always under pressure to expand or contract, and it is impossible to identify a sort of normative balance between the two. There is no standard, normative language from which the two linguistic environments I posit can be differentiated. But that is precisely where this project becomes a universalizing rather than minoritizing critical effort. I might even go so far as to say that any truly productive particularity (such as, in this case, moments of collision and transformation between and within the Korean and Japanese languages) will always move toward universality rather than toward a ghettoizing particularity. This is because a non-reified particularity, in its deviation from the norm, will always expose that norm as empty and problematic. In this way, any set of linguistic practices has the potential to incubate the kind of generative language exemplified by these writers, who create their way out of the binds of identity. Hence these Korean fiction writers are at the same time representative of nothing more or less than themselves and potential models for comparison to any writer, no matter where along the spectrum of normative to marginal she may fall.

With this in mind, I examine texts by four writers from a range of historical moments and situational backgrounds. In Chapter 1, I look at *Mujǒng* (Heartless, 1917) by Yi Kwangsu (1892-1950), which is often designated as Korea’s first modern novel. The “modernity” in the work is located both in its innovative vernacular language and in its concern with themes of individual subjectivity and romantic love. In this way, the style and content of Yi’s long serialized novel provide a glimpse of Korean language and culture in transition in the early years of Japanese colonial rule (1910-1945). The text illuminates the tension between the diverse modes of writing existing in pre-colonial Korean and the pressure to conform to a hegemonic modern form of written language. At the same time, the novel depicts a variety of romantic relationships—many

38 See Lydia Liu, *Translingual Practice : Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity--China, 1900-1937* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995).

outside the bounds of compliance with heteronormative notions of acceptable love—and the pressure on subjects engaged in these romances ultimately to comply with dominant modern ideas about romance and sexuality. Thus, the novel depicts the process of constricting, in colonial context, acceptable possibilities in the realms of language and sexuality simultaneously. In spite of this sense of constriction, however, *Mujǒng* also subtly offers sites of resistance to these imperial reconfigurations of sexuality and language. This chapter explores these sites, viewing the hybrid and multifarious nature of the novel's language as a form of queerness that mimics the queer sexualities presented in the course of the story. I argue that even as the politically tenable possibilities available in the realms of language and sexuality are diminished, the queer practices legible in Yi Kwangsu's text offer the chance to forge new and empowering linguistic and sexual possibilities.

Chapter 2 takes up another major writer of the colonial period, Ch'ae Mansik (1902-1950), tracing his career through the peninsula's changing environment under colonialism, war mobilization, and “liberation” under US and Soviet occupation. Each of these contexts provided its own set of challenges and limits on what was possible to write and say. Most obvious of course is the pervasive system of censorship in place during the colonial period and the pressure to write in support of an intensifying war in the 1940s, to which Ch'ae (like Yi Kwangsu) eventually succumbed. However, the Cold War politics of the divided Korean peninsula and the dominance of nationalist literary history have also imposed a set of impossibilities, not only on what Ch'ae Mansik was able to write after liberation in 1945 up to his death in 1950, but also on what can be read into his texts after the fact. This chapter examines Ch'ae's major work of post-liberation fiction, “Minjok ūi choein” (Public Offender, 1949) which has typically been read as a confession of or justification for the transgression of collaboration and a departure from the

author's usual satirical style. I read the piece alongside works of Ch'ae's colonial period fiction, noting that their critiques are aimed at the colonial system and its status as an extension of global capitalism and imperialism, rather than at the specific colonizers of the historical moment, the Japanese. This allows his post-liberation fiction to make use of the same tropes and strategies in satirical critiques of the now American occupying power. I argue that “Minjok ūi choein” can be read in the same ironic mode, which allows both writer and reader an escape from the political impossibilities of the text.

Turning to works of Zainichi literature, Chapter 3 takes up works of criticism and fiction by Kim Sōkpōm (1925-). By the 1970s, as second-generation Koreans in Japan—many of whom, in contrast to their parents, had little or no Korean language ability—were starting to outnumber the first generation, Zainichi authors debated the moral and psychological implications of writing in Japanese. At stake was the question of whether these authors could maintain a specifically Korean subjectivity if that subjectivity could be expressed only in the Japanese language. Kim was particularly active in this debate, writing numerous essays on the topic from 1970 to 1972, and eventually publishing them in the edited collection *Kotoba no jubaku* (The Spellbinding of Language, 1972). In this chapter, I explore the ideas Kim presents in his essays about the relationship between language and identity formation in a postcolonial context, while also considering their concrete manifestation in his works of fiction. Focusing in particular on the novellas *Karasu no shi* (The Death of a Crow, 1957) and *Mandogi yūrei kitan* (The Curious Tale of Mandogi's Ghost, 1970), I argue that through the insertion of fragments of the Korean language, Kim destabilizes the Japanese text of his novels and carves out a space for the performance of a Korean identity. Though the Korea and the Korean language of Kim's fiction

are ultimately imaginary, for Zainichi Koreans, it is only through this imaginative process that an identification with the Korean “homeland” can be forged.

Chapter 4 looks at *Kogoeru kuchi* (Frozen Mouth, 1970), a work by the second-generation Zainichi writer Kin Kakuei (1938-1985) that explores the intersectional politics of Korean identity and disability. In order to contextualize Kim's novel, which is narrated by a person who stutters, I examine the trope of disability—specifically disabilities affecting speech—in works of colonial Korean literature. I attempt to problematize the troping of disability as a kind of allegory for colonized or minority subjugation, and to gesture toward the particular and intersectional characteristics of disability as a mode of identity. Viewing disability as a potentially productive rather than inevitably restrictive condition, I argue that Kim's stuttering narrator allows for new possibilities in the enunciation and representation of identity, ethnic and otherwise.

Finally, I wish to be clear about the limitations of this study, or more plainly, what this study is not. Although I hope that as much will be obvious from the stance and approach taken throughout this dissertation, this project is not meant as a complete or cohesive narrative of Korean literature in contact with or in the aftermath of the Japanese empire—as if such a thing were possible in the first place. Rather than aiming for broad or general coverage, I focus on writers in diverse positions constituted by differing historical moments, intersectional positions, and personal backgrounds. The writers and texts chosen for analysis are not selected via a logic of representation, by which I mean that I would like to avoid burdening these texts with the weight of representing any particular group, movement, time, place, and especially identity category. Again, I treat this proposition as impossible in the first place, and more than that, as

doing a sort of violence to the text, foreclosing many of the possibilities they offer outside the frameworks offered by genres.

In the same way, I will make no attempt to define, describe, or uncover the essence of Korean identity—again, as if that were a possibility in the first place. Instead, I focus only on specific moments of Koreans radically identifying, which is to say, grappling with and ultimately escaping the double bind imposed by Korean identity. I do not wish to depart from existing categories of identity or literature only to propose and begin to reify a new one that will be equally susceptible to being forced into the service of the double bind. Rather, it is my hope that this study might mimic the dimensional shift of the texts it sets out to analyze: neither adhering to nor tearing down the boundaries of existing identities, but representing—which is to say imagining—an entirely new space.

CHAPTER 2. Queer(ing) Language in Yi Kwangsu's *Mujöng*: Sexuality, Nation, and Colonial Modernity

In “Ch'unwön yöngu” (A Study of Yi Kwangsu, 1934-35), Kim Tong-in discusses the career of Yi Kwangsu and its relevance to the beginnings of modern Korean literature.¹ In a section on “Örin pöt ege” (To my young friend, 1917), which Kim describes as “the first piece of Korean fiction to have been influenced by Western literature,” he writes the following, quoting lines from Yi's short story:

“Only a brute needs intercourse to be satisfied in a male-female relationship. A civilized, sophisticated gentleman knows the ultimate satisfaction that comes from loving someone mentally, admiring their appearance as well as the elegance of their heart.”

How he clamors for his ideal love! This is the anguished cry of a man who has suffered through a life of loneliness. Not a cry, but rather a shouted curse. He could see none of life's other problems. Only after tasting love could he think of other things; before tasting love nothing else had meaning. ...

As the target for his love, he did not desire only women. Young men would do just as well. As long as that someone would hold him to their breast, that would be enough.

Thus, his first short story in the formative period of Korean New Literature took the form of “a passionate longing for love.”²

One theme that emerges from this passage is the important role of “love” (*sarang*) in defining both civilization and “Korean New Literature.” Love that combines both emotional and bodily aspects is the mark of a civilized person, and the longing for such a love characterizes a new kind of literature. For Yi Kwangsu, writing at the time of an epistemological shift in the meaning of literature as a concept or category, literature becomes inextricably bound up with emotion (*chöng*), most often the emotions attached to love.³ This theory of literature is borne out not only

1 Kim Tong-in, “Ch'unwön yöngu,” *Samch'ölli* 6, no. 7 (July 1934) – 7, no. 8 (August 1935). “Ch'unwön” is Yi Kwangsu's pen name. Internal quotations from Yi Kwangsu, “Örin pöt ege,” *Ch'öngch'un* 9-11 (1917).

2 Kim Tong-in, “Ch'unwön yöngu,” *Samch'ölli* 6, no. 8: 147.

3 Atsuko Ueda discusses this epistemological shift as it occurred in Japan (where Yi was educated) in Atsuko Ueda, *Concealment of Politics, Politics of Concealment: The Production of “Literature” in Meiji Japan* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007).

in Yi's works of fiction, but also in his seminal essay, “Munhak iran hao” (What is Literature?, 1916), in which he states: “Human emotions are the very foundation of literature. The significance of literature derives from human emotions and human relations.”⁴ The essay goes on to contend that any nation lacking such a literature “will be stuck in a barbaric and primitive state.”⁵ In sum, for Yi Kwangsu, a concept of romantic love (*sarang*), as the primary means of exploring emotion (*chǒng*), was an essential pillar of modernity, and modernity was the concern not only of individual subjects, but also of *minjok*—nations, ethnicities.

As we can see from Kim's quotation, the notion of love that informs Yi's production of “Korean New Literature” is never divorced from sexuality. Even as he tries to separate his civilized concept of love from that of the “brute” (*yain*), he can only do so by positing the purely physical sexuality of the latter as conversely uncivilized. In this way, Yi's concept of love as marker of civilization is homologous to heteronormativity as marker of modernity. As Foucault famously argues in *The History of Sexuality*, such norms arose from nineteenth-century European medical and psychological discourse, which created the “species” of the homosexual.⁶ Building on the work of Eve Sedgwick, who similarly dates the rupture of the “male homosocial continuum” to the late nineteenth century,⁷ Keith Vincent locates in the heteronormativity resulting from this rupture a requirement of Japan's modernization at the turn of the twentieth century: “As exclusive and compulsory heterosexuality became associated with an enlightened

4 Yi Kwangsu [Ch'unwǒn], “Munhak Iran Hao,” *Maeil Shinbo*, 10-23 November 1916, chapter 2 (11 November 1916). Translation from Yi Kwangsu, “What Is Literature?” trans. Jooyeon Rhee, *Azalea: Journal of Korean Literature & Culture* 4, no. 1 (2011): 295.

5 Yi Kwangsu [Ch'unwǒn], “Munhak Iran Hao,” chapter 4 (15 November 1916); Yi Kwangsu, “What Is Literature?,” 301. These and other ideas found in Yi's essay are similar to the philosophy of literature in Tsubouchi Shōyō's “Shōsetsu shinzui” (The Essence of the Novel, 1885), of which Yi was a reader. Michael Shin, “Interior Landscapes: Yi Kwangsu's ‘The Heartless’ and the Origins of Modern Literature,” in *Colonial Modernity in Korea*, ed. Gi-Wook Shin and Michael Robinson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 255.

6 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 43.

7 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 201–202.

modernity, love between men was increasingly branded as either 'feudal' or immature. The resulting rupture... thus constituted one of the most significant markers of Japan's entrance into modernity."⁸ Insofar as "modern" meant "Western" and the West had embraced heterosexuality as the norm, heteronormativity was thus a requirement for a claim to modernity. In Korea's case, such a modernity was mediated by Japan—as was the shift in the definition of literature noted above—which had itself been subject to the same requirement to conform to Western models.

It is ironic, then, that Yi Kwangsu, regarded as a central figure in the project of building a modern Korean literature and importing enlightenment discourse into colonial Korea, would seem according to Kim Tong-in to have embraced what would now be known as a queer sexuality. "Örin pöt ege" is hardly unique among Yi Kwangsu's early works in its depiction of male-male desire; his Japanese-language debut work, "Ai ka" (Maybe Love, 1909) tells the story of a Korean student in Tokyo who longs for and is rejected by a Japanese male student, with at least one critic suggesting that the story was based on Yi's own feelings for a Japanese student at Meiji Gakuin.⁹ Although this element of Yi's early fiction is broadly acknowledged, very little scholarship engages with it directly. One of the few critics to do so, Han Süng-ok argues that the open queer sexualities appearing in Yi's early short stories become coded in later works like *Mujöng* (Heartless, 1917), when the author, "as an enlightenmentist advocate of nationalism," had to focus on other things.¹⁰ Sin Chiyön, on the other hand, views the homoerotic elements of *Mujöng* as very much out in the open, but traces a shift occurring shortly thereafter in which Yi seems to reject same-sex love as pre-modern in order to align himself with sexological discourse

8 J. Keith Vincent, *Two-Timing Modernity: Homosocial Narrative in Modern Japanese Fiction* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2012), 3.

9 Kim Yunsik, *Yi Kwangsu wa kü üi sidae* (Seoul: Sol, 1999), 220–221. "Ai ka" is available in English translation; see Yi Kwangsu, "Maybe Love," trans. John Whittier Treat, *Azalea: Journal of Korean Literature & Culture* 4, no. 1 (2011): 321–27.

10 Han Süng-ok, "Tongsöng'aejök kwanjöm esö pon *Mujöng*," *Hyöndae Sosöl Yöngu* 20 (2003): 10.

being translated into Korean in the 1920s.¹¹ Though the two disagree on exactly when depictions of same-sex love stop being explicit in Yi Kwangsu's work, both agree that this homoeroticism was somehow incompatible with the project of building a modern Korean nation and its literature.¹²

In any case, it is clear that *Mujǒng*, often described as Korea's first modern novel,¹³ lies at a point of transition in Korean discourse on the relationships between sexuality, (colonial) modernity, and literature. The modernity in the work is located both in its concern with themes of individual subjectivity and romantic love and in its innovative vernacular language.¹⁴ The *hangŭl*-only text of the novel stands in stark contrast to the mixed script of the articles and essays surrounding the serialized installments on the pages of the *Maeil Shinbo* in January to June, 1917, an experimental style that attempts to be particularly Korean while qualifying as a properly modern vernacular mode of writing capable of mediating the modern novel. According to Yi's own critical writings of this period, this attempt was explicitly related to the project of building a modern but particularly Korean body of national literature. As he says in "Munhak iran hao," the use of vernacular writing "greatly influences a nation's culture. Therefore, new literature must be written in the purely contemporary everyday vernacular, which can be understood and used by anyone."¹⁵ In Yi's rhetoric on Korean literature, a binary emerges between a pre-modern Korean tradition and a Western modern, a relationship that must always be understood as triangulated by

11 Sin Chiyŏn, "Yi Kwangsu ūi t'eksŭt'ŭ e nat'ananŭn tongsŏng kan kwangye wa kamjŏng ūi ŏnŏhwa pangsik," *Sanghŏ Hakbo* 21 (October 2007): 190–191. See also Sin Chiyŏn, "1920-30 nyŏndae 'tongsŏng(yŏn)ae' kwallyŏn kisa ūi susajŏk maengnak," *Minjok Munhwa Yŏngu* 45 (2006): 265–92.

12 On the particular role of nationalism in shaping modern sexuality and vice versa in the case of Europe, see George Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1985). In the case of colonial Korea, see Yi Hyeryŏng, "Shingminjuŭi ūi naemyŏnhwa wa naebu singminji: 1920-30 nyŏndae sosŏl ūi sekshuŏllit'i, jendŏ, kyegŭp," *Sanghŏ Hakbo* 8 (February 2002): 269–93.

13 See, for example, Lee Namho et al., *Twentieth Century Korean Literature*, ed. Brother Anthony of Taizé, trans. Youngju Ryu (Norwalk, CT: EastBridge, 2005), 6; Shin, "Interior Landscapes," 248–249.

14 Lee Namho et al., *Twentieth Century Korean Literature*, 6.

15 Yi Kwangsu [Ch'unwŏn], "Munhak Iran Hao," chapter 6 (19 November 1916); Yi Kwangsu, "What Is Literature?," 306.

Japanese colonization of the Korean peninsula. Standard readings of *Mujǒng* map this binary onto a romantic love triangle present in the novel.¹⁶ The male intellectual protagonist, Yi Hyǒngsik, is torn between two love interests: Sǒnhyǒng, the modern girl student who is preparing to study in the United States, and Yǒngch'ae, the traditional daughter of his teacher and benefactor who sells herself as a *kisaeng* (female entertainer) in an act of filial piety, attempting to free her father from jail. In this way, the style and content of Yi's long serialized novel provide a glimpse of Korean language and culture in transition in the early years of Japanese colonial rule.

However, this simplified schematic of the novel fails to account for the many tensions and inconsistencies embedded in the language of the novel's narrative as well as the sexualities of the characters' whose thoughts and actions are narrated. In many cases, these tensions and inconsistencies arise as a result of the multiple and competing value systems at work in the space of the novel. Just as it is impossible for Yi Kwangsu to forge a new literature that is both Korean and modern under the conditions of colonialism—the deck is stacked against him since the colonizing power always defines the colonized, in this case Korea, as abjectly pre-modern—the subjects of the novel, particularly the female characters, find it impossible to comply with the overdetermined imperatives of the overlapping and polymorphic forms of patriarchy operative at this transitional moment. In other words, both the linguistic and sexual norms that govern the space of *Mujǒng* are doubly impossible to comply with.

Nevertheless, from these impossibilities arise potential sites of resistance to these imperial reconfigurations of sexuality and language in the form of queer practice.¹⁷ This chapter

16 See, for instance, Kwǒn Podŭrae, *Yǒn'ae ūi sidae: 1920 nyǒndae ch'oban ūi munhwa wa yuhaeng* (Seoul: Hyǒnsil Munhwa Yǒngu, 2003), 25–27.

17 For the purposes of this chapter, I am using Nikki Sullivan's definition of “to queer” as “to make strange, to frustrate, to counteract, to delegitimize, to camp up.” Nikki Sullivan, *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), vi.

explores these sites, viewing the hybrid and multifarious nature of the novel's language as a form of queerness that mimics and complicates the queer sexualities presented in the course of the story. I argue that even as the politically tenable positions available in the realms of language and sexuality are foreclosed by the violence of colonial modernity, the queer practices legible in Yi Kwangsu's text offer the chance to escape and ultimately combat that same violence.

2.1 Overdetermined Norms and Queer Resistance

To explore these queer potentialities, I focus on the character of Yǒngch'ae, the *kisaeng*, who most embodies the paradoxes arising from the novel's views on romantic love and sexuality. Throughout the events of *Mujǒng*, Yǒngch'ae must navigate the confluence of different forms of patriarchy that act on her as a female subject. To oversimplify, one can identify the two major such forces as first, the Confucian patriarchy of the “three obediences” (to father, husband, and son), and second, the patriarchy inherent in modern Western heteronormativity, which is superimposed over the existing forms already in place. Thus, for Yǒngch'ae, complying with the rules dictated for female sexuality always involves a negotiation between two competing sets of such rules, the modern and the pre-modern.

Although the most basic reading of the novel situates Yǒngch'ae solidly on the pre-modern, more purely or traditionally Korean side of this binary, Yǒngch'ae's position is in fact much more fluid and complex than this schematic view of the novel suggests. Her father is described as follows:

Scholar Pak traveled to the state of Qing and brought back dozens of different kinds of new books published in Shanghai. He got an idea of what the situation was like in the West, and conditions in Japan, and realized that Korea could not go on as it was at present; thereupon, he tried to begin a “new civilization movement. ... Scholar Pak cut his hair short and put on black clothes, and he had his two sons do the same. At the time, cutting one's hair and wearing black clothing was a very courageous decision. It

symbolized the shattering of established customs that had been followed for over four thousand years, and adopting completely new ways.¹⁸

As is clear from this introduction to Yōngch'ae's father and Hyōngsik's benefactor, he cannot be positioned unequivocally in the traditional camp, even when compared to Sōnhyōng's father, Elder Kim, a practicing Christian who has studied in the United States. On the other hand, this is not to say that he is unproblematically modern, either. The contradictions inherent in his (and Yōngch'ae's) position are illustrated by the education he gives Yōngch'ae: “Though others laughed at him, Scholar Pak ignored them and sent his daughter to school. When she returned from school, he would teach her texts such as the *Elementary Learning* and *Biographies of Virtuous Women*, and the summer she turned twelve years old, he taught her the *Classic of Poetry* too” (5). Presumably “others laugh at him” because the notion of sending a daughter to school is something new and foreign that Scholar Pak carries out as part of his “new civilization” worldview, but at the same time, Pak teaches his daughter the traditional Chinese texts that *yangban* ladies would have learned in the Chosŏn period as well. In this case, as with arguably every major character in the novel, the modern versus pre-modern binary cannot be easily applied. In fact, one of the novel's most deep-seated contradictions is its simultaneous desire for and resistance toward modernity.

Already we can see one of the many double-binds ensnaring Yōngch'ae coming into focus. Her classical education demands that she seek virtue through her relationships with men: first by practicing filial piety toward her father, and then, after he dies, by preserving her virginity for Hyōngsik, the man she believes her father wished her to marry. In both cases, however, Yōngch'ae is thwarted. When her father is wrongfully imprisoned, Yōngch'ae models herself after “women who sold themselves in order to redeem their father's sins” in “the stories

18 Yi Kwangsu [Ch'unwŏn], “Mujōng,” *Maeil Shinbo*, 1 January - 14 June 1917. Hereafter cited parenthetically, with numbers referring to the chapter. Translations from Ann Sung-hi Lee, *Yi Kwangsu and Modern Korean Literature: Mujōng* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University East Asia Program, 2005).

of old” (15), selling herself as a *kisaeng* to obtain the money to support her father. Not only does she fail to get him released from prison, as she is swindled out of the selling price of her own body, her father curses her decision to become a *kisaeng*, and starves himself to death in his rage. Yǒngch'ae is then left with the guilt of having killed her father rather than the joy of having saved him—never mind the fact that it was the very education he gave her that led her to make the decision he ends up condemning. Yǒngch'ae then spends the next seven years preserving her virginity, “following the examples of women of olden times,” only to fail again (as it were) when she is raped.¹⁹ Hence Yǒngch'ae is confronted with actual sexual violence in addition to the violence of the double standards imposed on her sexuality.

In this way, the demands of Yǒngch'ae's father and his system of values are already impossible for Yǒngch'ae to satisfy, to say nothing of how those demands are compounded by other competing value systems that affect the politics of Yǒngch'ae's sexuality. After Yǒngch'ae is raped, she flees to Pyongyang to end her life, which she believes to be the only moral option available to her. She is stopped by Pyǒng-uk, a woman on vacation from her studies in Japan who “dislikes anything outdated” (91). The latter makes a powerful appeal for Yǒngch'ae to live, in which she mounts an attack on traditional morals: “You have been a slave of such outdated thought, and have tasted futile suffering. Free yourself from those shackles. Awake from your dream. Be a person who lives for herself. Attain freedom” (90). Yǒngch'ae comes to accept Pyǒng-uk's view of the world in lieu of the one she inherited from her father, but the novel is not willing to endorse the shift completely, and still portrays Yǒngch'ae crying and thinking of suicide again when she encounters Hyǒngsik by chance. Even Pyǒng-uk, the most hard-line “new woman” (*sinyǒsǒng*), is made to see the value of “traditional” ideas.

19 The narrative suggests that perhaps this is only an attempted rape, but either way, both she and Hyǒngsik perceive her purity as lost, her body defiled.

Pyŏng-uk learned traditional knowledge from Yŏngch'ae, and had a taste of Eastern emotions. Pyŏng-uk had disliked anything that was outdated. After coming into contact with Yŏngch'ae's thorough understanding of traditional thought, though, Pyŏng-uk realized that there were appealing aspects to even traditional thought. She even thought of studying the *Elementary Learning*, *Biographies of Virtuous Women*, and classical Chinese poetry and prose. She took out dust-covered books at home, such as the *Komun Chinbo* (Genuine Treasures of Classical Literature), and studied these books with Yŏngch'ae, and memorized what she learned. “This is such fun,” she would exclaim, rejoicing like a child, and she would recite the texts out loud. “Hm,” Pyŏng-uk's father would say when he heard his daughter reciting classical texts, though it was not clear whether he was praising her, or expressing ridicule. (91)

In the end, the skeptical and ambivalent voice of Pyŏng-uk's father reflects the narrative tone of much of the novel—somewhere between mocking and approval—toward both the “traditional” values of Korea and the often ill-conceived efforts of the characters to turn away from them toward what is new or “civilized.” The result is that multiple value systems operate simultaneously on Yŏngch'ae and the other characters, contradicting each other in obvious ways even as they more subtly contradict even themselves.

When considering the ostensible connection in the novel between heteronormative sexuality and a discourse of civilization that makes these contradictory demands, Yŏngch'ae's queer sexuality begins to make sense as a solution to this impossibility. It is when Yŏngch'ae and her older *kisaeng* “sister” Wŏrhwa awaken to a heterosexual desire for men that is linked through the language of the text to awakening as a modern subject that they turn to each other, rather than men, to release that desire. Their sexual relationship begins shortly after the pair witness a group of students singing. Their song repeats a trope in the novel used to position characters like Scholar Pak and others advocating for “new civilization,” that of being the lone person awake among sleepers:

While other people on earth dream,
I alone am awake.
I look up at the sky
and sing a sad song. (32)

The novel marks this as the beginning of Wörhwa's desire for men, as the “true poet” among the students is the only man she has found to be worthy of such desire. This heterosexual desire could be understood as a desire for modernity itself—in both cases, always remaining unfulfilled within the overdetermined structure of colonized sexuality. Thus, as in the students' song, it becomes a source of sadness:

When Yöngch'ae saw how Wörhwa had been suffering ever since the party... Yöngch'ae guessed that something had happened to Wörhwa. Yöngch'ae had also begun to feel a longing for the male sex. Her face grew hot when she faced a strange man, and when she lay down alone at night, she wished that there was someone who would hold her. Once, when Yöngch'ae and Wörhwa came back from a party late at night, and had gone to bed together in the same bed, Yöngch'ae put her arms around Wörhwa in her sleep, and kissed her on the mouth. Wörhwa laughed to herself. “So you have awakened as well,” she thought. “Sadness and suffering lie ahead of you.” (32)

This passage reveals an overlap in language between awakening as a modern subject and awakening as a sexual subject, both linked to a “sadness” that arises from a desire that cannot be satisfied. This “awakened” desire presents yet another impossibility for Wörhwa and Yöngch'ae, who, as we have seen, are already confronted with the impossibility of meeting the mutually exclusive requirements of the value systems in place, especially from their marginal position as *kisaeng*.

At the moment both women come face to face with the weight of this impossibility, their homoerotic relationship begins. One way to read the Yöngch'ae's queer sexuality then is as an outlet for the tension built up by these contradictory demands. With heteronormative desire for men—already naturalized as a bodily response with reference to Yöngch'ae's face flushing—simultaneously required and censured, Yöngch'ae's only choice is to substitute a queer desire that both mimics and upends the normative practice that is always inaccessible to her. Of note, Yöngch'ae engages Wörhwa in her sleep. This serves the dual function of naturalizing

Yǒngch'ae's queer desire in the same way that heteronormative desire is embodied, but at the same time making Yǒngch'ae's actions unconscious, allowing the narrative to maintain that it is a man's body that Yǒngch'ae wants to hold when she innocently reaches out for Wǒrhwa. The result is a queer ambiguity, wherein the overdetermined norms in the novel, concerned largely with Yǒngch'ae's virginity, are no longer able to define or constrict her sexuality. It is not that Yǒngch'ae is a lesbian, or takes on a homosexual identity—such a category could only be applied anachronistically—but rather that an embodied practice of queer sexuality becomes an escape from the binds of overlapping patriarchies. In a moment that strikes today's reader as ironic, the narrative claims that “it was Wǒrhwa who had given Yǒngch'ae half the strength to think of Hyǒngsik as her partner in life and to remain chaste for seven years” (34) even after Wǒrhwa replaces Hyǒngsik as the object of Yǒngch'ae's desire. Yǒngch'ae is able to escape the contradictions in normative demands for chastity by creating a contradiction of her own, protecting her virginity by engaging in sexual practice (albeit a sexual practice that clearly does not count as sexual in the reality of the novel). By embodying the paradox, she turns it on its head. If this moment is ironic, it also gestures toward the irony of a rape culture that simultaneously demands that a woman's body be pure and violently defiles it.²⁰

The language of the novel also faces contradictory demands brought on in part by a transition between (and overlapping of) value systems. As in the case of sexuality, the tension in the language of the narrative arises as the text sets out to occupy an always already foreclosed space that is both modern and nationally Korean.²¹ On the pages of the *Maeil Shinbo* where *Mujǒng* was serialized, it is clear that there is not a single, standardized mode of writing in the

20 I am referring to the internal logic of the novel, which treats Yǒngch'ae's rape as normal, in addition to holding her responsible for it.

21 It should be noted that the dichotomy between “Korean” and “modern” is itself a product of colonial discourse. Rather than accepting it on its own terms, I am gesturing toward the impossibility this dichotomy creates and queer practice as a tool for overcoming it.

Korean language, even within the narrow limits of such a high-brow publication. The serialized installments of *Mujǒng* stand out on the page, whose columns are filled overwhelmingly with Chinese characters (*hanja*), for its use of *hangŭl* almost exclusively. Whereas the articles surrounding the story are written in a mixed script that relies mostly on Chinese characters with Korean script filling in grammatical information, similar to the Japanese mixed script style still in use today, *Mujǒng* deviates from the apparent standard, carving out a particular style for the genre of fiction. This stylistic experiment, which would eventually become the dominant mode of writing, must be understood in the context of a discourse on the modern vernacular. Perhaps what we might call a pure *hangŭl* orthographic style had the best chance of developing into the kind of vernacular written language that was required, according to Yi, to produce a modern novel, as well as providing a particularly Korean medium that Yi sought as the basis for a particularly Korean literature.²²

However, as in the case of sexuality, the language must maneuver within an overdetermined set of constraints. Perhaps the most basic of these is the demand that the writing offer an unmediated representation of the vernacular, an impossibility on its face for an ultimately visual medium. Here Komori Yōichi's discussion of this problem in the context of Meiji Japan is instructive. Komori identifies a “phonocentrism” in the discourse on modern written language, which sets up a binary between phonetic and semantic forms of representation, concealing the semantic aspects of Western alphabetic orthographies and effacing the phonetic aspects of Chinese characters. Paradoxically, even the most purely “phonetic” forms of Japanese writing at the time—designed for the transcription of oral performances and aimed at reaching the largest possible Japanese audience—made use of Chinese compounds as the only means of

22 Complicating this line of thinking, however, is the generally accepted theory that Yi's original manuscript for *Mujǒng* was written in mixed script and then translated into *hangŭl*-only style, either by Yi himself or an editor at the newspaper. I thank Hatano Setsuko for bringing this to my attention.

translating words from English and other Western languages within the spacial economy of print media.²³ If the deck was stacked against these Japanese writers negotiating this paradox, all the more so for Korean writers like Yi Kwangsu, who always had to deal with an additional layer of mediation (and colonization) in the form of Japan as access point to the West, and Japanese as access point to European-language discourse.²⁴

This negotiation is uncannily concealed and embodied at the same time in the supposedly pure *hangŭl* text of *Mujŏng*. That is, its deployment can be seen as an attempt to depart from the ostensibly ideographic forms of Chinese writing—including appropriated and reworked Japanese-language manifestations with greater political claims to modernity—and empower a writing style with claims to being both more straightforwardly oral and uniquely Korean. The problem is that, upon closer examination, both of these claims are belied by the language of *Mujŏng*. What appears to be unadulterated Korean vernacular script is always already the product of the linguistic admixture characterizing East Asia at this moment.²⁵ The *hangŭl* orthography of the text creates a contrast between the installments of the novel and the surrounding articles and essays, perhaps in an effort to distance itself from the *hanja* that constituted the basis for pre-modern forms of Korean writing, which Yi Kwangsu goes out of his way to exclude from the category of Korean literature. This may also have had the effect of creating a greater sense of separation from Japanese versus the mixed-orthography texts that shared a common *kanji/hanja* vocabulary with the language of the colonizer. However, that

23 Komori Yōichi, *Nihongo no kindai* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2000), 65–67.

24 In “Munhak iran hao,” Yi discusses the term “munhak” as a translation of the English word “literature,” but elides the Japanese mediation of this translation. Yi Kwangsu [Ch’unwŏn], “Munhak Iran Hao,” chapter 1 (10 November 1916). On the violent process of such translations, see Lydia Liu, *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity--China, 1900-1937* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995). On the role of translation (through Japanese) in the formation of modern Korean literature, see Heekyoung Cho, *Translation's Forgotten History: Russian Literature, Japanese Mediation, and the Formation of Modern Korean Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).

25 In fact, as Hatano Setsuko points out, the *hangŭl*-only text of *Mujŏng* is the product of translation from a mixed-script original.

vocabulary is still present in the *hangŭl* text of *Mujŏng*, and still almost certainly called to mind in its visual form as Japanese-mediated Chinese script for readers of a paper that published almost exclusively in the mixed style. Ultimately, Yi Kwangsu was faced with a more acute version of the same anomaly embedded in discourse on *genbun itchi*, the Japanese effort to “unify spoken and written language”: a discussion that set up the West and China as two poles in a dichotomy could only take place in a language that already contained elements of both. All available modes of writing were already overloaded with meanings mediated by and negotiated among a multiplicity of languages and forms, none of which could be untangled from one another. In sum, the language of the text is constricted in ways comparable to the overdetermination of sexuality in the novel.

Similarly, the text wriggles out of these constraints through a sort of queer practice, a deviation from the assumed norms of the language that exposes the contradictions inherent in those norms. The very first installment of the novel, even as it is presented in a strikingly “pure” *hangŭl* form, includes representations of English and Japanese, creating a multilingual setting in which the interactions of the novel's characters take place. These “foreign” words are blended into the Korean text insofar as they are transcribed into *hangŭl* rather than presented in Japanese or English orthographies, but on the other hand are marked for emphasis, distinguishing them as something other. The text simultaneously accommodates and excludes the foreign, ironically mimicking but reversing the structure of the *hangŭl*-only style itself, foregrounding the very hybridity it sets out to conceal. The instances of code-switching also disrupt efforts to present the *hangŭl* text of the novel as strictly phonetic, representing the speech of the characters in an unmediated fashion, a project that is of course impossible in the first place. Although the transcription of the Japanese and English words into *hangŭl* emphasize the phonetic utility of the

latter, many of these transcriptions are followed by parenthetical glosses of the (domesticated) foreign terms. These glosses create two competing layers of signs, the sounds of which could not be uttered by the same person at the same time. This structure draws attention to the nature of *hangŭl* as visual medium: in its most phonetic moment, setting out to represent nothing more than the non-meaning sound of a foreign sign, the text ironically emphasizes its visuality and mediated distance from the oral. The language of the novel, from its very first page, is always more fluid, more flexible, more queer, perhaps, than the over-simplified frameworks of modern vernacular language can accommodate.²⁶

The queer ambivalence of the language comes into its starkest relief at a moment when Yŏngch'ae's queer sexuality becomes radicalized in response to her rape. The installments immediately following the scene of Yŏngch'ae's rape provide some of the richest opportunities to observe resistance to the overdetermined linguistic and sexual norms outlined above. When those norms reach their most violent and restrictive, a resistance that was once subtle becomes much more disruptive.

First, it is worth noting that the narrative leaves open the question of whether Yŏngch'ae was actually penetrated during her (attempted?) rape. When Sin Usŏn comes to see Hyŏngsik the day after the rape, the narrative suggests that Usŏn may have been somewhat disingenuous when he declared, in Japanese, “*Mō dame da,*” (39) implying that they were too late, and that Yŏngch'ae's body had already been debased. The next morning, Usŏn debates whether to tell Hyŏngsik the truth:

Sin Usŏn believed that Hyŏngsik was a man of such character that Hyŏngsik would marry Yŏngch'ae. However, if Hyŏngsik made Yŏngch'ae his wife, the scene at the house in Ch'ŏngnyangni [Yŏngch'ae's rape] would always remain in Hyŏngsik's mind and would cause him much pain and suffering. It was within Sin's power to decide whether or

26 It is worth noting that much of this material, especially the lines spoken in Japanese, is removed (censored) from later published versions of the text, such as the version appearing in *Yi Kwangsu chŏnjip* (The Complete Works of Yi Kwangsu, Samjungdang: 1962-64).

not Hyöngsik would suffer. For only he, Kim Hyönsu and Pae Myöngsik [the rapists] knew whether or not Yöngch'ae was still a virgin. Sin wanted to torment Hyöngsik for a long time by withholding this secret. (46)

According to this, even Yöngch'ae does not know whether she is still a virgin, though it is possible she is simply left out—after all, it is not her “pain and suffering” that is of concern here, only Hyöngsik's. In any case, although this passage implies that Yöngch'ae may not have been actually raped (but only assuming a problematically narrow definition of rape based on penetration—it is clear that Yöngch'ae has been subject to sexual violence), the narrative goes on from this point referring to the rape as if it had occurred. The details of the events in Ch'öngnyangni remain obscure.

Perhaps this ambiguity is the only way the novel can justify its contradictory stances on Yöngch'ae's status after surviving the rape. On the one hand, Yöngch'ae must remain a sympathetic character as she remains central to the novel's development through its final installments, and Hyöngsik can demonstrate how enlightened he is by declaring that Yöngch'ae's life still has value after her rape. On the other hand, Hyöngsik does not seem to question the notion that Yöngch'ae's rape constitutes a moral failing on her part and a debasement of her body's value, and the narrative continually censures Yöngch'ae for having been “defiled” (*töryöpdä*). The only way to resolve the tension between the two positions is to allow for the possibility that Yöngch'ae was not really raped and therefore remains a suitable object of sympathy for Hyöngsik.

By contrast, Yöngch'ae's own strategy for overcoming this ethical contradiction is to die. After the rape, Yöngch'ae resolves to throw herself in the Taedong River in Pyongyang, where her lover Wörhwa did the same. Yöngch'ae's planned suicide is not only motivated by a perceived sense of guilt at her failure to preserve her virginity, but also by her desire to be with

Wŏrhwa once again. It is not inconceivable that this journey toward a death shared with Wŏrhwa is Yŏngch'ae's ultimate rejection of the heteronormative patriarchy that has finally subjected her to its ultimate form of violence.

Ironically, Yŏngch'ae's death becomes her greatest source of power in the novel, despite the fact that she never actually dies. The specter of Yŏngch'ae's raped and bleeding body haunts the characters of the novel, especially Hyŏngsik, before Yŏngch'ae ever has the chance to jump into the river. In fact, even before she departs for Pyongyang, Yŏngch'ae begins to turn her attack around, transforming her “tainted” blood into a weapon. In Yŏngch'ae's first encounter with the old woman who runs the *kisaeng* house after her rape, she is already a ghostly and terrifying figure. As Yŏngch'ae attempts to inflict harm upon herself in this scene, we also get the impression that it is the old woman, rather than Yŏngch'ae, who is most threatened by the violence inflicted on Yŏngch'ae's body and the flow of blood that results.

Yŏngch'ae's body shook like a person shivering with cold. She bit her lower lip again. Warm drops of blood fell onto the back of the old woman's hand where it lay on Yŏngch'ae's breast. The old woman looked up from Yŏngch'ae's shoulder at her face. Blood rose from her lip like water from a spring. Her front teeth were stained red, and bubbles of blood flowed through her teeth and dripped down. Her disheveled hair covered her eyes and cheeks, and, shadowed by her hair, her face looked like that of a dead person. (42)

When Yŏngch'ae screams, “My blood is tainted blood,” it sounds as much like a threat to disseminate her blood, now weaponized, as it does a statement of guilt or regret for her lost virginity. The fear she instills in the old woman with her bleeding body ironically becomes Yŏngch'ae's greatest source of power.

Moreover, the image of that body continues to haunt both the old woman and Hyŏngsik even in Yŏngch'ae's absence. Both characters imagine being attacked by a bleeding and terrifying Yŏngch'ae after she has left for Pyongyang. The two follow Yŏngch'ae to Pyongyang, intending

to stop her from killing herself, and en route, the old woman dreams that the bridge over the Taedong River collapses. As she is struggling to keep from drowning, Yǒngch'ae appears dressed in white.

The old woman reached out her hand and said, "I am sorry. Please forgive me. Take hold of my hand." Yǒngch'ae would not take the old woman's hand, though, but instead her face turned pale and she bit her lips with her white teeth, and sprayed blood on the old woman's face. The old woman felt drops of blood, hot as boiling water, strike her forehead and cheeks. "Help me, Yǒngch'ae," she said, flailing about in the water. Then she woke up. (55)

Yǒngch'ae becomes an ironic sort of Christ figure, appearing as the old woman's potential savior, but the blood that would save her instead turns against her, weaponized by Yǒngch'ae's anger and the old woman's guilt.

Hyǒngsik sees a similar vision of a blood-spraying Yǒngch'ae, but his curiously involves his other love interest, Sǒnhyǒng.

He could see Sǒnhyǒng and Yǒngch'ae side by side. At first they were both dressed in garments white as snow, and each held a flower in one hand, and held one hand open towards Hyǒngsik, as though asking him to clasp their hands. "Take my hand, Hyǒngsik! Please!" they said, smiling and holding their head slightly to one side coquettishly. Shall I take this hand, or that one? Hyǒngsik thought, and reached both of his hands into the air, then hesitated. Then Yǒngch'ae's appearance began to change. The white, snowlike dress gave way to a bloody, torn skirt of some nameless kind of silk, and her bloodied legs showed through the torn skirt. Tears fell from her eyes, and her lip was bleeding. The flower in her hand disappeared, and she held instead a fistful of soil. He shook his head and opened his eyes. Sǒnhyǒng still stood before him, dressed in white, and smiling. "Please take my hand, Hyǒngsik!" she said, reaching her hand out to him, and bowing her head. When Hyǒngsik reached for Sǒnhyǒng's hand in a daze, Yǒngch'ae's face as she stood beside Sǒnhyǒng, was hideously transformed like that of a ghost. She bit her lip and sprayed blood over Hyǒngsik. Hyǒngsik started with terror. (45)

Hyǒngsik's vision links Yǒngch'ae's radical and violent transformation more explicitly to the injustice of her situation. Not only does Hyǒngsik have all the power in the fantasy he sets up, choosing between two women who beg him to be with them, he compounds the violence of her rape by chasing her out of the fantasy as soon as the marks of this violence become visible in the

form of her blood and torn clothing. In the end, however, he is unable to keep her away, apparently not even by opening his eyes. It is when he rejects her this way and makes a move toward accepting the still ostensibly pure Sŏnhyŏng that Yŏngch'ae becomes monstrous and sprays him with blood as she does the old woman. Ultimately, Yŏngch'ae's "ghost" turns her defiled blood into a weapon against the very attitudes that view her body as defiled in the first place.

Perhaps it is not surprising, then, that Hyŏngsik argues shortly thereafter that it is wrong for Yŏngch'ae to choose to die, which would take away the power that she has as a ghostly figure. His case is presented in Chapter 53, a strange installment that breaks from the plot of the story and takes a form more like that of an essay. Chapter 53 also represents a radical shift in the style of the novel, its language containing a sudden burst of Chinese characters. The chapter is structured to contrast the views of Usŏn and Hyŏngsik on Yŏngch'ae's responsibilities after being raped, with the narrative seemingly ruling in favor of Hyŏngsik's ostensibly more compassionate view that Yŏngch'ae should not commit suicide just because her virginity is lost. It begins by presenting a logical fallacy in Usŏn's view of the situation, which sees suicide as the proper course of action for Yŏngch'ae as a "good woman" who has lost her virginity, even though he would have had no problem with Yŏngch'ae as a *kisaeng* going on living without her virginity. The narrator points out that "if one followed the implications of this line of thought, one could say that Usŏn believed that it was a sin for a 'virtuous woman' to be unchaste, but not a sin for a woman who was not a 'virtuous woman' to be unchaste. This was a reversal of premise and conclusion. In actuality one did not remain chaste because one was a virtuous woman; one was a virtuous woman because one was chaste" (53). If Usŏn's logic is unfair, however, then so is the

narrator's counterpoint, which implies that Yǒngch'ae, having been raped, is no longer a “virtuous woman.”

Indeed, Hyǒngsik's opinion on the matter struggles with this same contradiction. He recognizes that Yǒngch'ae's failure to remain chaste was not intentional, but rather than absolving her from blame for her rape, concludes that she has responsibilities beyond those of remaining chaste and loyal to her parents (the only moral imperatives guiding Usǒn's view, it would seem), and must live to carry out these further responsibilities.

Even if she had failed to carry out these two responsibilities, she still had countless other responsibilities in her life. There was the responsibility of loyalty, and her responsibility to the world, and to animals, and to the mountains and streams, and stars, [and to God,] and to Buddha. It was wrong for her to end a life with so many responsibilities, just for the sake of two duties (even if those two duties were important, and even if she had not succeeded in fulfilling those duties as she wished). It was nevertheless one of life's glories when a person who was passionate, and pure of mind and body, made their most important responsibilities their very life. (53)

Not only does this position further burden Yǒngch'ae with “responsibilities” beyond chastity and filial piety, which as we have already established were impossible for her to fulfill in the first place, it also hedges in the final line, allowing that Usǒn's position that Yǒngch'ae's virginity was equivalent to her entire life's value could also be “one of life's glories.” In the end, Hyǒngsik's view is just as confused, but the narrative does not point out the contradictions as it does with Usǒn's, allowing them instead to remain hidden from view. Thus, Yǒngch'ae is faced once again with competing value systems, both endorsed by the narrative, and both internally contradictory, eradicating all possibility for her to behave correctly.

However, it is at this point that the queer language of Chapter 53 intervenes to make this paradox visible, just as Yǒngch'ae's queer sexuality does earlier in the novel. Even though the narrating voice does not call out the paradoxes in the value systems presented here, the voice of a sort of translating presence appears in the form of the heavy *hanja* glossing of the installment,

creating a highly visible critique of this logic. This critique is enacted through the destruction of the vernacular prose of the chapter, which contains multiple Chinese character glosses in most lines, each gloss placed in parentheses after the *hangŭl* word to which it corresponds. Thus, any orality contained in the text is destroyed as it constantly repeats itself. What makes the style of this chapter particularly jarring is the implicit comparison with the mixed-script pieces surrounding it on the pages of the *Maeil Shinbo*, which do not create this sense of unnecessary repetition and must have been much easier for contemporary readers to read smoothly. Neither are the glosses present to offer clarity in the meanings of ambiguous *hangŭl* words, as most of them are repeated again and again, long after the connection between a given *hangŭl* word and its corresponding *hanja* should be clear. What at first presents itself as a clarifying *hanja* translation of a potentially confusing *hangŭl* text becomes a confusing nuisance in itself. The translating presence begins to distance itself from, or even do battle with the narrating voice, creating its own story at the visual level of the text.

By interrupting the flow of the *hangŭl*-only prose, these Chinese character glosses do not simply hybridize the text, but actually expose the inherent hybridity of the ostensibly simple *hangŭl* text itself. This process is clearest with reference to the final line of the installment, which compares Hyŏngsik's line of thinking with Usŏn's, characterizing them as follows: "One man was English-style and the other was Chinese-style" (53). To reiterate, even though the "English-style" thought of Hyŏngsik is presumably favored, the narrative endorses both as bases for judging Yŏngch'ae's actions. What is highlighted by the particular textual representation of "English-style" and "Chinese-style"—each written in *hangŭl* as "yŏngmunsik" and "hanmunsik" respectively, and then repeated in the corresponding Chinese characters—is that at the linguistic level, neither can be disentangled from the other. Hyŏngsik's "English-style" thought can appear

only in the *hanja* (Chinese) derived language of translated English mediated by Japanese. In fact, we could just as easily assume these Chinese character glosses are Japanese *kanji* rather than particularly Korean *hanja*. The point is that the language to which they belong is undecideable—they represent English and other Western languages as well as Japanese and Chinese in a way that makes the languages impossible to distinguish from one another. This admixture is violently drawn outside the text into the queer space of the parentheses, just as Yǒngch'ae's blood is drawn out from inside her body. It exposes the impossibility of the demands on the language of the text just as it points toward the contradictions and overlaps between “English-style” and “Chinese-style” demands on Yǒngch'ae's sexuality.

In both cases, the unruly translator of the Chapter 53 interlude and Yǒngch'ae's furious blood-spraying specter as radical figures unmask the impossibilities and contradictions in the normative demands made by competing and overlapping systems of value. Both the language of the novel and the sexualities it describes are overdetermined by these operative systems, but the queer presences that “come out” within them begin to move toward positionalities outside the bounds of these overdetermined structures.

2.2 Code-Switching as Cross-Dressing

Perhaps the most frequently-occurring queer practice in the novel, however, is that of cross-dressing, which, according to Marjorie Garber, performs exactly the sort of function explored above, opening up spaces outside restrictive binary categories. Garber conceptualizes the cross-dresser as a “third,” outside the bounds of either term of the sex binary and allowing for disruption—queering—of its categories:

The “third” is that which questions binary thinking and introduces crisis—a crisis which is symptomatized by *both* the overestimation *and* the underestimation of cross-dressing. But what is crucial here—and I can hardly underscore this strongly enough—is that the

“third term” is *not* a *term*. Much less is it a *sex*, certainly not an instantiated “blurred” sex as signified by a term like “androgynous” or “hermaphrodite,” although these words have culturally specific significance at certain historical moments. The “third” is a mode of articulation, a way of describing a space of possibility. Three puts in question the idea of one: of identity, self-sufficiency, self-knowledge.²⁷

In other words, the cross-dressed figure produces new space outside what the dyad allows. The radical potential of cross-dressing lies in the unbridgeable gap it creates between what the cross-dresser is and what the cross-dresser appears to be. Its practice is a displacement of identity, a non-identity that provides a means of escaping overdetermined normative structures, if only temporarily.²⁸ In the case of *Mujǒng*, both literal cross-dressing and cross-dressing in more figurative senses—including a sort of linguistic cross-dressing—perform just such a function.

In the first and clearest instance of cross-dressing in the novel, Yǒngch'ae dresses as a boy to run away from her relatives and make her way to Pyongyang to rescue her father, as she knows that she will not be able to travel in women's clothing. When she sleeps at an inn among several male travelers, she wakes up to find them discussing her, recounting the moment as follows:

I heard the guests in the room discussing something. No, it is a boy, one of them said. Then another said how could it be a boy. She definitely has a girl's face and a girl's voice. Would a girl have reason to dress up as a boy and travel alone, said another. . . . The men argued for awhile until one man said there is nothing to argue about, we will know for certain if we just look, and started moving towards me. I was terrified and clung to the wall. But my strength was no match for a man. Eventually, my true gender was exposed. (10)

Here is yet another example of the disturbing violence directed at Yǒngch'ae's body, but more important in this case is what necessitates the violence. It is clear from the progression of the argument Yǒngch'ae recounts that she achieved through cross-dressing a level of gender ambiguity that was not only enough to arouse the curiosity of the other guests, but also enough

27 Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 11.

28 See also Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1990).

that they could not determine her sex without resorting to controlling and exposing her body. One factor that makes the argument unresolvable is the difference in logic employed by the two sides. One argues that she is female on the basis of how he perceives her body (as having “a girl's face and a girl's voice”), whereas the other reasons that the act of traveling is unimaginable for a woman, therefore she must be male. Before Yǒngch'ae is attacked and violently stripped of her drag, her actions, as well as the spaces she occupies, appear to be just as valid a gender logic as the body. Still, in the end, the exposed body is treated as the final determinant of Yǒngch'ae's identity.

In fact, within the same installment, Yǒngch'ae's body becomes determinant of much more than just her gender. When she relates that she was carried away by her attacker, Hyǒngsik wonders to himself, and tries to decide based on her physical appearance, whether she was raped at that juncture.

Hyǒngsik hoped that Yǒngch'ae's body had not been defiled by that bad man. Hyǒngsik looked carefully at Yǒngch'ae's face and body again. He knew that a woman's face and body changed after relations with a man. She seemed to be a virgin still, and yet seemed to have given her body to a man. Her shaped brows and the perfume from her body, moreover, did not seem to be those of a guileless virgin. (10)

If this reasoning sounds absurd, then it suggests the possibility of finding the logic of the argument over Yǒngch'ae's gender absurd as well. Hyǒngsik seems to be looking for some kind of unaffected bodily sign of Yǒngch'ae's virginity or lack thereof, but all he really relies on for judgment is perfume and plucked eyebrows—both changes applied to the body externally, and in this sense well within the realm of cross-dressing and gender performance. Whatever factors at his disposal, Hyǒngsik is ultimately unable to determine whether Yǒngch'ae is a virgin or not, just as the men at the inn cannot decide her gender. In both cases, the men view Yǒngch'ae's body with the assumption that it will reveal an identity or history that her clothing and

presentation might belie, but even as they acknowledge the potential fissures between the “real” body and its cross-dressed presentation, they rely only on these same potentially “false” externalities in making their determination of Yǒngch'ae's gender or sexual identity.

This same kind of ambivalence, the uncomfortable and sometimes violent reactions the characters have to Yǒngch'ae in drag when they cannot determine her gender on sight, appear also in moments of cross-dressing in the novel that are less directly related to gender. One such moment involving Yǒngch'ae is juxtaposed with her story of dressing as a boy on her way to Pyongyang. Before Yǒngch'ae launches into this narrative of her past, the narrative uncannily foreshadows this visual undecidability when Hyǒngsik's landlady describes Yǒngch'ae to Hyǒngsik: “She wore her hair like a student, but no matter how I looked at her, I could not help but feel that she looked like a *kisaeng*” (4).²⁹ Although the landlady seems certain that Yǒngch'ae is a *kisaeng* rather than a student, she does not offer any specific tip-off, visual or otherwise, that leads her to draw this conclusion. All of the usual indicators that would mark Yǒngch'ae as a *kisaeng*—such as clothing, hairstyle, and makeup—are presumably absent, but still she “[cannot] help but feel” that Yǒngch'ae is a *kisaeng*. It is tempting, then, to assume that it is some kind of non-visual cue that leads her to this conclusion, but the language is clear: “no matter how [she] looked at her,” Yǒngch'ae still “looked like” she was a *kisaeng* rather than the student she presents herself as. This statement operates according to the same strange logic employed by the man at the inn who suspects that Yǒngch'ae is a girl and by Hyǒngsik when he suspects that Yǒngch'ae is not a virgin. Both conclusions are drawn on the basis of what she looks like, even though her external image does not coincide with the inner identity being ferreted out. Rather than ignoring the deliberately misleading visual disguises that Yǒngch'ae wears and relying

29 Note that Sǒnhyǒng has already been marked as a student with the *hisashigami* hairstyle, setting up hairstyle as a code for determining certain identities. On the *hisashigami* as such a sign, see Kwǒn Podŭrae, *Yǒn 'ae ūi sidae*, 25–31.

instead on another sense or intuition, both the mens' and the landlady's assumptions are coded in terms of what they can literally see.

In fact, Hyöngsik relies on the same kind of logic yet again, just after he wonders to himself whether Yöngch'ae “looks like” a virgin. This time, he looks at her to determine whether she has continued to study since her childhood schooling and whether she is educated enough to become a proper wife.

Thus, he looked at Yöngch'ae's face again. Her bearing and the expression on her face did not seem to be those of a woman without education. Judging from her hands and clothes, moreover, she did not seem to have suffered hardship. She seemed to have lived in an upper-class family, and received higher education. Otherwise, she would not have been able to bear herself with such accustomed poise, or speak with such well-mannered and practiced ease. (12)

At least compared to Hyöngsik's attempt to visually determine the status of Yöngch'ae's virginity, the logic he follows here is easier to understand. It boils down to an association of education with the upper class, and draws its conclusion based on visual evidence that Yöngch'ae belongs to such a class. However, as in the case of Hyöngsik's musing on Yöngch'ae's virginity, that conclusion is revealed in the course of the story to be false. As we learn, Yöngch'ae is in fact a virgin, and has not in fact continued her education, much less lived with a wealthy family. In the context of the man at the inn and the landlady drawing correct conclusions about Yöngch'ae's invisible history or identity based on mysterious or non-existent visual evidence, Hyöngsik's errant conclusions only emphasize the fallibility or absurdity of such visible clues. The gap between external presentation and internal truth is both denied (by the characters' ability to see through Yöngch'ae's disguises) and confirmed (by Hyöngsik's bumbling inability to do the same). The exploitation of this gap in this manner makes it difficult for the reader to determine what Yöngch'ae looks like, what visual signs she is presenting consciously or unconsciously, and

how if at all they are connected to what Yǒngch'ae “really” is, in terms of gender, class, occupation, or other potential markers.

One such marker that is also subjected to this gap between presentation and actuality is ethnicity. In fact, the best example of ethnic “cross-dressing” in the novel is juxtaposed with yet another instance of Yǒngch'ae's cross-dressing as a student. On her way to Pyongyang to end her life, Yǒngch'ae once again dresses and styles her hair in the manner of a student. On the train, she meets Pyǒng-uk, a Korean woman on break from studying in Tokyo. Kwǒn Podūrae discusses this meeting in terms of their mutual “misrecognition”: Pyǒng-uk assumes that Yǒngch'ae is a student and asks her if she is also on break, whereas Yǒngch'ae wonders to herself “how a Japanese woman could speak Korean so well” (88). According to Kwǒn, this misrecognition occurs because “Yǒngch'ae and Pyǒng-uk meet when both of their clothes are functioning as false signs [chal mot toen kiho].”³⁰ In other words, both women are engaging in a form of cross-dressing. Moreover, the “misrecognition” that Kwǒn describes is an indication that their cross-dressing has resulted in successful passing, whereas Yǒngch'ae's previous attempts to pass as a boy or a student have met with suspicion and ultimately recognition.

In this case, Yǒngch'ae reveals of her own accord that she is not a student without Pyǒng-uk ever suspecting as much. On the other hand, Yǒngch'ae immediately corrects her own misrecognition of Pyǒng-uk as Japanese without any hint from the latter: “[Pyǒng-uk] spoke Korean so well that Yǒngch'ae realized she must be a Korean woman studying in Japan” (88). The possibility of Yǒngch'ae's initial misapprehension and immediate correction is consistent with other examples of ethnic coding on clothing in the novel. As noted above, readers are trained to recognize the *hisashigami* hairstyle as code for student in the case of Sǒnhyǒng, only to see that code garbled when Yǒngch'ae (decidedly not a student) appears with the same

30 Ibid., 31.

hairstyle. In the same way, readers are taught prior to encountering Pyŏng-uk in Japanese clothing that different ethnic styles of dress can be read as codes for the (political, if not necessarily ethnic) identities of their wearers. Yŏngch'ae's father, for instance, is first introduced as an early adopter of Western clothing by way of succinctly establishing his political position: “Scholar Pak . . . cut his hair short and put on black clothes, and he had his two sons do the same. At the time, cutting one's hair and wearing black clothing was a very courageous decision. It symbolized the shattering of established customs that had been followed for over four thousand years, and adopting completely new ways” (5). It is clear from the text that Pak's choice of clothing and hairstyle fix him in a particular political position, and from the context—Pak changes his look in response to a “new movement” that most likely refers to burgeoning cultural nationalism at the time³¹—that its politics are ethnic or national. In other words, they represent a choice, though not necessarily of whether to be Korean, but rather of how to be Korean in the face of impending colonization.

In a sense, then, Pak's act is also a form of cross-dressing. He wears clothing at odds with expectations for what a *yangban* in his position should wear, expectations that have been in place “for over four thousand years” (5). The text certainly never implies that Pak ceases to be Korean due to his dress, nor even that Pak was ever assumed to be anything other than Korean. However, this is still consistent with the entire logic of cross-dressing that is set up in the novel. Clothing and hairstyle—everything from the girl student's *hisashigami* to the Western suit and tie—are used in the novel to code identities and positions, but only in a way that allows for a gap between the external codes and the inner truth, as we see through Yŏngch'ae's failure to hide her true

31 See Lee, *Yi Kwangsu and Modern Korean Literature*, 88, n23.

gender. In this case, Scholar Pak may change his dress, but he remains immutably Korean either way.³²

Unlike Scholar Pak, Pyŏng-uk is misidentified when she engages in ethnic cross-dressing, but as noted above, the confusion is quickly cleared up, and her inner Korean identity reaffirmed. This time, rather than the kind of mysterious essence or visual sign that exposes Yŏngch'ae to the men at the inn or the landlady, it is language that reveals Pyŏng-uk's true ethnic identity. Still, the connection of Pyŏng-uk's identity to the language she uses takes on a similar structure to that configuring the relationship of identity to its presentation in the form of clothing and hairstyle. That is, the text establishes language use as a more or less unquestioned sign that indicates to Yŏngch'ae that Pyŏng-uk is not Japanese but in fact Korean, but at the same time allows the misrecognition to occur despite Pyŏng-uk's use of the Korean language from the outset. As with Yŏngch'ae's body, Pyŏng-uk's Korean language use is simultaneously insufficient and sufficient to reveal her true identity beneath her cross-dressed costume. Even if, in this case, language is a layer beneath clothing en route to a true, inner identity (which is always absent or empty, or which never exists apart from moments of affirmation or disavowal of the outward signs it presents to others), it still exists within the same gap between inner and outer that allows for simultaneous confusion and certainty concerning identity.

Such linguistic cross-dressing presents itself in *Mujŏng* not only in terms of language use, but also in terms of naming. Characters “wear” names other than their own in order to take on roles, identities, and positions that differ from their own, though again, it goes without saying that the original names and identities of these characters are no less performative than their false counterparts. In Pyŏng-uk's case, her choice of name is linked explicitly to perceived masculinity

32 Note that this is also a time-traveling cross-dressing. Pak establishes himself not only as a different kind of national subject, but also as an occupant of a different temporal period.

versus femininity. Here is the first mention of Pyŏng-uk's name, appearing after she has already comforted Yŏngch'ae on the train and insisted on taking her to her parents' home:

The woman student's name was Pyŏng-uk. According to Pyŏng-uk, her name had been Pyŏng-ok at first, but she had changed it to Pyŏng-mok because she thought Pyŏng-ok seemed too soft and feminine. “Pyŏng-mok,” though, was a bit too strong and masculine, so she made her name Pyŏng-uk instead, which seemed to be somewhere in between the other two names.

“Pyŏng-uk is a lonely name, isn't it?” she said to Yŏngch'ae once. “I don't want to have to be quiet and soft as required of women by traditional thought. Nor do I want to be quite as strong and stiff as a man either. I think somewhere in between is just right.”

“Yŏngch'ae,” she said smiling. “Yŏngch'ae. That is a pretty name.” At home, though, she was called Pyŏng-ok, not Pyŏng-uk. She would still answer when they called her by the name Pyŏng-ok. (91)

This passage provides an excellent illustration of how gender norms function in general. It is especially clear in English translation, for a reader without any knowledge of the underlying Korean or the Chinese characters from which these names are derived, that there cannot possibly be anything masculine or feminine about these sets of sounds. “Pyŏng-ok” and “Pyŏng-mok” can obviously only become feminine and masculine respectively within an already extant system of signs and values. Of course, in the time and place of *Mujŏng*'s initial publication, the femininity and masculinity of the names would have seemed more obvious or even natural, but the character “ok” (玉) is no more immutably tied to the notion of femininity than the sound “ok” is bound inextricably to the Chinese character or meaning behind it. Both signs can only be interpreted within an existing code of gender norms or language—they are literally just discourse.

Furthermore, in the translation of the novel's text, which represents the name in *hangŭl*, which in turn represents a set of Chinese characters (either imagined in the minds of readers with Chinese literacy, and likely written down by Yi Kwangsu in his original mixed-script draft of the novel), as well as in Pyŏng-uk's multiple name substitutions, we can see the same kind of layering of signs that occurs in cross-dressing. What is worn externally may or may not match

the layer beneath—the body, in the case of literal cross-dressing—but in the end, that inner layer is itself already a sign substituting, in a sense, for an essence that can never be present. These layers of representation with no fixed core may be a functional metaphor for identity. Pyŏng-uk is free in some sense to choose her name, and she switches among several options before landing on Pyŏng-uk, which she seems to feel best represents her identity. Nevertheless, she cannot escape her original name, Pyŏng-ok, which was chosen for her by others. When she is at home, her relatives still insist on the name they gave her rather than the one she has given herself. Hence, as with cross-dressing, the success of Pyŏng-uk's at renaming depends on the spaces she occupies and the others with whom she interacts. The difference between her successful passing as Pyŏng-uk outside the home and the restriction of her name choice inside her home has less to do with any potential gap between the label “Pyŏng-uk” and the characteristics of the real person it represents (which, again, is mediated by never-ending layers of signs) than with the willingness of her interlocutors to accept the identity she presents.

Yet, if the space a given subject occupies determines the possibilities for the representation of her identity, then it is also true that the subject's identity and its (re)presentation also determine which spaces it is possible for her to occupy. This becomes clear when we look at Yŏngch'ae's renaming, from Pak Yŏngch'ae, her given name, to Kye Wŏrhyang, the name she uses in her career as a *kisaeng*. As with Pyŏng-uk, Yŏngch'ae goes by Yŏngch'ae or Wŏrhyang depending on where she is and who shares the space. She is known as Wŏrhyang in the *kisaeng* house that owns her and among the men who visit her in that capacity, but is known as Yŏngch'ae to Hyŏngsik. Sin Usŏn is perhaps the only character who knows her substantially as both, and his reaction to her multiple identities is telling.

Yŏngch'ae is a good woman after all, he thought. He began to respect her, and felt ashamed of having tried to seduce her. He was unaware, however, of any contradictions

in his way of thinking. When Yǒngch'ae was the *kisaeng* Wǒrhyang, Usǒn thought it was all right for her to lose her virginity, but when he realized that Wǒrhyang was Yǒngch'ae, he thought she should remain chaste. (53)

By becoming Wǒrhyang, Yǒngch'ae excludes herself from the very spaces that decent women can occupy, even though, as the narrator points out, this logic is inherently contradictory. The inner Yǒngch'ae/Wǒrhyang is obviously the same person, insofar as she exists apart from her name(s), but the simple attachment of another label, the presentation of another identity, creates a whole new set of standards and possibilities for her. In the most extreme example, the cold reaction of the old woman who owns Yǒngch'ae suggests that Wǒrhyang, as her property, is unrapeable, but as soon as she is presented as Yǒngch'ae in the reading of her suicide letter, the old woman feels “ashamed, and sorry towards Yǒngch'ae’s inner being” (52). Wǒrhyang's rape is a matter of course, whereas Yǒngch'ae's is a tragedy.

However, there is some question of which, between Yǒngch'ae and Wǒrhyang, is the “inner being,” the “real” person represented by both names. She puts on the name Wǒrhyang like a costume when she enters the world of *kisaeng*, but unlike a costume, her identity as *kisaeng*, and Wǒrhyang specifically, is not so easy to remove. Returning to Yǒngch'ae's presentation of herself as a student when she meets Hyǒngsik for the first time in the novel, we can see that in this case, it is Wǒrhyang the *kisaeng* who is the true self hidden under the student's costume—which is presented as a false Yǒngch'ae. Yǒngch'ae the student who goes to visit Hyǒngsik does not exist, and suspicions that she is actually Wǒrhyang the *kisaeng* turn out to be true. Yǒngch'ae is not cross-dressing as Wǒrhyang, but in fact it is the other way around.

It must be noted as well that this cross-dressing (and through it, successful passing) has high stakes for Yǒngch'ae/Wǒrhyang. It determines the very spaces she is able to move through safely. Kwǒn Podŭrae argues that Sǒnhyǒng's *hisashigami* hairstyle, which marks her as a girl

student, is what allows Hyöngsik to meet her face to face, because she is marked as a specific kind of woman not subject to the same restrictions that apply to Yöngch'ae as traditional woman or *kisaeng*.³³ When Yöngch'ae as Wörhyang puts her hair up in this way to meet Hyöngsik, reverse cross-dressing as Yöngch'ae, she may be banking on the same kind of permission that this identification grants to Sönhöng. More troubling, Kwön also notes that Yöngch'ae disguises herself as a student again on the train to Pyongyang, this time perhaps for safety, or to distance herself from her life as a *kisaeng*, with the rape fresh in her mind.³⁴ Hiding her true identity as a *kisaeng* allows Wörhyang to escape the unrapeable status assigned to her, and brings to mind her more standard cross-dressing as a boy to mitigate the risk of rape while she travels. The reader will remember, however, that neither attempt is successful. In the end, Hyöngsik and others who meet Yöngch'ae the student end up suspecting—albeit without any stated evidence—that she is really Kye Wörhyang. Neither Yöngch'ae nor Wörhyang has a complete claim to being the real woman beneath the presented label.

With this function of cross-dressing in mind, I would like to return to the issue of style in *Mujöng*, particularly the project of representing the novel in *hangül*. In the way that the novel's project of (re)presenting normative heterosexual relationships is disrupted by instances of cross-dressing, the project of pioneering a *hangül* style as normative modern vernacular is disrupted by occasional code-switching. The character Sin Usön is especially prone to mixing Japanese into his speech, which, when represented in *hangül*, queers the language of the text as a whole, not simply the linguistically hybrid lines spoken by Usön and other bilingual characters. That is, just as cross-dressing in its standard sense queers gender norms by exposing the lack of essence or substance beneath the performance of such norms, the transliteration of foreign words into

33 Kwön Podürae, *Yön'ae üi sidae*, 27–31.

34 *Ibid.*, 31.

hangŭl has the potential to expose the foreignness of even the Korean words the *hangŭl* is supposed to represent unproblematically.

To look at a concrete example, we need read no further than the first installment of *Mujŏng*, in which Usŏn mixes both English and Japanese into his speech as he converses with Hyŏngsik. These instances of code-switching are punctuated with dots that emphasize them for the reader in the manner of bold or italics in English print matter. In the first such instance, Usŏn addresses Hyŏngsik as “Mister Yi” (Misŭtŏ Ri).³⁵ This, like many of the moments in which Usŏn code-switches in conversation with Hyŏngsik, instantly places the two of them in a shared space. It establishes the two characters immediately as having a certain type of background, with enough education to have been exposed to English and Japanese—in this case, almost certainly an experience of study abroad in Japan. The attachment of this kind of language to Hyŏngsik as a term of address even *identifies* him as belonging to this particular kind of space, in the way that Yŏngch'ae/Wŏrhyang's names place her into different spaces.

Later in the installment, Usŏn starts to mix Japanese words into his speech. First, he reacts to Hyŏngsik's statement that he is on his way to meet a girl with the Japanese “omedetō,” transliterated into *hangŭl* as “omedettoo” and without a gloss explaining the meaning of the term. In this moment, the reader too is brought into the space that Usŏn and Hyŏngsik occupy through their shared knowledge of Japanese, assuming that the reader also has this knowledge.³⁶ Usŏn follows this congratulatory remark by commenting that the girl must be Hyŏngsik's betrothed, employing the Japanese term “iinazuke,” represented in *hangŭl* as “iinajŭk'e.” In this case, however, “iinajŭk'e” is followed by a parenthetical explanation of its meaning: “yakhonhan saram,” or, “person to whom one is engaged.” As we observed with Chapter 53, these

35 At the time of *Mujŏng*'s publication, the standard spelling for Hyŏngsik's surname was “Ri,” though in later versions of the text it is written as “Yi.” This is another case where the evolution of the Korean language is visible in *Mujŏng* and other texts written at this time.

36 Given the *Maeil shinbo*'s fairly small and elite readership, this is not an unfair assumption.

parentheses mark off a queer space that intervenes in the main text, disrupting the otherwise smooth vernacular representation with extra information not necessarily generated by the narrating voice. What we have here is an oral representation of the sounds of a Japanese word, glossed with semantic information in Korean. However, even as the parentheses attempt to separate the two into different spheres of labor—one oral, one semantic—they still share the same presentation in *hangŭl* signs, which carry both semantic and oral information at once.

The Japanese word and the Japanese characters that would typically represent it are covered over by *hangŭl* in the process of transliteration: a kind of linguistic cross-dressing. A word that is Japanese on the inside, ostensibly, is presented as Korean, at least in its appearance. As with other cases of cross-dressing in the novel, including more standard gender cross-dressing, that “inside” is at once concealed and in plain sight—in some cases even marked for emphasis. The *hangŭl* characters here are presented in the same fashion as Korean words, while never denying their non-Korean identity. How, then, do we view the Korean words that follow, still represented in *hangŭl*, within the parentheses? The “yakhon” in the explanation of the meaning is derived from a Chinese word, its foreign origins no less apparent to the presumably educated reader.

In fact, in this chapter we see native Korean, Sino-Korean (Chinese, Japanese), Japanese, and English words all represented in *hangŭl*. As with cross-dressing, their differences are still apparent to certain readers in certain spaces, and yet it is impossible to schematize such differences without prior knowledge independent of the text at hand and the strictly visual signs it has to offer—visual signs that flatten out the differences in question in the absence of such prior knowledge. In this way, the connection between a word and its visual representation becomes destabilized. As with Yŏngch'ae, who “looks like” a *kisaeng* despite having concealed

all visual signs that would indicate such an identity, the Japanese origin of the words transliterated in this chapter are hidden in plain sight. There is a presumed essence of the word beneath this visual representation, and yet, that essence can never present itself without such a visual sign. In terms of gender, this is performativity. The dressing of “other” signs in *hangŭl* transliteration, similarly to drag performances, parodically ruptures the link between presentation and identity, creating a queer space of non-identity in between.

2.3 Queer Time and Space in the Train

Finally, I want to turn to a discussion of space as one more arena that is queered in/by the language of *Mujŏng*. The novel ends with all of the central characters coincidentally convening on the same train. The train's terminal station is ambiguous, but also irrelevant: for all of the characters, pursuing study abroad in Tokyo or the United States, the ultimate destination cannot be reached by train. Better yet, the destination is not a literal space but rather a time—their own personal futures, as well as the Korea of the future that they will help build as its most privileged and educated subjects. At both the personal and national level, for the characters and for Korea at large, that future is reached via the West (in this case the United States), which is in turn reached via Japan. Unpacking the train's journey from rural Korea to Seoul and then on to even more civilized destinations reflects a journey through an imperial timeline, revealing the recursive structure of violence and colonization that renders each stop in the journey behind the stop that follows.³⁷

For readers of the novel, the train's journey begins in Hwangju, where Yŏngch'ae has been staying with Pyŏng-uk and her family, and is eventually invited to accompany Pyŏng-uk back to Tokyo to study. En route to its final destination (presumably Pusan, a port city with

37 For a discussion of this kind of imperialist organization of temporalities, see Stefan Tanaka, *New Times in Modern Japan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), especially “Prelude” (1-25).

connecting service to Japan), the train stops in Seoul, where Hyöngsik, Sönhhyöng, and Usön get on board. This chance meeting allows the central tension of the novel—the love triangle between Hyöngsik, Yöngch'ae, and Sönhhyöng—to come to a head. However, I will argue that this tension is never resolved. Instead, the characters' sexual desires are redirected toward a love for the nation.

This substitution of nation as the object of desire (perhaps better stated as “love”) is the last in a series of such substitutions set up in the novel. As we have seen, Wörhwa is substituted for Hyöngsik when Yöngch'ae finds that her desire for the latter cannot possibly be fulfilled under the conditions she faces. The central motivator of Yöngch'ae's life shifts from Hyöngsik to Wörhwa. Similarly, that motivator had previously shifted from Yöngch'ae's father himself to the figure of Hyöngsik, but again, only after it had become impossible to satisfy her father, due to his disapproval of her becoming a *kisaeng* and eventual death. What these substitutions amount to, then, is a series of patriarchs. Yöngch'ae's desire, motivation, or love always traces back to her father, even when it is queerly directed at Wörhwa. Her father orders her to love Hyöngsik, at least as she perceives his wishes, and, as noted above, it is this love for Hyöngsik that drives her, queerly, toward Wörhwa. Wörhwa dies, a relationship with Hyöngsik is assumed impossible, and Yöngch'ae searches in vain for a suitable target for her affections. This desire is directed toward Pyöng-uk and her sister-in-law, with whom Yöngch'ae also shares the same kind of skinship she did with Wörhwa: “That evening, the three of them slept together, side by side. Yöngch'ae could not fall asleep until later. She eventually fell asleep, though, and in her dreams she saw Wörhwa” (91). Here, her desire for these women is mapped onto her continued longing for Wörhwa.

Notably, Pyöng-uk seems to desire Yöngch'ae as well. Even from the moment they meet on the train, Pyöng-uk's gaze toward Yöngch'ae verges on erotic:

The woman [Pyöng-uk] looked at Yöngch'ae's glossy hair, the Korean hairpin ornamented with flowers that was in her chignon, her white neck, and back, and wondered who she was. From time to time, she would adjust the towel over Yöngch'ae's shoulders to keep it from slipping, and would tuck tendrils of hair behind Yöngch'ae's ear. ... She is young and adorable, the woman thought.” (87)

On the train at the end of the novel, the two reminisce about this scene, with Pyöng-uk telling Yöngch'ae, “You looked so pretty when you were crying. If I were a man, I would have been quite taken with you” (103). This line is telling in that, earlier in the novel, it would not have mattered, per se, whether Pyöng-uk “were a man.” Same-sex relationships, like the one between Yöngch'ae and Wörhwa, were treated with no greater alarm than those between partners of the opposite sex. This explanation for why a sexual relationship between Yöngch'ae and Pyöng-uk never comes to fruition is indicative of a shift in the logic of the novel toward heteronormativity.

That shift is evident also in the time that Yöngch'ae spends with Pyöng-uk's family. After she discovers she has feelings for Pyöng-uk's brother, and then acts on those feelings by embracing his wife, the narrative reports that “From then on, she began to long for men more and more” (94). This transition toward heterosexual desire even causes Yöngch'ae to revise the past:

She thought about men who had grabbed her by the wrist, men who had put their arm around her and drawn her into their embrace, men who had forced her to put her cheek against theirs, men who had tried to seduce her with lascivious looks, men who had threatened her with arrogant words. Those men had seemed to be her enemies, and had seemed hateful, yet gave her an indescribable sensation of warmth. She remembered with exhilaration the touch of a man's flesh against hers. She wished she had a man at her side just then. She wanted to give her hand to hold to any man who asked, and let herself be embraced. (94)

Here Yöngch'ae comes to accept the rape culture that previously saw her defiant and spewing blood. It is no coincidence that this acceptance is immediately followed by a description of Yöngch'ae's awakening as a “human being.” Perhaps this is meant to demonstrate growth on her part, but again, I would argue that instead it represents a shift in the logic of the novel toward an unquestioned acceptance of heteronormative values and a foreclosure of queer possibilities. In

this way, Yŏngch'ae's queer desire, having substituted previously for a foreclosed opposite-sex desire, is itself precluded, and another substitution becomes necessary. This shift toward heteronormative logic goes hand in hand with the establishment of a modern nation, and thus at the very same moment that logic becomes dominant, the nation is there, available to take over as the central object of desire.

This substitution of service to the nation for romantic love is a phenomenon observed by Yi Hyeryŏng in her work on sexuality and early modern Korean literature. As she describes it, the journey to becoming a properly modern subject involves a transition from the base sexual desire of the lower class to an enlightened passion for a “higher cause,” which is always configured by the nation.³⁸ *Mujŏng* hints at this logic in a number of places, such as in Pyŏng-uk's speech convincing Yŏngch'ae to live. When she argues that Yŏngch'ae has much more to live for than potential marriage to Hyŏngsik, she evokes the “tongp'o,” other members of her race or nation, as the correct object of Yŏngch'ae's loyalty and life service: “You were not born only for the sake of your father and Mr. Yi. You were born for the tens of millions of Koreans of past generations, our 1.6 billion fellow countrymen [*tongp'o*] in the present, and the tens of millions of our descendants in future generations” (90). On the train as the novel is drawing to a close, this logic is in full force, even as the love triangle that has motivated the novel to this point is coming to a climax through the coincidental meeting of its three nodes. Yŏngch'ae and Sŏnhyŏng finally meet, albeit not yet aware of each others' identities and relationships to Hyŏngsik, but it is not romance that they discuss: “The three young women talked of how they would all study diligently and, sometime in their future, join together to enlighten the Korean women's world” (105). Which one of them will ultimately win Hyŏngsik's affection is no longer

38 Yi Hyeryŏng, “Shingminjuŏi ūi naemyŏnhwa,” 275.

the central issue of the novel; instead, they will become allies in the quest to modernize the nation.

This is especially clear when Hyöngsik comes to his own realization about his love for Yöngch'ae and Sönhhyöng. He determines that his love is immature and not properly civilized, rhetorically asking himself, “Is my love any different from that commonly felt by men who are infatuated with the looks of beautiful women such as *kisaeng*? Could I say after all that my love is a love baptized by civilization and one that involves all of my character?” (114). This again falls into the pattern Yi Hyeryöng points out, wherein the intellectual must overcome his carnal desire and replace it with fervor for the nation.³⁹ In the process, sexual desire is marked as uncivilized, and those who engage in it are othered, which enables the intellectual to establish himself as modern against the foil of these other, uncivilized desiring subjects. What complicates the matter in this case is that, as we have seen, *Mujöng* establishes heteronormative “enlightened” desire as a condition for modern subjectivity. Thus, Hyöngsik must simultaneously disavow his desire for Sönhhyöng and redirect it toward the nation, but also embrace it as that which enables his enlightenment in the first place. Indeed, just after this realization, Hyöngsik implicitly identifies this lack of emotional development as the hindrance that has prevented his proper service to Korea: “I thought I knew the road that Korea should take, he thought. I thought I had a firm grasp of the ideals that Korean people and Korean educators should have. However, this too was nothing more than childish thinking” (115). When becoming adult enough to serve Korea requires both sexual desire and its disavowal, the possible spaces for identifying as modern Korean subject are foreclosed—the same type of foreclosure that eliminates all possibilities for Yöngch'ae to identify as a sexual subject and necessitates her queer escape.

39 Kim Haengsuk similarly discusses the possibility of human emotion, so central to Yi Kwangsu's notion of modern subjectivity, being targeted at the state rather than occurring only between friends, family, or lovers. Kim Haengsuk, “Yi Kwangsu ūi kamjöngnon,” *Sanghō Hakbo* 33 (October 2011): 94–95.

What Hyōngsik's predicament requires is a queering of time and space, a queering of the center-periphery geographies of the empire that constitute the civilized versus backwards temporal distinction excluding colonial subjects from modernity. This is what happens as the train moves through the final installments of the novel. In the space of the moving train, the referent of the nation, or even the Korea, that Hyōngsik is supposed to serve becomes unmoored. Even the peninsular space they are traveling through is no longer exactly Korea due to its incorporation into the space of the empire, a fact of which the reader is constantly reminded in these final chapters. Japanese passengers (or at least cross-dressers presented as such) occupy the train, even outnumbering those “wearing white clothes” (104). Announcements are made in Japanese as well, establishing Japanese as the official language of this space, and Usōn offers more instances of code-switching, crossing the linguistic boundaries that map spaces and subjects into hierarchical relationships.

This mechanism is strangest when the train finally stops due to flooding in Samnangjin, a rural location to the southeast of Seoul, presumably en route to the port that will take them to Japan. Here, where the people are most helpless and in need of the civilizing or enlightening project the characters are undertaking, we see the greatest concentration of Japanese influence. Pyōng-uk and Yōngch'ae step off the train and into an inn where they are greeted with “Irasshai” by the “bantō” and taken to an eight-mat *tatami* room (119). This contradictory situation, the presence of the colonizer in a space so removed from the centers of civilization, reflects the strange space of the empire, but also highlights the ambiguity of the nation that these characters must serve. Within this same arc, the narrator remarks that the people of this area are so destitute that if they are allowed to remain in their current condition they may even become as hopeless as the Ainu. Perhaps this gratuitous put-down of the Ainu is meant to establish at least a baseline

level of civilization for rural Koreans by comparison, but at the same time it places them alongside the Ainu on the fringes of the same imperial nation. This rural town is suddenly part of a space much larger than Korea, suggesting the possibility that the referent of the nation is in fact the empire. Perhaps a colonizer-colonized or civilizer-uncivilized binary is operable, but it does not map clearly onto a coherent “Japan” and “Korea.”

In this way, the future that the train is bound for is both Korean and non-Korean. It is the “new Korea” that the main characters will build, but that new Korea only comes via Japan and ultimately the West—it is necessarily not the Korea of the past. Moreover, in the imperial context, the possibility of a future Korea independent of Japan is foreclosed.⁴⁰ Imperial temporalities already trap the colonized Korea perpetually in the past, not to mention the irreversible admixture of Japanese and Korean culture and language to which *Mujǒng* itself is a testament. Even absent this project of cultural genocide, it is clear from the text of *Mujǒng* with its concealed Chinese compounds concealing Japanese translations concealing Western terms that any Korea of the future must carry with it, in its core, the effects of hybridity. An unmolested Korea is discovered only in the process of its colonization when it is already too late, when its existence as such is shunted always into the past. The empire closes off all possible times and spaces in which an independent and fully-formed modern Korea, or Korean identity, could exist.

The narrative's response to this impossibility is, in the end, to queer. If modernity cannot be achieved, then the timeline that produces it must be queered. The final installment of the novel, in which the narrative shifts to the present tense, picks up some years after the previous installment, which never actually sees the characters make it to their destination—not even to the end of the line for the train where they will board a boat out of Korea. In a sense, the novel

40 For a detailed exploration of the consequences of this “disappearing future,” see Janet Poole, *When the Future Disappears: The Modernist Imagination in Late Colonial Korea* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

never ends, but instead remains forever in the fluctuating space-time of the train that moves both toward and away from the modern. In another sense, the novel ends in the time of the final installment, which is both present and future. The narrator speaks in the present tense, but describes the Korean future that the characters themselves can never reach on the train or through any means available to them. The narrative gap acts as a means of conveyance to a place that never existed, and the collapse of present and future in the last installment conjures a paradoxical space that enables the Korea of the future to be.

This collapse is brought home in the final lines of the chapter:
 The world will not stay dark and cruel [*mujǒng*] throughout our lifetime. Through our own strength, we will make the world brighter, more loving, more joyful, more prosperous, and stronger. And now, with happy smiles, and cries of “Manse” [long life!], let us bring to a close this novel, *Mujǒng*, which mourns for a world of the past. (126)

The queerness of this ending arises from its characterization of the novel's project as a “mourning for a world of the past” in the context of an entire chapter gushing with bright hopes for the future. At the very end, the impossible future is collapsed not only into the present, but also the past. “Manse,” which we can imagine referring to an elided “Chosŏn” or perhaps even to the empire, calls for this present to extend forever into the future, but is here put into the service of its antithesis, a mourning for what is lost. Even if the characters within the novel are years beyond, we are still in the trans-time and trans-space of the train, its vectors pointing at both past and future, its present, location, and identity always a queer unknown.

Chapter 3. The Problem of Minjok: Ch'ae Mansik Before and After Liberation

In the first two lines of a study of Ch'ae Mansik (1902-1950) and his satirical fiction, Yi Hwajin sums up succinctly but accurately Ch'ae's position within modern Korean literary history: “Ch’ae Mansik occupies an extremely important position in the history of Korean fiction. At the same time, he is also in many respects a ‘problematic writer’ [*munje chakka*].”¹ Yi shares with most contemporary critics of Ch'ae's work an anxiety about how to view the author's career and its relationship to Korean literature and society in the first half of the twentieth century (as well as later decades), simultaneously enunciating Ch'ae's importance to the trajectory of modern Korean fiction and acknowledging a sort of qualm about his straightforward inclusion in the canon. To be sure, Ch'ae Mansik belongs, but only in a way that is “problematic.”

In the same way, Ch'ae's short story “Minjok ūi choein” (Sinner Against the Nation, 1948-49),² a work that ostensibly treats the author's own experiences in the final years of Japanese colonization of the Korean peninsula (ending in 1945) and expresses his guilt for collaborating with the Japanese, is considered at the same time both central to understanding the arc of the author's career and somehow exceptional, transitional, or otherwise non-representative of Ch'ae's work as a whole. This anxiety about Ch'ae's pivotal story manifests itself in precisely the same manner as the anxiety produced by the author himself, in referring to the story as a “problematic work [*munje chakp'um*].” For example, Pak Sangjun begins an article on “Minjok

1 Yi Hwajin, “Ch’ae Mansik p’ungja sosŏl ūi sŏnggyŏk chaeron,” *Kukje ōmun* 30 (April 2004): 247.

2 First published in *Paengmin* 15-16 (October 1948, January 1949). I refer to Ch’ae Mansik, “Minjok ūi choein,” in *T’aep’yŏng ch’ŏnha oe* (Seoul: Tonga Ch’ulp’ansa, 1995), 510–560. The title of the story could be rendered into English in any number of ways, including “National Sinner,” “National Criminal,” “Sinner Against the People,” “Sinner Against the Ethnicity,” and so on. How to interpret the title is inextricably linked to one's interpretation of the story itself, and both will be at issue here. Here, I have translated the title in keeping with the most “standard” reading of the story, but will refer to it hereafter by its Korean title, or abbreviate it “Minjok.” The various possibilities for interpreting the title will be discussed in more depth later.

ŭi choein” in exactly the same way that Yi Hwajin prefaces his study on Ch'ae's work as a whole: “Ch'ae Mansik's 'Minjok ŭi choein' is a problematic work [*munjejōgin chakp'um*].”³ The *obi* band around the book jacket for the volume that contains the Japanese translation of the story, *Taihei tenka* (Peace Under Heaven; Korean: *T'aep'yōng ch'ōnha*), markets the title novel as “a masterpiece of satirical literature [*fūshi bungaku no kessaku*],” and notes the book's further inclusion of the “representative work [*daihyōsaku*] 'Redimeido jinsei' [A Ready-Made Life; Korean: Redimeidū insaeng]” and the “problematic work [*mondaisaku*] 'Minzoku no zainin' [Minjok ŭi choein].”⁴ This distinction not only sets the latter story apart as a work that is not necessarily “representative,” but also acts as a frame that informs our reading of the story, cautioning that the piece cannot be read straightforwardly, or more specifically, cannot be trusted to “represent.”

One could reasonably ask whether Ch'ae's “masterpiece” or “representative works” might not require similar caution, but perhaps a more immediate task is to unpack the textual and extratextual factors that contribute to the categorization of “Minjok ŭi choein” as a problematic work, and Ch'ae Mansik as a problematic author. In other words, what or whom is Ch'ae Mansik or “Minjok ŭi choein” a problem *for*, and how or why are other authors or texts unproblematically accommodated by the same?

To begin to answer these questions, it is necessary to consider the historical moment in which the work was published, and the politics of the “liberation space” [*haebang konggan*], the turbulent years immediately following the liberation of the peninsula and leading up to the outbreak of the Korean War. Standard narratives of this moment in Korean literary history regard it as a turning point at which writers and other intellectuals were required to reflect on the

3 Pak Sangjun, “‘Minjok ŭi choein’ kwa kobaek ŭi chōllyak,” *Hanguk hyōndae munhak yōngu* 27 (April 2009): 278.

4 See Figure 1. Ch'ae Mansik, *Taihei Tenka*, trans. Hotei Toshihiro and Kumaki Tsutomu, Chōsen Kindai Bungaku Senshū 4 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2009).

colonial past (including their own actions, or failures to act), working to understand the mistakes of the past, to thoroughly decolonize both their own minds and society at large, and finally, empowered with this knowledge and freedom, to turn toward building a new nation-state. Ch'ae Mansik takes part in this process by confessing his own misdeeds in “Minjok ūi choein,” and then turning his energies toward satirical stories that pointed out the faults in liberated Korean society—or so the story goes.

However, recent critics of “Minjok ūi choein” have begun to trouble this narrative. These troubles seem to stem from two main questions surrounding “Minjok ūi choein.” First, does the story actually represent a proper reflection [*pansǒng*] on the past? Is it adequately self-critical to atone for the sins of collaboration,⁵ or is it merely a self-righteous attempt to justify [*pyǒnmyǒng*] the author's actions? Second, and with greater implications, does the story perform its atonement (or possibly justification) sufficiently for the author to recover his identity [*chǒngch'esǒng*] as a modern Korean subject, such that he can take up the task of rebuilding the liberated Korean nation? In fact, insofar as “Minjok ūi choein” is a rare example of this kind of retrospective look at the colonial period and the role of intellectuals in colonized Korean society, in many cases what is at stake is not only the recovery of Ch'ae's identity, but also the recovery of Korean identity on the part of the nation itself.⁶

Already, there is ample room to ask whether this—the (re)construction of a national identity—is an undue burden to place on a single short story. I am less interested in arguing the

5 The categorization of the actions outlined in “Minjok ūi choein”—for example, writing stories and articles in support of war mobilization, or giving speeches demonizing the American and British forces—is itself a complicated enterprise. Would these and other “sins” committed by colonial writers and intellectuals be better called failure to resist? Is the binary of collaboration versus resistance simply inadequate to describe such a complicated situation? Is there potentially a better term, like “accommodation”? For a discussion of these and other issues surrounding the retrospective application of the term “collaboration,” see Yumi Moon, *Populist Collaborators: The Ilchinhoe and the Japanese Colonization of Korea, 1896-1910* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2013), 1–21.

6 Other than “Minjok ūi choein,” the most prominent example of this kind of writing is Yi T'aejun's “Haebang chǒnhu” (Before and After Liberation, 1946).

fairness or unfairness of such a burden, however, than in probing the discursive causes of its placement. Why must the labor of recovering identity be performed by this work, at this time, by this author? What are the implications of its failure or success in this labor? At what point in this process, and for what reason, does the work become a “problem”? And what possibilities for reading the text are opened up by the removal of this burden (itself a highly problematic proposition)? In order to gesture toward possible answers to these and other questions surrounding “Minjok ūi choein,” I propose in this chapter a reading of the work as neither transitional nor exceptional, but as problematic in a wholly different sense; that is, I read “Minjok ūi choein” as a satire, in the mode of Ch'ae Mansik's “representative” works.

I do so in full recognition that such a reading is not merely problematic, but perhaps impossible. Rather than attempting to prove the validity of one interpretation of the text or another, I am primarily interested in probing the specific historical, political, discursive conditions that foreclose the possibility of a satirical reading of “Minjok ūi choein,” even as its author is otherwise noted almost exclusively for his work as a satirist. I argue that it is precisely the consideration of “Minjok ūi choein” in the context of this foreclosure that allows for a better understanding of the place of both the work and its writer in Korean (literary) history, and all of the “problems” they entail. Thus, this chapter will not attempt to solve the problem of “Minjok ūi choein,” but rather to embrace it.

3.1 Reading Ch'ae Mansik

Scholars of Korean literature have written volumes about the work of Ch'ae Mansik, and more or less unanimously place him among the most important writers of the first half of the twentieth century. Ch'ae, who worked as a journalist for many years after his literary debut in 1923, turned his focus toward writing beginning in the mid-1930s, and wrote prolifically over the course of a

career that extended from the colonial period through the end of the liberation space. Over that span, he wrote hundreds of works of fiction, drama, and criticism; his complete works, published in 1989, fill ten volumes.⁷ Writing in the appendices of that collection, Yi Chuhyŏng offers a typical evaluation of Ch'ae's talent and status as a historical figure: “When the volume of work he produced, his intensely curious mind—with regard to his nation, its history, and the universal human experience—and his multifaceted experiments with literary genres and techniques are all taken into account, Ch'ae Mansik can be considered an author who represents one of the highest peaks in the history of modern Korean literature.”⁸ In English, as well, Ch'ae's works are well-represented in collections of modern Korean fiction in translation, and are evaluated in a similarly praiseworthy fashion.⁹ Bruce Fulton, for example, calls Ch'ae “one of the great talents of modern Korean literature,” with “a fictional style all his own.”¹⁰

If critics agree on Ch'ae Mansik's stature, however, there is much less consensus on where exactly to place Ch'ae within the trajectory of modern Korean literary history, or among the various literary and political movements to which his contemporaries belonged. Though Ch'ae sympathized with writers of proletarian literature, he was never a member of the Korean Proletarian Artists' Federation (KAPF),¹¹ but neither did he align himself with the modernist writers of the *Kuinhoe*, or “Circle of Nine,” despite being noted for his pioneering efforts in the

7 Ch'ae Mansik, *Ch'ae Mansik chŏnjip*, 10 vols. (Seoul: Ch'angjak kwa Pip'yŏngsa, 1989).

8 Yi Chuhyŏng, “Ch'ae Mansik ūi saengae wa chakp'um segye,” in *Ch'ae Mansik chŏnjip*, vol. 10 (Seoul: Ch'angjak kwa Pip'yŏngsa, 1989), 618.

9 See, for instance, Ch'ae Mansik [Mansik], “My Innocent Uncle,” in *Modern Korean Fiction: An Anthology*, ed. Bruce Fulton and Youngmin Kwon (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 95–112; Ch'ae Man-shik [Mansik], “A Ready-Made Life,” in *A Ready-Made Life: Early Masters of Modern Korean Fiction*, ed. Kim Chong-un and Bruce Fulton (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1998), 55–80; Ch'ae Mansik [Mansik], “The Wife and Children,” in *Land of Exile: Contemporary Korean Fiction*, ed. Marshall Pihl and Bruce and Ju-Chan Fulton (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1993), 3–14. Ch'ae's stories also appear in the ten-volume UNESCO series of representative works of Korean literature, and in Jimoondang's Portable Library of Korean Literature.

10 Kim Chong-un and Bruce Fulton, “Ch'ae Man-Shik,” in *A Ready-Made Life: Early Masters of Modern Korean Fiction* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1998), 55.

11 Bruce Fulton and Youngmin Kwon, “Introduction,” in *Modern Korean Fiction: An Anthology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), xiv.

realm of literary style.¹² Kwŏn Yŏngmin groups Ch'ae with both writers like Yŏm Sangsŏp (realist) and Pak T'aewŏn (modernist), who developed new ways of depicting everyday life in fiction in the 1930s in the wake of KAPF's disbandment and increased censorship of overtly ideological writing, but also with authors who critiqued contemporary society through satire and other forms of humor, such as Kim Yujŏng and Yu Chino.¹³ Lee Namho, et al. echo Kwŏn's characterization of Ch'ae as satirist and pioneer of realist fiction, but also group him with writers who took up similar thematic material, such as the urban environment, or the multi-generational family in a modernizing Korea.¹⁴

Although Ch'ae Mansik is certainly most noted for his works of critical satire, not everyone agrees that these stories can sufficiently represent his oeuvre. For example, Bruce Fulton and Kim Chong-un take issue with this point of view, arguing that Ch'ae is “pigeonholed as a satirist” and pointing to several works of his that do not fit this pattern, including his debut work, “Age of Transition” (Kwadogi, 1923), “an autobiographical novella about Korean students in Japan testing the currents of modernization.”¹⁵ Pang Minhŏ, in his reevaluation of late colonial period works usually dismissed as pro-military propaganda, draws attention to even further examples of Ch'ae's departure from the mode of satire, examining works that experiment with the so-called “I-novel” (*shishōsetsu/sasosŏl*) form, and works written (at least on the surface) in support of the Japanese war effort.¹⁶ It is likely this latter type of story that presents the single

12 Christopher Hanscom points out that while these two groups (KAPF and the Kuinhoe) are typically treated as polar opposites in Korean literary histories, there was actually a good deal of overlap between the two. He argues effectively that the distinction between realism and modernism emphasized by these groupings is actually a false dichotomy—modernism does not preclude a concern with the “real.” See Christopher Hanscom, *The Real Modern: Literary Modernism and the Crisis of Representation in Colonial Korea* (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Asia Center (Distributed by Harvard University Press), 2013), especially 7-15.

13 Kwŏn Yŏngmin, “Early Twentieth-Century Fiction by Men,” in *A History of Korean Literature*, ed. Peter H. Lee (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 399–400, 403–404.

14 Lee Namho et al., *Twentieth Century Korean Literature*, ed. Brother Anthony of Taizé, trans. Youngju Ryu (Norwalk, CT: EastBridge, 2005), 7, 17–20.

15 Kim Chong-un and Fulton, “Ch’ae Man-Shik,” 55.

16 Pang Minhŏ, “Ilje malgi munhagindŭl ūi taeil hyŏmnyŏk yuhyŏng kwa ūimi,” *Hanguk hyŏndae munhak yŏngu* 22 (August 2007): 231–279.

most pressing problem in assessing Ch'ae Mansik's place in the literary history of Korea: how can his status as an acknowledged *ch'in-il* (pro-Japanese collaborator) writer be reconciled with standard portrayals of Ch'ae as a tenacious critic of colonial society and one of the pillars of modern Korean literature?

Scholars continue to attempt to answer this question—or to raise it anew—from a number of different angles, but many of these projects revolve around a single story: “Minjok ūi choein.” If Ch'ae Mansik's position in the history of modern Korean literature is difficult to locate precisely, then “Minjok ūi choein” is equally difficult to fit into standard narratives of Ch'ae's career as a writer. It is viewed as exceptional, standing apart from those works written in Ch'ae's usual satirical mode and instead taking the form of an autobiographical record of the author's actions during the latter years of the colonial period, and functioning either as a self-critical atonement for sins committed, or as a justification for perceived shortcomings. More importantly, however, it is viewed as a turning point in Ch'ae's career: only by dealing with his collaborationist actions (whether through apology or atonement) could he overcome that temporary blemish on his record and turn his critical eye once again toward society at large in his works of satire penned in the liberation space. Thus, even as “Minjok ūi choein” is presented as exceptional—perhaps Ch'ae's only non-satirical story worth mentioning—it is the self-criticism carried out in “Minjok ūi choein” that enables Ch'ae to make use of satire again after liberation.¹⁷

17 This pattern is apparent in examples of modern Korean literary histories by both Kwōn Yōngmin and Lee Namho, et al., both of which present *T'angnyu* (Muddy Waters, 1937) and *T'aep'yōng ch'ōnha* (Peace under Heaven, 1938) as Ch'ae's major works, and mention “Redimeidū insaeng” (A Ready-Made Life, 1934) and “Ch'isuk” (My Idiot Uncle, 1938) as other noteworthy colonial period satires. Both go on to discuss “Minjok ūi choein” as Ch'ae's work of reflection on the failure of colonial period intellectuals to actively resist, then list “Maeng sunsa” (Constable Maeng, 1946), “Misūt'ō Pang” (Mister Pang, 1946; cited by Kwōn), and Non iyagi (Once upon a Paddy, 1946; cited by Lee et. al.) as examples of Ch'ae's turn back toward satire post-liberation. See Kwōn Yōngmin, “Early Twentieth-Century Fiction by Men,” 400, 403; Kwōn Yōngmin, “Late Twentieth-Century Fiction by Men,” in *A History of Korean Literature*, ed. Peter H. Lee (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 469; Lee Namho et al., *Twentieth Century Korean Literature*, 20–23.

Cho Ch'anghwan's "Study of Ch'ae Mansik's Post-Liberation Fiction" (Haebanghu Ch'ae Mansik sosŏl yŏngu) offers a typical understanding of the place of "Minjok ũi choein" within Ch'ae's literary biography. In the article, Cho focuses almost entirely on Ch'ae's post-liberation works that have typically been read as satire—Mister Pang, Once Upon a Paddy, Constable Maeng, and so on—but makes mention of "Minjok ũi choein" in order to contextualize Ch'ae's position in the years following liberation. He writes:

His [Ch'ae's] consciousness of the reality of the liberation period was based on self-criticism of his colonial period experiences. Through his autobiographical short story, "Minjok ũi choein," he tried to atone for the offenses he himself committed in the final years of the colonial period by confessing the process and actual circumstances of his collaboration with the Japanese. He also understood the main cause of the chaotic conditions of the liberation period to be rooted in the passive nature of the liberation, and thought that the entirety of the nation that had experienced the colonial period needed to have a sense of responsibility for their own liberation.¹⁸

He goes on to write that it was toward these "chaotic conditions" that Ch'ae turned his critical eye in his satirical works of post-liberation fiction.¹⁹ In other words, only through the act of confession in "Minjok ũi choein" could Ch'ae purge himself of the sins of colonial period collaboration and regain the moral autonomy necessary to create his subsequent works of critical fiction. Moreover, the process that Ch'ae underwent in these years—a fall into sin (against the nation, as a collaborator), confession and repentance (through "Minjok ũi choein"), and redemption (in the form of a recovery of his autonomous subjectivity)—is presented as a rubric by which the "entirety of the nation" can regain its independent subjectivity in similar fashion. These two notions—that Ch'ae could only reestablish his legitimacy as a Korean national subject by taking proper responsibility for his colonial period failures, and that a similar process was necessary on a national scale in order to move beyond the colonial period and build an

18 Cho Ch'anghwan, "Haebanghu Ch'ae Mansik sosŏl yŏngu," *Hyŏndae munhak iron yŏngu* 3 (1993): 52.

19 *Ibid.*, 52–53.

independent nation—form a basic framework from which even more recent scholarship on “Minjok ũi choein” does not depart.

Within this framework, however, critics have put forward a range of readings of “Minjok ũi choein” and its relationship to the transitional moment of the liberation space. One of the major issues that scholars dispute is that of the nature of Ch'ae's confessional project in the work: that is, does “Minjok ũi choein” represent a critical reflection on the author's past behavior, arriving at an attitude of sincere remorse (*pansǒng*), or does the narrative simply make excuses for these actions in a process of self-justification (*pyǒnmyǒng*)? Although most standard accounts of Ch'ae's body of work have, as Cho Ch'anghwan, considered “Minjok ũi choein” an unproblematic atonement for Ch'ae's collaborationist failures, other critics, especially in recent years, have questioned the sincerity of the narrative and have placed the work more within the latter category of justification rather than reflection. Shin Hũigyo offers one of this kind of critique.²⁰ Shin rightly points out that the narrator of “Minjok ũi choein” cannot be uncritically trusted, especially as the narrator is refracted into many versions of himself through the nested structure of the story. He argues that the narrative layers embedded in the story—and the complex web of relations among their respective subjects and objects of narration—masks a sort of hurried or blithe nature to the “I” narrator's transformation from self-critical to self-consolatory. A more careful examination of these narrative layers undermines the sincerity of the piece and reveals its function as a justification for acts of collaboration. Shin notes, also, that it was only at this half-baked stage, without having completely carried out the work of critical self-reflection, that Ch'ae returned to writing works of satire.²¹ Thus, even as Shin works to dismantle the standard interpretation of “Minjok ũi choein” as performing the work of atonement necessary

20 Shin Hũigyo, “Haebanggi Ch'ae Mansik ũi chagi pip'an sosǒl e nat'anan sǒsul sujun: ‘Minjok ũi choein’ ũl taesang ũro,” *Hanguk munhak iron kwa pip'yǒng* 14 (March 2002): 114–137.

21 *Ibid.*, 135.

for Ch'ae to reclaim his legitimacy as social critic, he reinforces the notion that such a process of atonement was necessary in the first place. The purpose of the work is not in question, but only its relative success or failure in reaching the goal of reestablishing the subjectivity necessary to satirize contemporary society. The moment such a failure becomes a possibility is precisely the moment “Minjok ūi choein” becomes a “problematic work.”

It is in this context that Pak Sangjun attempts to intervene in the debate on whether “Minjok ūi choein” is a work of reflection or justification. As noted above, Pak begins his article, “Minjok ūi choein' and the Strategy of Confession” (‘Minjok ūi choein' kwa kobaek ūi chŏllyak), by stating simply: “Ch'ae Mansik's 'Minjok ūi choein' is a problematic work.”²² He goes on to explain that what makes the work such a problem for critics is that “the meaning of the work ambiguously straddles the border between remorse (*pansŏng*) and excuse (*pyŏnmyŏng*).”²³ Pak incisively demonstrates the fruitlessness of attempts to categorize the story wholly on one side of the *pansŏng/pyŏnmyŏng* dichotomy, arguing that what distinguishes the two is less the specific content of the text (which is flexible enough to allow for any number of interpretations) and more a particular reader's approach.²⁴ Instead of adhering to this binary, then, Pak proposes a reading of “Minjok ūi choein” that examines the rhetorical strategy of its confession. Even as the narrator repeatedly condemns his own actions and reinforces his status as a sinner or criminal (*choein*) in the diegetic portions of the text, the mimetic portions of the narrative provide justification for his actions; as a result, through the strategic use of both self-rebuke and justification, Ch'ae's confession is able to make greater claims to “sincerity” (*chinjŏngsŏng*).²⁵ In

22 Pak Sangjun, “‘Minjok ūi choein’ kwa kobaek ūi chŏllyak,” 278.

23 Ibid., 279.

24 Ibid., 281–283.

25 Ibid., 289. Pak uses the terms “diegesis” and “mimesis” to refer to those portions of the text directly narrated by the first-person narrator and those revealed through less direct narrative strategies (such as flashback, or the spoken discourse of other characters in the story), respectively.

this way, remorse and justification are not diametric opposites, but rather both necessary components in a successful confession.

This success, however, still represents the achievement of the same purpose previous critiques of “Minjok ūi choein” assign to the work: namely, that of recovering Ch'ae's autonomy as a moral subject. Even as Pak Sangjun moves the discourse surrounding “Minjok ūi choein” beyond the remorse versus excuse debate, he still treats the work as a turning point, or “watershed” (*punsuryōng*), in Ch'ae's career.²⁶ Pak organizes Ch'ae's liberation space fiction chronologically, and correspondingly divides the works into three major categories: satire, self-criticism, and historical fiction. He shows that after the publication of “Minjok ūi choein” in 1948 and 1949, Ch'ae wrote only historical fiction, and argues that this turn occurs only after “Minjok ūi choein” completes a process visible in the works of satire leading up to “Minjok ūi choein” of turning the target of criticism from the outer to the inner, from larger social conditions to the actions of individuals. In this way, Pak argues, “Minjok ūi choein” completes the work of Ch'ae's critical satires and allows him to shift toward the “field of vision” (*siya*) that was necessary in order to “read the new era” (*saeroun sidae rŭl ikda*).²⁷ Even as Pak attempts to reframe our understanding of the position “Minjok ūi choein” occupies within Ch'ae's body of work, he is consistent with previous scholars in his view of “Minjok ūi choein” as an exceptional or transitional piece that interrupts or otherwise changes the flow of (mostly satirical) output.²⁸

26 Ibid., 301.

27 Ibid., 300–301.

28 Pak's reliance on the chronological order of publication of Ch'ae's post-liberation works to draw his conclusion about “Minjok ūi choein” and its relationship to those works that come before and after its release is somewhat questionable considering the two year gap between Ch'ae's completion of the story in May of 1946 and its publication starting in October of 1948. In terms of when the works were written, then, we might consider “Minjok ūi choein” to exist prior to the bulk of Ch'ae's liberation space works of satire—and indeed, this seems to be how most critics interpret the story's relationship to the satirical works. Hotei Toshihiro raises the possibility that “Minjok ūi choein” may have been published at this later date as a response to the formation of a committee in 1948 to investigate and punish acts of treason and pro-Japanese collaboration, a possibility that further complicates the question of the work's “sincerity” as self-criticism. See Hotei Toshihiro, “Kaisetsu,” in *Taihei tenka*, Chōsen Kindai Bungaku Senshū 4 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2009), 432–434.

Other recent scholarship on “Minjok ūi choein” is even more explicit in its assigning to the story the work of restoring Ch'ae's “identity.” For example, O T'aeyōng examines Yi T'aejun's “Before and After Liberation” and Ch'ae's “Minjok ūi choein,” considering how the two pieces narrate memory in the attempt to recover the self. O describes “Minjok ūi choein” in particular as “putting forth the desire to reconstruct one's own identity [*aident'it'i*].”²⁹ Similarly, Yi Minyōng considers the mechanisms of confession and memory in “Minjok ūi choein” and “Before and After Liberation,” reiterating that Ch'ae and Yi were tasked not only with recuperating their own sense of individual self, but also with building a nation-state and securing its identity (*chōngch'esōng*).³⁰ Kim Minsōn, in the same vein, considers “Minjok ūi choein” representative of the direction taken by South Korean literature in the liberation space and years following, demonstrating a great deal of comfort with allowing the recovery of authorial identity through literary text to stand in for the recovery of national identity:

In the sense that liberation from Japanese colonial control was not a result of an autonomous ethnonational [*minjok ūi*] struggle for independence but was rather bestowed by an outside power, the work of establishing the meaning of “liberation” and giving literary meaning to the experience of the colonial system was an issue that certainly demanded resolution under the chaotic circumstances of the time. In particular, issues having to do with pro-Japanese collaboration by literati were not only a priority issue for narrativizing the history and identity of the nation as a singular entity, but also a sensitive spot for the preservation of each individual writer's identity... In this respect, the act of fictionalizing memories of the time before liberation simultaneously served to reconstruct one's own identity as a single author [*munhakja*] and also represented one's reestablishment as a subject within the larger process building the nation state after liberation.³¹

In this way, Kim and other recent critics of “Minjok ūi choein,” though they offer more careful consideration of the techniques Ch'ae employs in the text for the purpose of reestablishing his identity as a realized national subject in such a way that he—and Korea itself—could move on to

29 O T'aeyōng, “Haebang kwa kiōk ūi chōngch'ihak,” *Hanguk munhak yōngu* 39 (December 2010): 171–172.

30 Yi Minyōng, “Haebanggi ūi chagi kobaek kwa singmin sahoe ūi kiōk: Yi T'aejun ūi ‘Haebang chōnhu’ wa Ch'ae Mansik ūi ‘Minjok ūi choein’ ūl chungsim ūro,” *Uri ōmun yōngu* 42 (January 30, 2012): 389.

31 Kim Minsōn, “Haebanggi chajōnjōk sosōl ūi kobaek kwa chuch'e chaesaeng ūi p'ūllot: Ch'ae Mansik ‘Minjok ūi choein,’ Yi Kiyōng ‘Hyōnggwan’ yōngu,” *Uri ōmun yōngu* 40 (May 30, 2011): 360–361.

the task of (re)building the newly-liberated nation, reinforce the general understanding of the story as setting out to accomplish this goal. Kim's contextualization of the work ends up looking remarkably similar to much earlier considerations of the text, such as that of Cho Ch'anghwan.

As such, the “problem” of “Minjok ūi choein” remains even after the basic question of whether the work performs a self-censure or a self-justification is bypassed. That is to say, the question of whether or how Ch'ae Mansik is able to recover an autonomous Korean identity (and, concomitantly, whether Korea at large is able to reestablish itself as a subject) in or through the text remains unresolved. If anything, the ongoing critical labor that is required to demonstrate the success of this project—the construction of a decolonized Korean identity—becomes, on the contrary, proof that it remains incomplete.

In order to break free from this critical trap, it is necessary to more carefully interrogate the nature of the “identity” that Ch'ae and other liberation space Korean intellectuals were supposed to “recover.” Such an interrogation raises a whole new set of questions. For instance, how or why does collaboration—a particularly pro-Japanese collaboration (*ch'in-il*), taking the form of writing in support of the Japanese, or writing in Japanese—cause the rupture, fissure, or loss of this identity? What did this identity look like prior to the loss or distortion it suffers during the colonial period? Will the same identity, “recovered” after liberation, look the same, or is it irreversibly altered?

Ch'ae Mansik's fiction, both before and after 1945, can provide insight useful for approaching these kinds of questions. Looking at pieces from different moments in Ch'ae's career can not only help us to historicize the notion of a stable and recoverable identity (Ch'ae's, or even more problematically, Korea's), but also to contextualize “Minjok ūi choein” and its function within Ch'ae's body of work and the larger literary history of which it was a part. Specifically,

Ch'ae's fiction troubles the understanding of Korea's "identity" and its history that underlies most interpretations of "Minjok ūi choein" and perhaps the liberation space at large—that is, an understanding of Korea as transhistorical, ancient in its history, but at the same time, paradoxically recognizing an interruption in that history (colonization, and especially acts of collaboration) that must be bridged, patched over, "recovered" from. These identity politics are clearly at work in the usual narrative of Ch'ae's career, which employs the strategy of ignoring those works of his, written in the very last years of Japanese occupation, that could be considered complicit with the Japanese imperial project, and focusing instead on his criticism of colonial society in fiction written in the 1930s, as well as his fiction of the liberation space, which is seen as a return to his criticism of the colonial system, or in the case of "Minjok ūi choein," a self-critical apology for his role in supporting that same system.³²

I want to argue that this narrative—with its inevitable emphasis on the Japanese and Korean ethnonational identities of colonizer and colonized, oppressor and oppressed—obscures the brilliant equivocality of so much of Ch'ae's work, reducing every position to a binary broken on ethnic or national lines. It misses the fact that, during the colonial period, Ch'ae Mansik was able to critique colonial society under Japanese rule without resorting to an essentialist demonization of the Japanese, and demonstrated little optimism for the resolution of society's problems by way of recovering Korea's national identity—whatever that is or was. As a result, his post-liberation fiction quite readily displays disturbing continuities with his colonial period stories, in that he sees many of the same injustices remain intact even after 1945, though the perpetrators are no longer Japanese. Perhaps because his resistance was not couched in ethnic terms, it proved adaptable to the semi-colonial circumstances following the liberation of the

32 Theodore Hughes discusses this "disavowal" of mobilization literature as necessary for the construction of a South Korean literary canon in Theodore Hughes, *Literature and Film in Cold War South Korea: Freedom's Frontier* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012). On the issue of collaboration, see especially Chapter 5, which also discusses "Minjok ūi choein" very briefly (196-197).

peninsula. In this way, Ch'ae's work not only flouts the imperative to recover a national identity, but also questions the very logic that would demand such a recovery in the first place.

In order to further unravel the trajectory of Ch'ae Mansik's career, this chapter examines some of the “representative,” non-problematic works of Ch'ae's colonial period fiction, noting that their critiques are aimed at the colonial system and its status as an extension of global capitalism and imperialism, rather than at the (ethnonationally) specific colonizers of the historical moment, the Japanese. This refusal to couch his resistance in essentialist terms allows Ch'ae to transition smoothly to those non-problematic works after 1945, which critique “liberated” Korean society and its new semi-colonizers, the Americans and the Soviets, even as they continue to attack the colonial structures of the past in retrospect. Finally, I return to Ch'ae's “problematic” work of liberation space fiction, “Minjok ūi choein,” which has been read as a departure from the author's usual satirical style. I reread the story as a post-colonial intertext of one of Ch'ae's colonial period “representative” works, “A Ready-Made Life,” probing the ironies, aporias, and anxieties present in both—not merely in “Minjok ūi choein” as problem.

3.2 Anti-Colonial versus Anti-Japanese: Ch'ae Mansik's Colonial Fiction

The 1930s were easily the most productive decade of Ch'ae Mansik's writing career; in the middle of the decade especially, he published dozens of works, among them many of the most highly regarded examples of Ch'ae's satirical fiction. Yi Chuhyōng writes that from 1934 to 1938, Ch'ae “focused on writing works that negated their subjects through satire,” and that pieces like *T'aep'yōng ch'ōnha* (Peace under Heaven, 1938), *T'angnyu* (Muddy Stream, 1937), *Redi meidŭ insaeng* (A Ready-Made Life, 1934), *Ch'isuk* (My Idiot Uncle, 1938) and others falling into this category can be considered, along with several from after the liberation, his representative

works.³³ Perhaps not coincidentally, these pieces are also read nearly ubiquitously as critical of Japanese colonial rule, and unequivocally so. Yi, for example, describes them as “completely renouncing the reality of the Japanese occupation.”³⁴

Though it is possible to imagine more complicated readings of these works, which often require the unraveling of many dense and complex layers of irony, a sampling of Ch'ae's fiction from this period indeed gives the impression of a man highly dissatisfied with the political and material realities of life on the Korean peninsula, both in the current historical moment—during Japanese occupation—and also in the past. A question that returns again and again in Ch'ae's novels and short stories is whether colonial rule has actually worsened the situation in Korea, and these pieces from the 1930s are critical in almost equal measure of the patriarchal and oppressive systems in place in Chosŏn Korea. In any case, however, when the critique is aimed at the present, colonial moment, Ch'ae seems less critical of the Japanese colonizers in particular than of the capitalism-driven imperial project in general. This is not a difficult pattern to spot in reading Ch'ae, but the relentless framing of colonial period issues in terms of Japanese aggression and Korean victimization can obscure even such an obvious position.

This trend is visible, for instance, in *Peace Under Heaven*,³⁵ Ch'ae's longest and perhaps most representative work, considered “one of the great Korean novels.”³⁶ The story is centered on Master Yun, a caricature of a member of the affluent class in colonial Korea, originally a rural peasant who becomes wealthy through usury and a general willingness to abuse and take advantage of anyone with less power or money than he has. In a nod to a not uncommon practice at the time, Yun has purchased the title of “master” of a Confucian school as well as his *yangban*

33 Yi Chuhyŏng, “Ch’ae Mansik ūi saengae wa chakp’um segye,” in *Ch’ae Mansik chŏnjip.*, vol. 10 (Seoul: Ch’angjak kwa Pip’yŏngsa, 1989), 624.

34 Ibid.

35 Ch’ae Mansik, “T’aep’yŏng ch’ŏnha,” in *T’aep’yŏng ch’ŏnha oe* (Seoul: Tonga Ch’ulp’ansa, 1995), 11–220; Ch’ae Man-sik, *Peace Under Heaven*, trans. Kyung-Ja Chun (Armonk N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1993).

36 Kim Chong-un and Fulton, “Ch’ae Man-Shik,” 55.

aristocratic family tree, attempting to erase his history as a member of the laboring class whom he now makes a living exploiting. However, he ultimately finds this history almost impossible to escape: “Whenever he was introduced, he was still Toad Yun, son of Horseface Yun Yonggyu—Yun Tusöp, son of the gambler Yun Yonggyu. As a result, he always felt there was a void where his esteemed ancestors should be, a gnawing emptiness like the hole in the stomach of a starving man.”³⁷ As part of his mission to elevate his family completely into the aristocratic echelons of society, Yun gives attention to the future in addition to the past, hoping to have his two grandsons installed as a county magistrate and a police chief, securing power and wealth for his progeny. Most of the novel is concerned with Yun's anxieties and various failures in the pursuit of this goal.

However, embedded within this humorous and often scathing portrait of Master Yun and the upper crust of which he is (or desires to be) a part, critics note “an implicit critique of Japanese colonial rule.”³⁸ For instance, in Carter Eckert's introduction to the English translation of the novel, in the process of discussing its political stance he proposes that “in satirizing Yun and his 'peace,' Ch'ae is indirectly mocking the Japanese occupation that allows men like Yun to prosper,” noting the numerous ironic praises it offers for Japanese actions on the continent, including the recently begun war in China.³⁹ However, Eckert continues:

While all this may be true, one can hardly fail to note that the novel's real focus is not on Japanese, but on Koreans, more specifically on Master Yun. *Peace Under Heaven* is by no means either a facile condemnation of Japanese imperialism or a sentimental exploration of Korean victimization. While it may have been Japan who first brought 'peace under heaven' to Korea, there were also Koreans like Yun, Ch'ae seems to suggest, who were willing to embrace and take advantage of it. It is not that Yun is necessarily anti-nationalist or pro-Japanese. Nothing in the novel allows us to pin such a tag on him. He has no political ideology. His only concern is self-interest. He may despise socialists

37 Ch'ae Man-sik, *Peace Under Heaven*, 46.

38 Carter Eckert, “Introduction,” in *Peace Under Heaven* (Armonk N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1993), xv.

39 Ibid.

as robbers who would take away his money, but he is also disgusted with the colonial government for imposing rent controls on landlords to alleviate tenant discontent.⁴⁰

As he points out, despite the novel's containing some references to the activities of the colonial government, it is not difficult to see them as merely incidental concerns. But what is important here is less that the novel, noted for its criticism and satirization of the Japanese occupation, is not actually focused on the Japanese, and more that the political attitudes possible, both for Yun within the novel and for Ch'ae existing outside it, are defined in terms of their positions vis-a-vis Japan. Even as Eckert attempts to outline some space for the novel outside “condemnation of Japanese imperialism” and “exploration of Korean victimization,” the political possibilities of the time remain couched in terms of the Korea versus Japan dichotomy; if its main target of censure is not Japanese rule, then it must be the Korean response to Japanese rule.

In fact, I would like to argue that the novel's ultimate ambivalence toward the Japanese presence can be seen as an attempt to create space outside precisely this kind of framework, to begin to decenter Japan as an axis around which political thinking about the Korean situation revolves and to render the looming, overbearing presence of Japan more ghostly or marginal. The limited references to Japan and the Japanese actually serve to deemphasize their presence and role in determining outcomes for the characters in the novel.

On the most basic level, for instance, Japanese characters are conspicuously absent in *T'aep'yŏng ch'ŏnha*, much like the rest of Ch'ae's work. Ch'ae is by no means exceptional in this regard. Japanese characters rarely appear in works of colonial Korean fiction, likely due to the threat of censorship for works criticizing the Japanese government too overtly.⁴¹ However, censorship in itself is not enough to explain the cases in which Ch'ae seems to go out of his way to direct his satire and criticism at the colonial system itself, and away from its particular

40 Ibid., xv–xvi.

41 Ibid., xv.

Japanese agents. First, the novel's satirical tone functions to disguise, albeit superficially, the subversive elements of the story that may have caught the attention of the censors. It is already quite plainly outside the range of acceptable ideology for published material, so it is hard to imagine that the introduction of Japanese characters, likely portrayed in a positive light (if ironically so) would have triggered a ban. Second, the story does not shy away from mentions of general Japanese entities, but only from specific individual Japanese characters, who could easily be presented sympathetically.

To be specific, although *Peace Under Heaven* contains numerous references to Tokyo and to the building Japanese military presence on the Asian continent, there is only one single reference to a Japanese individual in the novel, and it is one of only dubious existence, even within the reality of the story. This lone reference to a Japanese character comes when Master Yun's older grandson, Chongsu, who is supposed to become a magistrate, comes to his grandfather's house to swindle him out of the money he needs to pay off debts he has accumulated through his debauched lifestyle. The lie he tells in order to get the money is that a certain Mr. Ikeda, who works for the colonial government and presumably has influence over Chongsu's potential promotion to county magistrate, wants to buy an expensive diamond ring for his wife but does not have enough money on hand, so Chongsu hopes to curry favor with Ikeda by purchasing the ring. Not only does the character of Ikeda lack any depth or involvement in the plot of the novel, it is not clear whether he exists, even in the fictional reality of the story. After hearing Chongsu's account,

Master Yun was silent for a while, puffing away on his pipe. In a way it sounded like a plausible story, but then again it could have been another instance of Chongsu's hocus-pocus. In the end, he came to the conclusion that he'd be better off giving the money despite the risk of being swindled, for he didn't want to put the whole project in jeopardy by mistaking a true story for a fake and so failing to offer that accursed gift.⁴²

42 Ch'ae Man-sik, *Peace Under Heaven*, 234.

Even after Yun acquiesces to the bribe, the novel never reveals whether Ikeda actually exists or whether he has been created by Chongsu for the purpose of this extraction, though it is clear that this story, at least, is false. More importantly, it ultimately does not matter whether Chongsu has created Ikeda out of thin air. Precisely because the character is so empty and his story so lacking in details, his existence becomes plausible and serves the very limited purpose of convincing Master Yun to part with his money.

Moreover, the doubtful reality of this character serves to separate this reference one degree further from an explicit critique of the Japanese colonial government in particular, especially the actual Japanese people who participated in its execution on the Korean peninsula. Here Ch'ae seems to be going out of his way to emphasize the non-existence of the Japanese in the reality of the novel. This could plausibly be viewed as an ironic jab at the worry of being censored for the portrayal of Japanese characters, but equally likely is an attempt to decenter the Japanese presence on the peninsula, to treat it as a specter that can be manipulated, rather than the sole entity with the power to manipulate events. In this way, Ch'ae is able, at least in a small way, to ironically subvert the power relations at work in the Japan-Korea hierarchy that dominates the discourse on the colonial period. The agency in this situation is painfully contorted, but ultimately removed from a Japanese presence that only exists in the background: even as Yun is controlling (or believes himself to be controlling) Chongsu's life and position for the purpose of cementing his own status, Chongsu is able to turn Yun's goals around on him, using his grandfather's desires to deceive him into serving Chongsu's own purposes. From both sides, the treatment of Japan is both ambivalent and little more than expedient.

Still, the novel does contain some other references to the Japanese empire as a whole and its links to global systems of capitalism and the imperialism that it engenders. For example, in a

rare reference to the use of the Japanese language in colonial Korea,⁴³ Master Yun is escorting a teenage *kisaeng* entertainer Ch'unsim, his would-be mistress, to an expensive jewelry store, where they are greeted with “*Irasshaimase*,” the Japanese for “Welcome.”⁴⁴ This quick and isolated insertion of the Japanese language into the text draws attention to its own location, the store in the city center dealing in luxury goods. This reference serves to link Japan as an imagined entity to the frantic and real exchange of commodities (including the bodies of women) that takes place in the novel and in the burgeoning capitalist urban center of Keijō, or Seoul. Although the connection of the Japanese language with conspicuous consumption cannot help but recall the colonial order, again the emphasis is rather on the injustices and absurdities of capitalism rather than the cultural damage inflicted by the use of the language of the colonizer.

Furthermore, the Japanese presence here is once again spectral, and calls into question its own presence. The passage goes on:

All six salesmen sounded the Japanese greeting in unison as they gathered at the front of the store to take in the spectacle of this pair. Ch'unsim inquired from one of the salesmen about the whereabouts of the ring in question, using the few words of Japanese she had picked up at the *kisaeng* guild. The salesman listened patiently, “I understand,” he replied in fluent Korean. “But we’ve just sold the last one of those. But over here we have some similar ones....”⁴⁵

First, Ch'unsim's knowledge of bits of rudimentary Japanese learned in the course of her career as a female entertainer—probably for the city's wealthy and powerful, many of whom would have been connected with the Japanese government or with Japanese corporations setting up shop in the colonies—only further underscores the language's accessorial role in the monetary exchanges in the capital. That is, any comment on the cultural or national betrayal of using Japanese must necessarily be overshadowed or at least deemphasized next to the

43 The reference to the use of Japanese is rare in this particular work, but not in other examples of colonial period Korean fiction, including many by Ch'ae himself. Especially in the later years of the empire, when stricter controls were imposed on the use of Korean, the Japanese language became an extremely fraught issue.

44 Ch'ae Man-sik, *Peace Under Heaven*, 221.

45 Ibid.

commodification of the female body (particularly the adolescent female body) that is suggested here. Second, the salesman switches quickly from the Japanese of his greeting to “fluent Korean” for his more detailed, content-oriented communication with Ch'unsim. It is not clear whether his reasons for switching over stem from an inadequacy in Ch'unsim's Japanese or from his own discomfort with the language, but it is likely safe to assume that the salesman is himself a native speaker of Korean, not Japanese. Here again, there is an emptiness about the presence of Japan, in this case in the form of the Japanese language. It is used for greetings, in order to present a front of Japanese assimilation or conciliation toward the ruling elite, but again, is ultimately decentered, absent at the core of the interaction. The exchange taking place here, both that of words and that of goods, can take place with or without the mediation of the Japanese language.

Similarly, the novel's occasional references to the Japanese military presence on the Asian continent (especially in Manchuria) are focused largely on the capitalist interests that are the driving force behind Japanese imperialism and eventually militarism, rather than on Japan as the particular entity carrying them out. In a highly satirical passage in which Master Yun discusses the developments of the Sino-Japanese War with a business associate, the war is described as an ongoing battle between the Japanese and socialists on the continent (especially but not necessarily Chinese), who have been pushed into war by Russian communists. The war is couched not in terms of the Japanese versus the Chinese or even the Japanese versus all of Asia, but as the military of a capitalist empire seeking to rid the world of socialist influence.⁴⁶ Furthermore, in the final climactic scene in the novel, at which point Master Yun has just discovered that his younger grandson, Chonghak, the would-be police chief has been arrested for ideological crimes in Tokyo where he is enrolled at a university. Though no specifics are given,

46 Ibid., 107–111.

his arrest is understood to be related to involvement with socialist groups in Japan. In a speech dripping with irony, Yun shouts:

Don't ever forget to thank your lucky stars we live in this wonderful world, where the Japanese have mobilized a huge army, hundreds of thousands of soldiers, to protect us Koreans! It's a world of peace where we can keep what is ours and live in comfort! Peace under heaven, that's what it is! Peace under heaven, you understand? And now, a rich man's son, born into a world of peace under heaven, why should he join up with a bunch of gangsters who'll bring ruin to the world?⁴⁷

Here the criticism of the Japanese war effort is unmistakable, but again, it is grounded in the suppression of socialism, not in the particular actions of the Japanese as a particular nation.

Moreover, any antagonism toward Japan that is present in this satirical rant is undermined by the source of Chonghak's involvement with socialism in the first place: his education in Tokyo.

Almost without exception, intellectual leaders in colonial Korea—including Ch'ae Mansik himself—were educated at least in part in Japan.

Many Korean authors of the 1920s and 1930s write of their experiences studying abroad in Japan in fiction, usually painting a picture of a difficult life, lacking in the financial resources of other more wealthy students, and often relatively isolated from colleagues as a result.⁴⁸ Within these circumstances, the characters in these stories often find themselves bonding with other students of limited means, often Koreans or other foreign students, such that Tokyo became a hotbed for the formation of ideological relationships and groups, usually of a bent resistant to the empire and its policies, and international in its aim at global socialism. In much of the writing from this period on the experience of students in Tokyo, including this oblique reference in *Peace Under Heaven*, Japan is represented simultaneously as both the source and the suppressor of socialist thinking in Korea, such that any critique of the actions of Japan as a whole, at least

47 Ibid., 240.

48 See for example, in English: Na To-hyang, "The Lady Barber" (Yōibalsa, 1923) in *A Ready-Made Life: Early Masters of Modern Korean Fiction*, ed. Chong-un Kim and Bruce Fulton (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1998), 17–22.

from a leftist point of view, is necessarily ambivalent. Importantly, even when this complex and multivalent view of Japan as contact zone for student and intellectual resistance is referenced in *T'aep'yŏng ch'ŏnha*, as with other more critical allusions to Japan, its presence remains faint. The novel offers no direct narration of Chonghak's experience in Tokyo or even of his character. As with Japan in the novel, he is always absent despite his looming presence.

Ch'ae's ambivalence toward Japan is perhaps most palpable in a brief moment of his well-known short story “Ch'isuk,”⁴⁹ also published in 1938. This work is told from the perspective of a character who is gradually revealed to be ignorant as he narrates his complaints about his “idiot uncle,” a frustrated intellectual who has spent time in prison for his left-wing political ideas and writings and has now declined into a sort of nihilistic impotence. The satire here, as in other Ch'ae stories, is multilayered and equivocal, and it is not always a simple matter to tease out which of these two characters should be viewed as the true “idiot.” In one telling exchange, the uncle accuses the narrator of “kissing up” by wanting to marry a Japanese woman, take a Japanese name, and lead a Japanese lifestyle. The narrator asks what is wrong with this line of thinking, to which his uncle responds, “It would be one thing if what you say comes from profound cultivation and sound judgment. But it would seem from what you say that you have something else in mind.... You want to cozy up to your boss, and your neighbors too.”⁵⁰ Here, Ch'ae comes close to implying that in theory, there is nothing wrong with a Korean complying with or even actively seeking to participate in Japanese assimilation policy, but that the problem arises from the sycophantic pandering inherent in the colonial hierarchy. Again, it is not the specific Japanese colonizer that Ch'ae condemns, but the colonial system and its origins in capitalism.

49 Ch'ae Mansik, “Ch'isuk,” in *T'aep'yŏng ch'ŏnha oe* (Seoul: Tonga Ch'ulp'ansa, 1995), 255–274; Ch'ae Mansik [Mansik], “My Innocent Uncle.”

50 Ch'ae Mansik [Mansik], “My Innocent Uncle,” 108.

3.3 The “Liberation” of Korea: Continuity Across Rupture

As noted above, it is easy to dismiss Ch'ae's avoidance of direct condemnation of the Japanese regime in his colonial period works on the grounds that they were subject to approval and censorship by the Japanese government itself. In fact, given the obviously subversive nature of many of his texts, one could argue that it is surprising that some of them were published even without such overt criticism. In any case, this tendency to avoid direct reference to injustices caused by the Japanese as an ethno-nation rather than as a general imperial power continues into the post-war, when those controls are lifted. Even with the freedom from censorship (by the Japanese government) offered by the Liberation Period environment, Ch'ae does not resort to the assertion of a nationalistic Korean identity or a condemnation of the Japanese in particular in his critique of colonialism; rather, the sense continues to be that the Japanese could be replaced by any colonial power, and this idea eventually serves as a subtle censure of the semi-colonial powers that at this point have indeed replaced the Japanese.

The story in which Ch'ae most straightforwardly points out this continuity, or the incompleteness of Korea's liberation, is “Non iyagi” (Once Upon a Paddy, 1946).⁵¹ Interestingly, this story is concerned not only with the shift from a colonized Korea to the liberation space, but also with earlier upheavals as Korea transitioned from the pre-modern or early modern Chosŏn period to colonial modernity at the turn of the twentieth century. The story is set shortly after August 15, 1945, and centers on a seventy-year-old man, Han Saengwon, who is looking forward to retrieving his family's rice paddy, having sold it to a Japanese man during the colonial period. We learn that with his family on the verge of starving and their one small paddy unable to support them, Han hears that a certain Yoshikawa is buying up paddies at a price well above their

51 Ch'ae Mansik, “Once Upon a Paddy,” in *My Innocent Uncle*, trans. Robert Armstrong, The Portable Library of Korean Literature (Seoul: Jimoondang, 2003), 81–113; Ch'ae Mansik, “Non Iyagi,” in *T'aep'yŏng ch'ŏnha oe* (Seoul: Tonga Ch'ulp'ansa, 1995), 402–425.

value as farmland. He sells at the high price, planning to buy back another paddy, but ultimately cannot find any land to buy (since everyone is selling to Yoshikawa at the inflated price) and eventually the family is reduced to sharecropping. Han becomes a laughingstock when he vows again and again that he will get his land back when the Japanese are driven out, whereas his neighbors find it hard to believe that the Japanese occupation will ever end. Eventually, of course, it does end, but when Han tries to reclaim his paddy at the end of the story, he learns that the new Korean government has seized it and he is unable to get it back.

The implication here, that the post-liberation Korean government is no better than the Japanese colonial government (at least as far as Han is concerned) is an almost shocking contradiction of the standard nationalist narrative of colonization as the darkest moment in Korean history and of the liberation space as a time of celebration and hope. In fact, this contradiction is not simply implied by the outcome of the story, but is also presented overtly by the story's narrator:

Independence?

What was the big deal?

Sure Korea was independent, but there wasn't a chance in hell that things would suddenly improve for the poor farmer. The farmer would continue working someone else's land, sweating like a dog as he eked out a living from one year to the next, only to starve on what was left after he had surrendered the better half of his crops. It would be more of the same, independence or not.⁵²

Of course, this lamented lack of improvement with the end of colonization is clearly limited to the lives of those in the working class, but that only serves to emphasize Ch'ae's point, that regime change is only a change for those in power. Those at the top of society may fall in or out of favor with the government (though as we see in "Maeng sunsa," in many cases those in power see no change at all to their status), but the situation is constant for those at the base, remaining miserable regardless of the national entity claiming sovereignty over them.

52 Ch'ae Mansik, "Once Upon a Paddy," 83.

This position is even further highlighted by the story's treatment of the beginning of colonization in 1910, as opposed to its end in 1945. If the comparison of before and after 1945 implicitly contrasts Japan's rule with that of the American and Soviet occupations (although, notably, neither Western power is mentioned in the story), then in a comparison of before and after 1910, the only foil for Japanese colonization is Korea itself, in whatever form it existed prior to colonial modernity. Thus, in the opening of passages of the short story, it is toward Chosŏn Korea that Ch'ae turns his critical eye.

Han Saengwŏn is initially unmoved by Korea's liberation, as “the recovery of the nation he could understand only as a return to the old Korea.”⁵³ We learn that his father, Han T'aesu, saved his wages for years to buy two plots of land, a larger and a smaller one, but was swindled out of the larger one in 1895, in the wake of the Tonghak peasant rebellion. T'aesu was accused (falsely, according to the narrated account) of participating in the uprisings, and was jailed by the local magistrate, eventually tortured into confession and sentenced to death. With this leverage in place, the magistrate's office brokers a deal with Saengwŏn and his mother, trading his father's life for the deed to the larger of their two paddies. Saengwŏn carries this bitterness toward the Chosŏn authorities with him throughout the colonial period and the sale of the family's remaining land, and up to the liberation, which he greets as a return to more of the same corruption and oppression that characterized pre-colonial Korea.

In this way, Ch'ae overlays the transition from colonial to post-colonial Korea with the transition from pre-colonial to colonial Korea, and is thus able to interrogate the somewhat mythological idealization of an uncolonized Korean nation in the nineteenth century, while at the same time questioning the assumption that an end to colonization will necessarily bring improvement, if not a return to the ideal of the past. Notably, the American backers of the new

53 Ibid., 84.

government that confiscates Han's paddy as formerly Japanese-owned land never appear in the story. As with Ch'ae's fiction in the 1930s, which to a large extent avoids overt reference to (and especially critique of) the Japanese regime, there is likely a politics associated with his choice to leave the United States out of the story. But in any case, at first glance Ch'ae seems to be setting up a familiar dichotomy between colonized Korea and Japan as sole colonizing power, but when he ends up comparing rather than contrasting the two, the (Japanese) ethnicization of power begins to break down, and the American military could easily be substituted in the place of either the Chosŏn aristocracy or the Japanese governor general. From the perspective of a peasant like Han, Korea equals Japan equals the United States: the ethnic distinction is just that—ethnic—and has no effect on the level of fairness or compassion shown by power to non-power.

Further complicating the story, however, are the strange echoes of Korean nationalism perceptible in the attitude of Han Saengwŏn. Despite his repeated insistence that poor farmers were no worse off under the Japanese than under old Chosŏn and his lack of enthusiasm for the liberation of Korea, for the bulk of the story, from the time he sells the family's smaller paddy to the moment its Japanese owner flees the country, the narrative has Han repeating the nearly constant refrain of, "Once all the Japanese are kicked out, the land'll come back to me—it ain't going nowhere."⁵⁴ But what the story emphasizes is the absurdity of the claim that the Japanese will ever be "kicked out" of the peninsula. Each time Han repeats it, he is mocked by his fellow villagers, who can see no future except that under Japanese rule. Even the somewhat more neutral narrator concedes:

As the Japanese imperialist base in Joseon [Chosŏn] grew more tenacious year by year, and, starting with the Manchurian Incident, which eventually developed into a lengthy, full-blown war in the Pacific, as Joseon's worth to the Japanese grew day by day from every possible angle, and as Japan's roots in Joseon drove ever deeper, and its branches and leaves flourished, talk of a Japanese surrender and independence sounded all the

54 Ibid., 100.

more fantastic. And so, as Han Deok-mun helplessly lost face by the day and year, the value and effect of his boastful phrase—“Once the Japanese are kicked out....”—not only remained intact, but shone even brighter in inverse proportion.⁵⁵

It is easy to imagine that this pointing out of the foolishness of Han's claim within the context of an empire firmly entrenched in Korea is in no small part meant to poke fun at the post-1945 view of liberation as inevitable, a complete and almost immediate turnaround from the assumption that indefinite colonial rule was inevitable. But on a deeper level, Han's obstinate insistence on an untenable position echoes a sort of misguided nationalism, the blind belief that if Korea can simply expel the Japanese, the Korean people—like Han—will get their land back.

As has been established, it is questionable to what extent the land belonged to the Korean people even before Japanese rule, and the narrative hints at a similar gap between an absence of Japanese control and a presence of Korean control when colonization finally ends: “On August fifteenth, Japan capitulated and Joseon became independent (technically speaking, it was just liberated for starters).” This careful distinction between “independence” and “liberation,” often used interchangeably with respect to August fifteenth, gestures toward the American forces looming in the background of the story, “liberating” Korea from Japanese rule, but still preventing it from achieving “independence.” If we extend the metaphor of Han's rice paddy as Korean sovereignty—Han's land as Korea's land—we can easily read the United States back into the story, and its conclusion becomes representative of the acute disappointment of failing to regain sovereignty even with the expulsion of the imperial government. Indeed, the story invites this kind of reading, if subtly: “Our nation stolen by the Japanese has been regained, and once again we have a land to call our own.’ For Han Saengwŏn this constant refrain left a bitter taste.”⁵⁶ Han's bitterness likely arises from the hollowness of Korean independence and its claim

55 Ibid., 103.

56 Ibid., 84.

to “a land to call its own,” and is of course possible to interpret as a critique of American neocolonial occupation. But perhaps Han's bitterness is mostly a realization that his own blind belief that a negation of Japanese ownership is tantamount to a restoration of his own power over his land—a sentiment embedded in Japan-anchored narratives of the colonial period even today—suddenly rings false.

The irony of the moment of liberation is even further emphasized by Han's relationship with Korean cries of “*Manse!*” in celebration of the Japanese surrender. *Manse* is closely associated with celebratory images of the liberation in narratives of the end of colonial rule in all kinds of popular media, and it is established early on in “Once Upon a Paddy” as a stand-in for the standard, elated reaction to the end of the war, against which Han's more bitter position is contrasted:

On August fifteenth, the day Joseon had regained its independence, Han Saengwon hadn't felt the urge to shout “*Manse!*” but now it was all he could do to hold it back. That day, the young people in the village had made a Korean flag, rounded up some chickens and booze for a feast, and had themselves a dandy time shouting “*Manse!*” Han Saengwon hadn't taken part. Others asked him to join, but he found little to crow about in Joseon's independence.⁵⁷

The use of the Korean flag links the shouts of “*Manse!*” inextricably to feelings of Korean nationalism, though, notably, the actual flag has to be created from scratch, perhaps suggesting a nation born at the moment of decolonization, rather than one continuously existing—if dormant—throughout the colonial period. In any case, the story goes on to make a convincing case that the moment of liberation provides little cause for celebration, at least as far as Han is concerned.

Still, as with almost any Ch'ae Mansik protagonist, Han Saengwŏn is not an entirely sympathetic character, and in the end he undermines his own claim to moral or intellectual superiority in refusing to join in the celebration. As soon as he finds out that his baseless

57 Ibid., 82.

prediction that the Japanese will be “chased off” has come true, he turns to *manse* as an outlet for celebrating his own personal victory. When he runs into an old friend, he asks “How's about a shout of 'Manse!' for independence?” but is rebuffed on the grounds that the two have missed their window for shouting “*Manse!*” a fact which may be a source of anxiety for the friend, Song. Han asks:

“Song Saengwon, were you out there when everyone in the village was shouting 'Manse!'?”

“Nah, I was laid up in bed. I got a bad back.”

“Well, I didn't do any cheering that day, either.”

“Well heck, if we didn't, we didn't. What are they going to do, send a couple of old farts like us into exile just because we didn't shout 'Manse!'?”

“Still, I kinda wish I had...”⁵⁸

This conversation reveals some of the political complexities of this post-Liberation outpouring of nationalistic sentiment, in that Song reveals a bit of nervousness that he will face consequences for his failure to participate—yet another gesture toward the new but not automatically less oppressive power structure in Korea. At the same time, however, Han is appropriating the use of *manse* for his own personal celebration, after having rejected it only a few days before. Once Han feels that the regime change will benefit him personally by reuniting him with his land, suddenly his smug attitude vanishes, and he wishes to express his support for the (re)born nation, only too little too late. Han embodies the convenience of nationalism that seems to be at issue in much of Ch'ae's work: for so many actors, the preference of one national entity over another for the control of state power is a matter of practicality, not one of ideology. Through the fickle and ineffectual character of Han, Ch'ae satirizes the arbitrary quality of this kind of allegiance. Ultimately, Han's hypocrisy comes full circle when, in the last line of the story, his expectations of retaking his land disappointed, he declares, “I sure am glad I didn't shout 'Manse!'”⁵⁹

58 Ibid., 104.

59 Ibid., 113.

Another short story of Ch'ae's liberation space fiction that similarly troubles the celebration of Korea's liberation is “Maeng sunsa” (Constable Maeng, 1946), written just after the war and certainly recalling the satire of Ch'ae's pre-war fiction. The story takes place immediately after the liberation and centers on Constable Maeng, who has been employed as a police officer during the colonial period. His wife complains that while other police officers have become rich by extorting enormous bribes, Maeng has only managed to receive relatively minor bribes of one hundred won or less. Maeng convinces himself that his lack of wealth is due to his higher level of moral conscience, rather than his inadequacy as a swindler. In any case, Maeng leaves his job immediately following the liberation, fearful of the angry mobs of people who have started lynching police officers who, as has been established, made themselves rich by abusing their power under the colonial system. When he runs out of money, however, Maeng returns to his job, only to promptly quit again when he discovers one of his coworkers to be a robber and murderer who had been imprisoned prior to liberation. Maeng is simultaneously (and ironically) aghast that murderers and robbers are allowed to become police officers, as well as cognizant of the fact that police officers themselves were inherently robbers and murderers during the colonial period.

Perhaps like no other, this story demonstrates the odd continuity present in Korea, even across the rupture of the 1945 liberation from Japanese colonial rule. Though Ch'ae avoids direct mention of these issues in his story, the narrative readily calls to mind the climate of hostility toward former collaborators—especially police officers—that arose on the peninsula after 1945. American and Soviet occupation of Korea followed immediately on the heels of Japanese colonialism, and to the chagrin of many Koreans, left much of the structure of Japan's colonial government in place—its police force in particular. As a result, many collaborators who held

high-ranking positions within the Japanese government went unpunished and continued to hold these positions under the American occupation.⁶⁰ The resentment that this situation engendered in the Korean population in turn led to the instability and riots against the police that form the backdrop for “Constable Maeng.”⁶¹

Another perhaps better known Korean short story that examines these issues is Chŏn Kwangyong's “Kkŏppittan Ri” (Kapitan Ri, 1962),⁶² which is similar in both its satirical mode and its portrayal of a collaborator who adapts to the new regime after the Japanese defeat—in this case, first Russia, then the United States. Yi Inguk, the title character, is a medical doctor who thrives under the colonial government by following Japanese assimilation policy to the letter—learning the Japanese language and speaking it at home, adopting a Japanese name, giving his children Japanese names, and so on. After the liberation and especially once the Korean War begins, the favor he has accumulated with the Japanese becomes useless, at which point he must adapt by learning Russian and pandering to the Russian military, and eventually switching over to English and the flattery of Americans. Though Yi's adaptable nature keeps him in favor with the current ruling power, he is despised throughout as a traitor by his fellow Koreans.

As with “Constable Maeng,” “Kkŏppittan Ri” exposes and critiques the ability of collaborators (especially elites) to continue functioning in the same way before and after liberation, and by extension, the similarities in structure between the Japanese colonial government and the semi-colonial occupations that followed. One major difference, however, is the latter work's emphasis on collaboration with the Japanese, as opposed to Ch'ae Mansik's

60 Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, vol. 1 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), 142–144.

61 Michael Robinson, *Korea's Twentieth-Century Odyssey* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007), 98.

62 Chŏn Kwangyong, “Kapitan Ri,” in *Land of Exile: Contemporary Korean Fiction*, ed. Marshall Pihl, Bruce Fulton, and Ju-Chan Fulton (Armonk N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1993), 58–83.

relative silence surrounding the identity of the governing power hovering over the police described in the story. Throughout “Kkōppittan Ri,” even as the narrative relates Yi Inguk’s transition into servility to the Russian and American occupying powers, Chōn returns over and over again to Yi’s initial transgression: his complicity with Japanese colonial rule and assimilation policy. While Yi is sycophantically pandering to Russian soldiers occupying the area, he is condemned not for his collaboration with the Russians, but for his pro-Japanese past, called a “lackey,” a “doormat,” but also a “Jap-lover.”⁶³ Many years after the end of Japanese colonialism and with two new powers threatening Korean sovereignty, Yi’s fellow Koreans remain preoccupied with his pro-Japanese collaboration. On the one hand, there is a clear recognition that Yi’s fawning behavior vis-a-vis the Russian and American liberators is more or less identical, ethically speaking, to collaboration with the Japanese regime; that is, the story acknowledges that it is this sycophantic activity itself that we have an instinct to condemn, rather than its direction toward any given bearer of power. However, at the same time, what remains at issue is a betrayal of the Korean nation. I would argue that the Japanese other is most central to the construction of that Korean identity, and thus collaboration with the Japanese remains the most transgressive even into the post-war, but even if we consider the various instances of a sort of collaboration in the story—pro-Japanese, pro-Russian, pro-American—to be merely equally immoral instances of the same transgression, this ethical calculus is still centered on a Korean ethnicity or nation to which its members owe an obligation of fidelity. It is this kind of specifically ethnic nationalism that I am trying to argue Ch’ae was able to avoid in his stories, despite his apparently similar treatment of the issue of collaborators before and after liberation.

By comparison, in “Constable Maeng,” Ch’ae makes almost no reference to the Japanese, and none at all to the American or Russian occupations. The only reference in the story to pro-

63 Ibid., 73–74.

Japanese collaboration is a fairly subtle one. In the course of describing the incredible wealth that police officers were able to amass through the collection of bribes, the story mentions two officers named Kanemoto and Kinoshita.⁶⁴ As Joel Stevenson explains, these were two Japanese surnames commonly adopted by Koreans once the Japanese policy of *sōshi kaimei*, which forced Koreans to take on Japanese names, came into practice.⁶⁵ This subdued reference is critical of both Japanese assimilation policy and those Koreans who enthusiastically sought assimilation and its resulting benefits, to be sure, but compared to a story like “Kkōppittan Ri,” the lack of emphasis on the colonial power is striking. In his story, Ch'ae seems more interested in the processes by which Korean participants in the Japanese imperial project—especially minor ones like Constable Maeng—convinced themselves of their innocence after the fact. This is an issue that Ch'ae treats in much greater depth in “Minjok ũi choein.”

3.4 The Irony of “Minjok ũi choein”

I would like to focus now on Ch'ae Mansik's most substantial piece of fiction from the liberation space, though one that is emphatically not “representative” of his work from this or other periods, “Minjok ũi choein.” In it, he gives a first-person narrated account of a writer in the last years of Japan's colonization of Korea and the war on the continent, a story that is interpreted to a greater or lesser extent as semi-autobiographical.⁶⁶ From a moment of narration fixed just short of a year after the liberation of Korea from colonial rule, the main character recalls his experiences through a series of flashbacks that cover a number of different moments from the final months of the war and those following its end, and grapples with his own complicity or

64 Ch'ae Mansik, “Maeng sunsa,” in *T'aep'yōng ch'ōnha oe* (Seoul: Tonga Ch'ulp'ansa, 1995), 394; Ch'ae Mansik, “Constable Maeng,” trans. Joel Stevenson, *Acta Koreana* 2 (July 1999): 147.

65 Joel Stevenson, “Short Fiction of the Liberation Period: Ch'ae Mansik and Constable Maeng,” *Acta Koreana* 2 (July 1999): 134.

66 As I will argue later on, the extent to which the narrator of the story is intended to represent Ch'ae himself is a matter for some debate.

collaboration with the Japanese regime. He describes the extreme circumstances—including imprisonment and torture as punishment for his refusal to participate in mobilization efforts—under which he finally succumbs to the pressure to support the Japanese war effort through writing and public lectures, as well as his eventual flight to the countryside after his own sense of hypocrisy becomes too much for him and he decides to give up writing completely and make a living by farming rather than participate in the recruitment of soldiers for a hopeless and devastating war. Yet, even as he outlines the complexity of his own past as it relates to pro-Japanese collaboration and veers toward apologizing for or excusing his actions, he always returns to the conclusion that he failed to do the right thing. In fact, the strongest defense of the narrator's actions does not come from his own retelling, but from the mouth of a friend and colleague that he meets in a flashback taking place just two weeks before the moment of narration, a defense that he ultimately finds difficult to accept. In this way, the narrator seeks throughout the story to understand and eventually overcome his own sense of guilt, but the narrative always leaves unclear whether or not he is ultimately able to do so, and falls short of an actual apology for or defense of his shortcomings during the final stages of the war.

As noted above, though the story has received a great deal of critical attention, scholars typically view it as somewhat anomalous within the context of Ch'ae's overall body of fictional work.⁶⁷ Bruce Fulton, for example, cites it as a notable example of Ch'ae's occasional departure from the satirical mode, in which he makes an apology for himself and other writers who failed to “actively oppose Japanese colonial rule.”⁶⁸ In fact, I would like to read “Minjok ūi choein” as an intertextualization of one of Ch'ae Mansik's best-known colonial period stories,

67 Even if the story cannot represent Ch'ae Mansik and his work, it can, however, represent the reflections and confessions of intellectuals in general at this moment in history. Kim Chiyōng calls it one of the “representative works of self-critical fiction published after the liberation.” Kim Chiyōng, “Hana ūi haebang, tu kae ūi sisōn,” *Hanguk hyōndae munhak yōngu* 30 (April 2010): 318.

68 Kim Chong-un and Fulton, “Ch'ae Man-Shik,” 55–56.

“Redimeidŭ insaeng” (A Ready-Made Life, 1934).⁶⁹ My purpose here is not to prove that Ch'ae deliberately or even consciously reworked his earlier story into a critique relevant in the post-war, or even to argue that readings of “Minjok ũi choein” as unironically self-critical are invalid. I only wish to show how elements of “Minjok ũi choein” recall similar moments in “A Ready-Made Life,” further demonstrating the fluidity of Ch'ae's transition from his colonial period satire to comparably critical portraits of the post-liberation Korean condition—and his critique of discourse on nation in both moments. Furthermore, as “A Ready-Made Life” is typically read as a bitter, ironic piece, a look at the intertextuality between this text and “Minjok ũi choein” may hint at some of the ways in which the latter must not be read as a simple, unfiltered narrative of the author's experience of the years leading up to liberation, but as a similarly ironic or satirical critique of contemporary society. In this way, “Minjok ũi choein” may not be anomalous at all, but rather a more subtle, more elaborate incarnation of the satires for which he is renowned.

Returning for the moment to the relationship between “A Ready-Made Life” and “Minjok ũi choein,” perhaps the most obvious connection to be drawn lies in their opening scenes: both stories open with a writer visiting a publishing company and speaking with its president. In “A Ready-Made Life,” the story's protagonist, P, is asking the president of the company for a job, having found it extremely difficult to find work after returning from Tokyo with a university education. P is treated to a lecture by the company president, calling on young, educated intellectuals like P to go to the farming villages and educate the masses or to start their own papers and magazines instead of looking for jobs in the city.

Instead of a nine-to-five job in the city, you should go down to the farming villages.... Why, Korea is a farming nation—farmers make up eighty percent of the population. Therefore we can view the Korean problem as a farming problem, pure and simple. There are all sorts of things to be done in the farming villages. ... For example ... uh ... well ... take the literacy campaign. Did you know that ninety percent of the population can't read

69 Ch'ae Mansik, “Redimeidŭ Insaeng,” in *T'aep'yŏng ch'ŏnha oe* (Seoul: Tonga Ch'ulp'ansa, 1995), 221–254.

Korean, much less Chinese! And the modernization movement—that's something you could devote yourself to.⁷⁰

In addition to sounding oddly clinical in its citation of percentages to outline the circumstances of Korean peasants in rural areas and use of terms like “modernization movement” that smack of official rhetoric, this advice rings hollow for P, who points out that there are few real opportunities for people like himself to make a difference in the lives of peasant farmers.

The college graduates who go to the farming villages to root out illiteracy and modernize the life there, they've never soiled their hands. ... They're not exactly welcomed with open arms. Far from it, they're a nuisance. The farmers may be ignorant and uncultured, but the root cause of their wretched lives isn't a matter of not knowing how to read and write or how to modernize their lives.⁷¹

This scene clearly functions as a social critique, but as with so many of Ch'ae's stories, that critique is embedded in complex layers of irony, such that the author's point is never immediately discernible or uncomplicated. In this case, Ch'ae seems to be sympathizing with this generation of middle-class Korean intellectuals who were promised success through hard work and education, only to be disappointed when they graduated and found the jobs appropriate for their skill levels occupied, often by Japanese colonial immigrants, or collaborating Korean elites. And of course on a more basic level, these passages call into question the heretofore unquestioned logic of modernization and its projects of education and industrialization of a highly agrarian traditional Korea. P points out explicitly that the problems facing Korea will not be solved through these efforts at modernization, though he never states what he considers to be the true cause of their suffering.

All the same, the narrative does not completely side with P, who is portrayed as feckless and uncommitted to the progressive causes he has espoused; ultimately the company president's complains that P, like other newly educated members of his generation, is too unmotivated to

70 Ch'ae Man-shik [Mansik], “A Ready-Made Life,” 57–58.

71 *Ibid.*, 58.

make anything of himself prove largely founded. In this way, Ch'ae is able to use both sides of the argument as a mouthpiece, showing through P the unfair, compromised position of colonized intellectuals at the time, and arguing through the president that the same intellectuals' failure to act outside their own self-interest or to overcome their malaise was the cause of their frustration and their helplessness to resist the colonial system. In the end, the author's own position on the issue is left unclear, and perhaps his main goal is simply to complicate and satirize the issue for the reader.

On the other hand, in the opening scene of “Minjok ūi choein,” the narrator is stopping by to visit an old friend, Kim, at the publishing house for which Kim serves as editor. He, too, is treated to a lecture by a third party who is present at the office, a Mr. Yun who has also written for this particular publisher. Yun is introduced as a writer who, unlike the narrator, managed to avoid writing pro-Japanese propaganda at the height of war mobilization, and he serves as the main voice denouncing collaboration in the story. Just as the excuses offered for the narrator's past actions are displaced from the narrator himself and presented from Kim's perspective, the attacks of those actions are transmitted through Yun, rather than stated directly by the narrator to the reader. These multiple voices work against the view of the story as a direct and largely autobiographical confession, allowing for a more noncommittal stance like the one offered in “A Ready-Made Life.”

Before Yun launches into his diatribe against Korean collaboration with the Japanese later in the story, Ch'ae hints at the castigation to come through a single sarcastic jab inserted at the beginning of the story: “Did you harvest lots of corn and squash?”⁷² The narrator immediately indicates that Yun is condemning him for pro-Japanese collaboration, but the reader finds out much later that this is a reference to a newspaper article written about the author by a friend. The

72 Ch'ae Mansik, “Minjok ūi choein,” 514.

narrator leaves Seoul in the spring of 1945, fearing for his safety when American bombers start appearing in the sky, and with the hope of avoiding the pressure to continue publishing war propaganda in order to make a living and avoid imprisonment. He moves back to his home village and grows vegetables in order to support his family. A friend who still lives in the city and writes for a newspaper gets word of his situation, and in order to protect the narrator from possible suspicion that he has shirked his duties as a writer to support the war effort through publishing, prints an article in the newspaper that spins the narrator's actions as a humble sacrifice—the intellectual has become a farmer in order to harvest lots of corn and squash for the army.

Thus, in an ironic turn, the narrator of “Minjok ūi choein” ends up performing precisely the action requested of P in “A Ready-Made Life,” except that now the circumstances have been flipped around such that it has become potentially transgressive. Whereas P was asked to go into the farming villages and help to educate the people, the narrator in the latter work comes under suspicion for leaving the capital for the countryside, though both men are ultimately censured for their failure to participate in the projects of the empire—modernization, then eventually mobilization for war. This contrast highlights the inconsistency of the Japanese colonial project on the Korean peninsula, with its many shifts in policy and strategy over the years, and also functions as evidence of the impossibility of living through the colonial period without participating in some way in the advancement of that project. What is considered resistance one day may be considered collaboration the next, or may vary depending on who commits the offense and under what circumstances. Scholars examining “Minjok ūi choein” criticize Ch'ae roundly for this line of reasoning, which is seen as a morally relativistic excuse for the crime of collaboration and a failure to adequately atone for his own offenses and those of authors like

him. The difficulty of the circumstances under which authors collaborated, the argument goes, does not mitigate the betrayal that collaboration represents. However, this line of thinking tends to dehistoricize the notion of collaboration. While it is easy to see how Ch'ae might be attempting to justify his actions here, critiques of this justification may assign to it an overly narrow focus on the circumstances at the end of the war, for which comparison with his portrayal of P's situation may be an antidote. If Ch'ae is indeed attempting to justify collaboration, he relies no more on the fact that intellectuals were not free to choose in the face of a brutal authoritarian regime mobilized for war, than on the historical inconsistency of the definition of collaboration. Over the span of just a decade, the policies and practices of the colonial authorities change so much that resistance becomes collaboration, and collaboration becomes resistance.

Furthermore, when viewing “Minjok ũi choein” against the backdrop of “A Ready-Made Life,” it becomes harder to see the voice of Yun as pure antagonist, the foil against which the narrator (or in this case, Kim) makes the case for his own justification. Both Yun and the publishing house president in the earlier story are positioned ambiguously with respect to the author's own stance on the characters they criticize. For instance, Yun's grating, sarcastic accusation in the form of his question about the narrator's success in growing vegetables brings to mind Ch'ae's own ironic style of criticism, even as the narrator's transition from educated intellectual writer to peasant farmer recalls the discussion of intellectuals going to the villages from the corresponding scene in “A Ready-Made Life.” As in that scene, it is possible to sympathize with both sides of the argument being made here in “Minjok ũi choein.” Even as the reader feels inclined to forgive the apologetic narrator after learning of the struggles and hardships that led him eventually to stop actively resisting, Yun's judgment is echoed by the overwhelming majority of voices in post-colonial Korea: pro-Japanese collaborators betrayed the

nation, and deserve whatever shame to which they are subjected. Ch'ae's narrator is not in a position to refute that line of thinking, and indeed he cannot help but agree with Yun's attacks, but at the same time, Yun's criticism is so scathing and belligerent that it offers echoes of the exaggerated, satirized characters of Ch'ae's more overtly ironic stories, leaving the reader wondering whether to take Yun's argument at face value. In the context of Ch'ae's ambivalent, sarcastic work, both before and after Liberation, any voice so perfectly aligned with this kind of politically correct narrative cannot but be read with a tinge of irony. Read in this light, the story seems to be simultaneously accepting and rejecting the condemnation of collaboration offered by Yun, which echoes the consensus at the moment of publication. However, that rejection comes not through a direct defense of collaboration, but through the satirical mocking of Yun's voice and position.

The issue becomes even more complicated when, as in the corresponding scene in “Redimeidŭ insaeng,” the narrator is lambasted for his shortcomings in the form of a long, drawn-out lecture. In this case, instead of defending himself the way that P does, the narrator of “Minjok ũi choein” simply listens to Yun berate him while Kim, the president of the publishing company, comes to his defense. Kim points out that Yun was able to keep his name clean because he had enough money to quit his job in the final years of the war, and was thus never compelled to write anything in support of the empire, and as a result his resolve has never been truly tested. Moreover, he argues, intellectuals like the narrator probably had very little effect on how the masses felt, as the actions of the population were motivated by threats from the police and the government more than through cultural means. Again, there is no one side of this argument that can be considered representative of the author's own point of view in a straightforward way. The narrator is grateful that Kim has forgone his usually affable persona to argue with Yun on his

behalf, but ultimately does not find his argument convincing. In this way, Ch'ae the author uses Kim to articulate a fairly convincing justification for the sort of collaboration he engaged in at the end of the war, even as he uses the narrator, his alter-ego, to dismiss this justification out of hand. Ch'ae remains unwilling to reveal his own position in a straightforward, unironic, uncomplicated form. But again, what is more interesting than the question of whether Ch'ae is trying to justify or criticize himself for collaborating is the very impossibility of the former. Any discursive space in which to mount a defense of pro-Japanese actions has been closed off.

“Minjok ūi choein” ends with a scene involving education that intertextualizes the ending of “A Ready-Made Life.” At the end of “A Ready-Made Life,” P's son has been sent up to Seoul from his extended family's home so that he can be properly educated at a school in the city. In what is perhaps one of the most iconic scenes in Ch'ae's colonial period fiction, P is so disillusioned by his experience as an educated man in colonial Seoul that he refuses to send his son to school, and instead apprentices him to a typesetter at a printing press. It seems unlikely that Ch'ae's point in this scene is to denounce education and recommend that all children be trained in a trade, but again, the precise point he is trying to make remains somewhat elusive. Of course he is critiquing the system that created this situation for an educated man, but his evaluation of P's actions is neither unmitigated approval nor unmitigated disapproval, though he does seem sympathetic to P's pragmatic concerns for his son—he wants him to grow up with the means to make a living and avoid the life on the brink of starvation and homelessness that he himself endures.

In a related scene in “Minjok ūi choein,” the story ends with the narrator's concerns about his nephew's education. At this point in the story, the narrator and his family have returned to Seoul after the war, but he is contemplating a move back to the countryside. His wife argues that

they will not be able to survive as farmers, and begs him to think of his children, who will have a difficult time getting educated as proud, able citizens of the new Korea if they move away from the city. As he and his wife are having this discussion, his nephew arrives, which is puzzling because it should be a school day. The nephew explains that the students at his middle school are striking because their teacher has been revealed to be a pro-Japanese collaborator, and he is avoiding participation in the strike because he is afraid that striking might jeopardize his chances to be admitted to high school. This angers the narrator, who berates his nephew for his compromising position and tells him that he must stand with the other students if he believes they are right to strike. This represents a reversal of the father-figure's position in "A Ready-Made Life," in which pragmatic material concerns supersede moral commitments. Now, moral concerns are foremost, with pragmatic concerns occupying a secondary position.

The intertextuality between this scene and the ending of "A Ready-Made Life" shows that, instead of reading the ending of "Minjok ūi choein" as an unmediated representation of Ch'ae the author's apology for his collaboration and condemnation of it in retrospect, it is possible to read this ending as ironic, a response to the overwhelming and indiscriminate denunciation of anyone implicated in pro-Japanese collaboration, regardless of the practical circumstances that surrounded and motivated an individual's failure to adequately resist the empire. Buried under layers of irony and contradiction, Ch'ae's intent in "Minjok ūi choein" could be less an expression of guilt or self-criticism at having collaborated, and more a critique of the present moment, at which residual anger toward the atrocities and injustices of the Japanese empire, as well as the frustration resulting from the partial status of Korea's liberation as the spaces vacated by the Japanese were immediately filled by semi-colonial United States

and Soviet Union forces and much of the Japanese colonial structure remained intact, motivated an uncritical demonization of anything short of complete resistance to the Japanese.

Read in this light, the narrator's repetitive references to his own “guilt” and “crime” can be seen as ironic as well. Even as he recounts the horrific circumstances under which he was forced to collaborate, and even as he points out those moments in which he showed bravery and commitment to the nation, and even as Kim gives an eminently plausible justification for his actions, the narrator constantly returns to his status as a “criminal,” the guilt that he cannot seem to overcome. Here, the “crime” of collaboration becomes a brand that can never be erased or moved beyond. Kelly Jeong notes that “Minjok ūi choein” represents a continuation of the nihilism and hopelessness that Ch'ae had begun to espouse in the late colonial period, in that it argues that the author's own generation could never escape the stain of collaboration, and that it was up to the next generation to begin anew.⁷³ While I think Jeong is right to point out the nihilism or defeatism that results from the inescapability of the collaborator's guilt in the story, I would also argue that it is possible to conclude that Ch'ae considered this inevitability unfair, and uses a subtle satire throughout the story to critique it. Moreover, I am not sure that the story places such hope in the generations of the future. Especially when read alongside the ending of “A Ready-Made Life,” the uncle's advice to his nephew to stand for his convictions even in the face of material hardships sounds ironic and contradictory, an indication that the younger generation is doomed either way.

It is also useful to return to the class element of Kim's justification for collaboration: the fact Yun's wealth allowed him to stop working during the height of war mobilization, and thus he was able to avoid being labeled a collaborator. As the narrator's wife reminds us at the end of the

73 Kelly Jeong, *Crisis of Gender and the Nation in Korean Literature and Cinema : Modernity Arrives Again* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011), 45–49.

story, the narrator can only materially survive after Liberation by continuing to write, as much as he might prefer to quit and work as a farmer. In the same way, Ch'ae Mansik's financial situation was never secure, and he was compelled to write for a living until his death in 1950.⁷⁴ Given the author's own financial circumstances, as well as his propensity for class-centered social criticism in his colonial period literature, it would not be unfair to read “Minjok ũi choein” as a critique of contemporary collaboration rhetoric, in which he accuses the elite, who were in sole possession of the luxury of resistance, of hypocrisy in their denunciation of those in poorer classes who were eventually forced to collaborate. In the end, the story reads much like Ch'ae's colonial period works, which satirize the hierarchical structure of Korean society and bring to light the struggles and injustices faced by those comprising the bottom of the hierarchy.

3.5 The Problem of the “Minjok” and its “Choein”

Why, then, in the context of Ch'ae's reputation as master of satire, among all the many readings and rereadings of “Minjok ũi choein” and its techniques of confession, memory, justification, reflection, and apology, is there no space for this piece to be considered ironic? Why is it placed outside the circle of Ch'ae's “representative” satirical works of social criticism and continually rendered exceptional, transitional, and ultimately “problematic”? Why, at the same time, do critics labor to smooth over the very same problems in “Minjok ũi choein” that give rise to this anxiety, and place on the text the burden of rendering Ch'ae's “non-problematic” works—and modern Korean literature itself—possible?

The key to unraveling these questions is the nature of that work, which “Minjok ũi choein” is asked to perform: the recovery (perhaps more accurately, construction) of a Korean national identity. It is not the text that performs this labor, but the critics reading it, folding it into

74 Jinhee Kim, “Man-Sik Ch’ae (1902-1950): Biographical Detail,” in *Korean Drama under Japanese Occupation : Plays by Ch’i-Jin Yu and Man-Sik Ch’ae* (Dumont, NJ: Homa Sekey Books, 2004), 132.

a narrative of an ahistorical, intact Korean identity—and they do this work, again and again, precisely because the text has not, or cannot. As Ch'ae's work begins to reveal, there is no singular Korean identity to be recovered and reconstructed in the liberation period, nor is it clear that such a project would be desirable. Moreover, this task is rendered all the more impossible by the continuing occupation and of the peninsula, preventing its decolonization. All that is available is the negation of specifically *Japanese* colonialism in ethnonational terms. Ch'ae's stories, particularly “Minjok ũi choein,” are “problematic” because they reveal the arrested state of this process, the absence of a coherent Korean identity. In their anger, they seem to demand, what nation? What *minjok*? What does *ch'in-il* betray or destroy? And was it worth fighting for in the first place? All impermissible, inarticulable questions, even today.

To conclude, I would like to return to the problem of the title, “Minjok ũi choein.” Scholars have translated this title in a wide variety of ways, including “Public Offender,”⁷⁵ “Criminal of the People,”⁷⁶ “A Sinner against the Nation”⁷⁷ “National Criminal,”⁷⁸ and other variations thereupon. The translation of the title is complicated by its inherent ambiguity. “Minjok” refers to nation, but a nation with ethnic grounds. It can be accurately rendered into English as “nation,” “people,” “the people,” “ethnos,” or even “race.” “Choein” simply refers to one (or many) who has (have) committed a crime or a sin. The question surrounding this story and its relationship to its title becomes, who has committed the crime, and against what? The Korean nation? The Korean people as a race or ethnicity?

To elide this question is to miss two crucial aspects of this work. First, the referent of “choein” is left somewhat ambiguous. Though the narrator repeatedly refers to himself as a “choein,” or criminal, as we have seen, it is far from clear whether the author himself would

75 Kim Chong-un and Fulton, “Ch'ae Man-Shik,” 55.

76 Jeong, *Crisis of Gender and the Nation*, 45.

77 Lee Namho et al., *Twentieth Century Korean Literature*, 22.

78 O T'aeyŏng, “Haebang kwa kiŏk ũi chŏngch'ihak,” 197.

apply that label to the narrator of this story, rather than to his myriad accusers. Just as the “idiot” moniker in “My Idiot Uncle” gets turned back on the speaker who uses it, the accusation inherent in “choein” loses its specific directionality from accuser to “sinner.” Second, and much more suggestive, the signifier “minjok” is just as empty. Not only is the entity it refers to ambiguous—as with “choein”—it testifies to the ongoing struggle to recover an identity that perhaps was never there. It is this ambiguity, in the title, in the story, and in the discourses that surround it, that give rise to the “problem” of “Minjok ũi choein.”

Chapter 4. Representing Radical Difference: Kim Sökpöm's Korea(n) in Japan(ese)

Kim Sökpöm, a major figure in “Zainichi literature,”¹ describes the experience of writing in Japanese as a Korean author in the following way:

It is said that in Chosön [Korea] there is a strange-looking imaginary creature called a “pulgasari,” which can dissolve iron and swallow it down, and I wonder, could “Nihongo” [the Japanese language] be about to dissolve me, to swallow me completely into its stomach, “Nihonteki” [Japanese-ness]? Or rather, I wonder, say I were eaten by “Nihongo,” is there some way I could, as the “pulgasari” does, chew my way through its iron stomach and break free? Could there be a way, somehow?²

Aside from the visceral nature of the analogy, what is striking about this passage is the immense power ascribed to the Japanese language. It is an all-consuming force, relentlessly eroding the writer's Korean identity and pushing toward an inexorable “Japanese-ness.” Kim's goal is to “break free” from inside the mechanism of Japanese, but part of what complicates this process is that, unlike the “pulgasari” creature in his analogy, the Japanese language exists within Kim even as he exists within the Japanese language. As Japanese destroys him from the inside out, how can he do the same to it?

This is the central question of Kim's essay, “Gengo to jiyū: Nihongo de kaku to iu koto” (Language and Liberty: The Act of Writing in Japanese, 1970), penned at a turning point in the history of Koreans in Japan. At the time of its publication, the past decade had seen the sharp decline of large-scale repatriation of Koreans in Japan to North Korea, normalization of

- 1 “Zainichi” (在日), literally “in Japan,” typically refers specifically to the Korean minority community in Japan, and “Zainichi literature” (「在日」文学) to literary works produced by its members. In recent Japanese discourse on the subject, “Zainichi bungaku” has replaced terms referring more directly to Korea (e.g., “Zainichi Chōsenjin bungaku” [literature by Zainichi (North) Koreans] “Zainichi Kankoku/Chōsenjin bungaku” [literature by Zainichi South/North Koreans], which divide the community along state lines), with “Zainichi” bracketed to emphasize the malleable nature of “Zainichi” as a concept. To reiterate, the malleability of “Zainichi,” as well as its relationship to “Chōsen/(Kankoku),” is very much at issue here, and “Zainichi” can be assumed to be bracketed as such throughout.
- 2 Kim Sökpöm, “Gengo to jiyū: Nihongo de kaku to iu koto,” in *Kotoba no jubaku: “Zainichi Chōsenjin bungaku” to Nihongo* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1972), 82.

diplomatic relations between Japan and South Korea, and a general shift toward the assumption of long-term residence in Japan as the second generation came of age.³ With everyday life in Japan more and more inevitable, Kim's questions take on a tone of crisis. How can he maintain an empowering sense of difference in a (post)colonial assimilation regime? How can he effectively take on a Korean identity without reproducing the ethnonational hierarchies of difference that subjugated him in the first place? And how might he do this with only the language of the colonizer at his disposal, as a consciousness that in the first place only exists in Japanese?

These questions echo one of the central tensions in the ongoing critical discussion of Fredric Jameson's essay, "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism," and its claim that "all third-world texts are necessarily...allegorical, and in a very specific way: they are to be read as...*national allegories*."⁴ Aijaz Ahmad identifies a number of problems with this idea in his famous response to the piece, not least among them that the framework Jameson employs in his essay reifies the categories of "first-" and "third-world," which are in fact anything but stable, homogenous entities.⁵ However, as Jameson then responded, deconstructing these categories is not necessarily the more productive move.⁶ If his othering of the colonized world is problematic, then so too would be the collapse of its distinction from its former colonizers. As in Kim's essay, the question becomes, what to do with difference?

In this chapter, I look to Kim Sökpöm's own fictional texts for possible answers to these questions. Kim's stories offer potential for escape from this double-bind—that is, the impulse to

3 For background on *Zainichi* issues see John Lie, *Zainichi (Koreans in Japan): Diasporic Nationalism and Postcolonial Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); Sonia Ryang, ed., *Koreans in Japan: Critical Voices from the Margin* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

4 Fredric Jameson, "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism," *Social Text*, no. 15 (1986): 69.

5 Aijaz Ahmad, "Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the 'National Allegory,'" *Social Text*, no. 17 (1987): 3–25.

6 Fredric Jameson, "A Brief Response," *Social Text*, no. 17 (1987): 26–27.

avoid an essentialist difference on the one hand, while resisting assimilation into bland and violent sameness on the other—which remains a sticking point in the debate on Jameson's “national allegory.” While Kim's works of criticism directly confront this problem at a theoretical level, his fiction provides a glimpse of what one potential resolution might look like in practice. His writing is thus a productive site at which to consider some of the issues Jameson and his critics raise: not only the politics of difference, but also the more central issue of national allegory itself.

As it happens, Kim's work has frequently been read as allegory.⁷ However, his position as a Korean writer in Japan complicates any attempt to read his work through a first- versus third-world frame. As a legacy of the Japan's imperial penetration of the Korean peninsula, Zainichi literature occupies the position of third-world with respect to Japan, even as Japanese literature is in many ways itself a third-world literature, with its own corpus of national allegories. Beyond this recursive structure, however, the particular complexity of allegorical readings of Zainichi texts lies in their moving beyond simple national allegory and into an allegory of the in-between. If a third-world narrative is never merely an individual's story but always takes on a meaning for the nation, then Zainichi narratives, while remaining inevitably collective in nature, are at the same time never merely about the nation of Korea. They are instead allegories of an inherently hybrid collective, with (incomplete) claims to belonging to both Korea and Japan.

7 Incidentally, many readers see in Kim's characters the figure of Lu Xun's Ah Q, which Jameson takes up in his “national allegory” essay; see Isogai Jirō, *Shigen no hikari : Zainichi Chōsenjin bungaku ron* (Tokyo: Sōjusha, 1979); Takeda Seiji, “Zainichi” to iu konkyo (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1995); Takazawa Shūji, “Kim Sōkpōm ron: ‘Zainichi’ diasupora no ‘Nihongo bungaku,’” *Bungakukai* 67, no. 9 (September 2013): 168–219. Other examples of allegorical readings of Kim's work include, in English: Elise Foxworth, “The Trope of the Ghost and Cultural Hybridity in Kim Sok Pom's Mandogi Yūrei Kitan (The Extraordinary Ghost Story of Mandogi) (1971),” in *Recentring Asia: Histories, Encounters, Identities*, ed. Jacob Edmond, Henry Johnson, and Jacqueline Leckie (Boston: Global Oriental, 2011), 237–55; Christopher Scott, “Invisible Men: The Zainichi Korean Presence in Postwar Japanese Culture” (Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 2006). In Japanese, see Takeda Seiji, “Zainichi” to iu konkyo; Yun Kōnch'a, “Henyō gainen to shite no Zainichisei: Zainichi Chōsenjin bungaku/Zainichi bungaku o kangaeru,” *Shakai bungaku* 26 (2007): 59–71.

Whereas being in-between or hybrid is a central theme in most works of Zainichi literature—though it is an open question whether that theme and its centrality are inherent in the texts or produced after the fact through their very framing as Zainichi literature— at least in the case of Kim Sökpöm, this kind of reading is somewhat counterintuitive in the context of the author's explicit goal of maintaining a specifically Korean identity that is wholly apart from Japan. Indeed, the insistence of critics upon such an allegorical reading is itself evidence for the tenacity of the mechanism Jameson identifies. Thus, my approach is not so much to resist allegorical reading of Kim's stories as it is to probe the historicity of the collective entity they are supposed to allegorize. In other words, my focus is on the nature of the national in Kim's stories rather than the allegory. Over just the first half Kim's long career (now approaching sixty years in length), his relationship to Korea changed profoundly, and concomitantly his ways of imagining it in his texts. I track this history specifically in terms of language politics, by which I mean both Kim's relative freedom to choose the language of his writing (Japanese versus Korean) and also the boundaries of existing linguistic space in which to articulate a given position or identity. I argue that Kim manipulates the language available—even (perhaps especially) the spellbinding language of Japanese he so vividly describes as ravenous *pulgasari*—to create spaces to be particularly Korean in a way that is both fundamentally national and productively different.

4.1 National Allegory and the Politics of Reading Difference

In order to trace Kim Sökpöm's navigation of his linguistic environment to articulate a specifically national difference, it is useful to reconsider the discourse on national allegory, including more recent interventions, in terms of language politics. Although this discourse rarely touches on language politics explicitly, it is, at its core, a discussion of what can and cannot be written. In “Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism,” Jameson's main

purpose is to advocate more extensive and careful coverage of “third-world literature” in the Western—more specifically, American—academy, by offering the work of third-world authors as a remedy of sorts to what he describes as the “radical split” in the first-world “between the private and the public, between the poetic and the political, between what we have come to think of as the domain of sexuality and the unconscious and that of the public world of classes, of the economic, and of secular political power: in other words, Freud versus Marx.”⁸ In other words, whereas the first-world intellectual has lost much of his social and political relevance in the absence of an ability to reconcile the personal and the collective, the libidinal and the economic, the third-world intellectual is not only able to bridge the gap between these two realms, but is also, Jameson argues, conversely unable to separate them. This logic culminates in the essay's highly problematic, already thoroughly debunked, and still frequently cited claim that “All third-world texts are necessarily...*national allegories*.”⁹ Framed another way, the thesis is that whereas the first-world writer cannot write a collective narrative, the third-world writer cannot write otherwise.

This statement generated (and continues to generate) enormous response in the scholarly community, though Aijaz Ahmad's takedown the following year remains the most memorable.¹⁰ Ahmad takes issue with a range of claims and assumptions made in the Jameson essay, but his main target is the theoretical coherence of Jameson's essential framework of first-world versus third-world. Beyond the fact that the overwhelming diversity within the third-world is flattened out by defining them all according to their historical experience of imperialism (which is itself highly diverse), Ahmad points out that much of the so-called third-world is now experiencing late capitalism in largely the same forms as the first-world, and thus, according to Jameson's

8 Jameson, “Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism,” 69.

9 Ibid.; emphasis original.

10 Ahmad, “Jameson’s Rhetoric of Otherness and the ‘National Allegory.’”

logic, should also be seeing the same kind of public/private rupture. Furthermore, this binary setup leaves out any conceptualization of the second-world, excluding possibilities other than advanced capitalism and colonization. In the end, Jameson's essay boils down to a kind of Orientalist othering. The argument is never about third-world writers and their work, but rather presents an imaginary, totalized vision of a third-world against which a problem with the first-world intellectual can be defined and examined. In this way, a piece that sets out to promote inclusivity and a rethinking of the Western canon ends up slipping into the same type of Euro-America-centrism.

Ahmad's argument to this effect is both forceful and convincing: indeed, one wonders at first why the discussion of "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism" has gone on for so long with such a thorough critique in place more or less from the beginning. Even Jameson's brief counterpoint to Ahmad's response sounds quite humbled.¹¹ Nevertheless, in offering this cautious defense of his essay, he raises some issues that remain unresolved.¹² Primarily, Jameson is concerned with how to go about theorizing difference: given the problems with conceptualizing a first- and a third-world that Ahmad has so thoroughly revealed, what alternatives exist for the treatment of situational difference? The complete collapse of difference, Jameson reminds us, is equally problematic: "If Identity and Difference are fixed and eternal opposites, we have either a ceaseless alternation, or a set of intolerable choices: presumably there would be no great advantage gained by junking the category of 'third-world' if the result is that North America then becomes 'the same' as the subcontinent, say."¹³

11 Jameson, "A Brief Response."

12 More recently, some critics have come to the defense of national allegory as a mode of reading and writing, or have mounted counter-critiques of Ahmad's response. See Margaret Hillenbrand, "The National Allegory Revisited: Writing Private and Public in Contemporary Taiwan," *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 14, no. 3 (2006): 633–62; Ian Buchanan, "National Allegory Today: A Return to Jameson," in *On Jameson: From Postmodernism to Globalization*, ed. Caren Irr and Ian Buchanan (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 173–88.

13 Jameson, "A Brief Response," 26.

This is one of many issues that Shu-Mei Shih takes up in a more recent essay on the current state of global or world literature, in which she also touches on Jameson's claim about national allegory and our ongoing treatment of it today.¹⁴ Shih expresses a concern similar to that of Jameson's in his short response to Ahmad: namely, "that not all differences are the same, not all critiques of difference can be collapsed, and a blanket rejection of difference is not called for."¹⁵ She cautions that the postmodernist impulse to break down reified and stereotyped difference can be overextended to the detriment of "productive" differences, culminating in the reproduction of a violent universalism that is, again, ultimately Eurocentric.¹⁶ In Shih's attempt to put the brakes on the complete obliteration of difference, one hears echoes of Jameson's anxiety over the rejection of first-world and third-world as categories of difference only to end up collapsing both into an equally problematic "same." This anxiety over where to draw the line between an irreconcilable and ultimately hierarchical difference versus a bland and equally hierarchical sameness is among the most important factors in keeping the debate over Jameson's essay alive.

Of course, this is not the only such factor. One other issue that frequently reappears is the by no means unfamiliar question of what, exactly, is meant by "nation" and, by the same token, what constitutes a specifically "national" allegory. This question is in fact one of the central pillars of Ahmad's critique. He points out that while Jameson repeatedly and explicitly posits national allegory as the specific form of allegory inevitably produced by third-world writers, at the same time he fails to separate the nation as category from other, arguably more vague possibilities for allegorical representation. More specifically:

14 Shu-Mei Shih, "Global Literature and the Technologies of Recognition," *PMLA* 119, no. 1 (January 2004): 16–30.

15 *Ibid.*, 27.

16 *Ibid.*, 28–29.

Jameson insists over and over again that the *national* experience is central to the cognitive formation of the third-world intellectual and that the narrativity of that experience takes the form exclusively of a “national allegory,” but this emphatic insistence on the category “nation” itself keeps slipping into a much wider, far less demarcated vocabulary of “culture,” “society,” “collectivity” and so on. Are “nation” and “collectivity” the same thing?¹⁷

Ahmad continues:

The difficulty of this shift in vocabulary is that one may indeed connect one's personal experience to a “collectivity”—in terms of class, gender, caste, religious community, trade union, political party, village, prison—combining the private and the public, and in some sense “allegorizing” the individual experience, without involving the category of “the nation” or necessarily referring back to the “experience of colonialism and imperialism.”¹⁸

All of this comes back to Ahmad's central point that the first-world and the third-world, if we can demarcate them as such in the first place, are not so different in the end—that is, first-world writers may also allegorize their experiences as members of a collective defined in terms of race or ethnicity, gender, religion, sexuality, or any number of other axes of identity.

Ahmad's point about third-world othering is well taken, but the issue of nation's particularity as a type of collectivity has consequences beyond the first- versus third-world dichotomy. When Ahmad asks, “Are 'nation' and 'collectivity' the same thing?” his implication is clearly that nation should be distinguished from collectivities in general, though he too does not specify precisely how. If Jameson's usage of nation is fundamentally ambiguous—in that he (perhaps purposefully) never specifies what is meant by nation or how such an entity differs from other potential identity qualifiers like race, ethnicity, culture, or even state—then in the end, so is Ahmad's. A similar kind of slipperiness with regard to collectivities is still present, possibly deliberately, in more recent entries into the national allegory discussion, which are often much less focused on the national.¹⁹ Shih, for her part, employs a broad range of overlapping terms to

17 Ahmad, “Jameson’s Rhetoric of Otherness and the ‘National Allegory,’” 14.

18 Ibid., 15.

19 Buchanan, “National Allegory Today: A Return to Jameson,” 185–186.

describe the hierarchies framed now as West versus non-West, now as First World versus Third World, including “national,” “cultural,” “ethnic,” “local,” diasporic,” and “minority,” making conceptual distinctions among them, but usually operating under the assumption that the larger East-West binary functions more or less the same way within each category.

In each case, although allegory or national allegory lies at the center of the discussion, to a greater or lesser extent it remains unclear what, precisely, these allegories are supposed to represent. Even if the only kind of allegory up for consideration is specifically national, the kind of collectivity that might fall under the rubric of national is open to many possibilities. At a certain level, perhaps even the collectivities Ahmad mentions—class, gender, caste, religion, and so on—could be considered nations of a sort. But, as we have already seen, there is an impulse to preserve the particularity of nation among such identity categories: not just any collectivity counts. The problem is that this impulse often leads back into the same trap: how can one assert the particularity of nation as collectivity without gesturing toward imperialism and configuring the same East-West, First World-Third World binary that Jameson used in the first place? The same impasse rears its head again.

Of course, in its more common usage, the specificity of nation as a collectivity arises from its claims to sovereignty over a given territory or an implied connection with a state. But the case of Korea—and especially Koreans in Japan—is just one example of how a nation cannot necessarily be considered equivalent to a nation-state. It is worth noting in the first place that the overlaps of terminology are especially difficult to sort out in Korean- and Japanese-language discourse, where the word *minjok* (Korean) or *minzoku* (Japanese) acts as equivalent for both of the English words “nation” and “ethnicity.”²⁰ The words *kungmin/kokumin* (the nation, the

20 This is not meant to point out a “lack” in the Japanese or Korean languages, but rather to highlight the discursive limits imposed on distinctions between ethnicity and nation calcified in the translingual process of equivalent-making. See Lydia Liu, *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity--China, 1900-1937* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995).

people) and *kukka/kokka* (country, nation, state) also frequently stand in for “nation,” but only in contexts where a state is assumed, as they include the Chinese character 国/國 (*koku/kuk*), implying sovereignty. For this reason, uses of these terms were actually censored during the Japanese Empire's colonization of Korea (1910-1945), leading to widespread use of *minjok* to refer to the colonized Korean “nation.” Even after decolonization, there is no such nation-state as “Korea,” only the two states on the divided peninsula, both laying claim to a larger Korean nation that exceeds the boundaries of their respective sovereignties.²¹ But insofar as a nation-state is a specifically modern form and Korea's modernity arrived in colonial context, then there has never been a sovereign, undivided Korean nation-state. If Korea is a nation, it is not in the *kukka* sense but only as a *minjok*.²²

In fact, the concept of a Korean nation has been so thoroughly ethnicized—or what Shih might call “culturalized”²³—that little or no effort is made to distinguish between the two, which is readily apparent in the rhetoric of Korea as ethnically homogenous (*tan'il minjok*). Meanwhile, the same belabored rhetoric is applied to Japan, where *tan'il minjok* becomes *tan'itsu minzoku*, and the presence of the Korean minority is often one of the first data points offered in its refutation.²⁴ For Zainichi Koreans, Korea as nation or *minzoku* is that much more removed from statehood, especially for those, like Kim Sōkpōm, maintaining a defunct “Chōsen” nationality rather than adopting South Korean citizenship, thus remaining effectively stateless. At the same time, clinging to Korean ethnicity is not the empowering political move that it might be in a supposedly homogenous Korea, but instead serves to minoritize and oppress in the context of a

21 Here again, the Korean and Japanese terms do not map easily onto the English “Korea.” The North refers to Korea as Chosōn/Chōsen, whereas the South uses Hanguk/Kankoku. Both lay claim to the entire peninsula, not just the territory controlled by their respective governments.

22 For more on Korea as a nation or *minjok*, see Henry Em, “Minjok as a Modern and Democratic Construct: Sin Ch'aeho's Historiography,” in *Colonial Modernity in Korea*, ed. Gi-Wook Shin and Michael Robinson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 336–61.

23 Shih, “Global Literature and the Technologies of Recognition,” 22–25.

24 See Oguma Eiji, *Tan'itsu minzoku shinwa no kigen: “Nihonjin” no jigazō no keifu* (Tokyo: Shin'yōsha, 1995).

supposedly homogenous Japan. In this way, if Zainichi writers like Kim wish to deploy the Korean “nation” in their work, there are obstacles to defining that nation in terms of either political sovereignty or ethnic heritage. On top of this, they may not have access to the Korean language, another commonly cited basis for the nation. This is exactly the problem that Kim grapples with in his critical endeavors.

4.2 Zainichi Particularity: From Exile to Ethnicity

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, a moment of transition for the field of Zainichi literature as second-generation writers like Ri Kaisei, Kin Kakuei, and Kim Sōkpōm started to come to the fore, resident Korean intellectuals debated the political implications of writing in Japanese.²⁵ At the present moment, with third and fourth generation writers in the mainstream, it seems inevitable that Zainichi literature should be written in Japanese.²⁶ However, the language debate at this watershed moment, and Kim Sōkpōm's contribution in particular, reveals that this was not always the case, nor was the Zainichi community's framing as an ethnic minority of Japan. Kim was particularly active in this debate and especially concerned with the relationship between linguistic practices and the performance of identity. From 1970 to 1972, he published several essays on the topic, which were eventually compiled into book form and published as *Kotoba no jubaku: “Zainichi Chōsenjin bungaku” to Nihongo* (The Spellbinding of Language: “Zainichi Korean Literature” and the Japanese Language) in 1972.²⁷

25 Isogai Jirō, “Henyō to keishō: ‘Zainichi’ bungaku no rokujū nen,” *Shakai bungaku* 26 (2007): 36.

26 In fact, critics like Isogai Jirō and Yun Kōnch'a exclude writers who focused on Korean-language literature and published in North Korean-backed organizational outlets from the framework of “Zainichi.” Zainichi seems to imply not only zai-Nihon but also zai-Nihongo, in this way failing to challenge the reified linkage of Japan and the Japanese language. On this linkage, see Komori Yōichi, “*Yuragi*” no *Nihon bungaku* (Tokyo: NHK Press, 1998).

27 Kim Sōkpōm, *Kotoba no jubaku: “Zainichi Chōsenjin bungaku” to Nihongo* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1972). Note that Kim brackets the category of “Zainichi Chōsenjin bungaku” in his title as in recent references to the category of “Zainichi” literature, but he maintains the “Chōsenjin” marker that has been dropped in many instances.

In the main essay of this collection, entitled “Gengo to jiyū: Nihongo de kaku to iu koto” (Language and Liberty: The Act of Writing in Japanese, 1972),²⁸ Kim starts by laying out the elements of the peculiar relationship that Zainichi Koreans have with language: namely, that while they experience Japanese as a “foreign” language, since it is the language of a foreign nation formerly positioned as colonizing power, they also have no linguistic space outside of Japanese from which to feel a distance from the Japanese language as something foreign or other.²⁹ These strange language politics, he argues, cannot help but affect the creative process of Zainichi writers, causing (at least in his case) no small amount of agony. He expresses a desire to have his work, which is inevitably positioned vis-a-vis Japanese (language) literature and read by a Japanese-language audience, maintain a sort of particularity or strangeness within what he experiences as an oppressive Japanese-language frame. Kim emphasizes that this linguistic positioning of Zainichi Koreans, forced to be conscious of a “lack” of their so-called ethnic language, cannot be cut off from the history of colonialism, under which Koreans were forcefully robbed of their language and culture. Thus, he argues, the issue of language for them can never be entirely a personal one, but inevitably involves the nation/ethnicity (*minzoku*).³⁰

Importantly, even if this naturalized tie between language and ethnic identity is contrived, it still has the power to cause pain. Kim describes an intense emotional pain or even “self-hatred” at his own inability to write in Korean at a satisfactory level, or even to avoid what he sees as an inevitable process of assimilation or “Japanization” of Zainichi Korean culture and literature.³¹

28 Ibid., 64–104.

29 Kim represents somewhat of an exception to his own claim here, as he was proficient enough in Korean to publish in Korean for several years. Nevertheless, he still is clearly conscious of Japanese as his first or primary language, a source of anxiety and suffering for him, as is clear in these essays. He also explores these emotions in fiction: see Kim Sōkpōm, “Kyomutan,” in *Kim Sōkpōm sakuhinshū*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2005), 135–55.

30 He explores this issue in more depth in a separate essay, “Minzoku no jiritsu to ningen no jiritsu” (National Autonomy and Personal Autonomy) in *Koioba no jubaku*, 45–63. In many ways, his ideas here anticipate Jameson's claims about formerly colonized writers and their inextricable position vis-a-vis the collective.

31 Ibid., 85.

To avoid this process and the mental anguish it causes, Kim seeks to discover a way to break free of what he calls the "mechanism" of Japanese, a looming, monolithic force pushing constantly in the direction of assimilation and preventing Zainichi authors from achieving autonomy as specifically Korean subjects. He calls this process the undoing of "the spellbinding of language" (*kotoba no jubaku*).³²

What ends up being the key to undoing this spellbinding is what Kim describes as a process of transcending the particularity of the colonial history and postcolonial circumstances in which Zainichi Koreans are embedded and accessing the "universal" (*fuhensei*). However, he stresses that this "transcending" is not tantamount to escaping or negating such particularities, and argues that in fact the experience of particularity or difference is itself a universal experience.³³ It is for this reason that Kim claims that a complete subjective consciousness is only possible for Zainichi Koreans through the becoming of a specifically Korean national subject, and it is the embrace of this national identity—not the rejection of it—that allows for a will toward the universal. Moreover, the transcendence of particularity (nationality) is not necessary for the achievement of autonomy; rather, the possibility of a turn toward the universal is, in and of itself, subjective autonomy.³⁴

In the final section of his essay, Kim looks at how this process plays out in the context of literary production. He makes reference to structural linguistics, and the arbitrariness of the relationship between signifier and signified and the creation of meaning. While recognizing that Korean and Japanese words differ not only at the level of signifier (particularly in terms of sounds) but also at the level of signified, as even "equivalent" words will conjure up images, memories, and experiences that vary depending on the listener's specific background, Kim draws

32 Ibid., 80.

33 This point is echoed by Naoki Sakai; see *Translation and Subjectivity: On Japan and Cultural Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 153–176.

34 Kim Sökpöm, *Kotoba no jubaku*, 89.

on the translatability of languages to posit a space that is truly universal. It is in this universally commensurable space that the Zainichi author as artist attains the freedom to create a specifically Korean world that exists within the boundaries of the Japanese language, while simultaneously exploding those very linguistic bounds. It is at this deeper level, rather than the surface level of individual words, that Kim calls for Koreans writing in Japanese to inscribe a “Korean flavor” (Chōsenteki na taishū; literally “Korean bodily odor”) into their writing to avoid being too “Japanized” by writing in Japanese.³⁵

At first glance, this may appear to be an assertion of essential difference and a desire to maintain a pure and complete Korean ethnic identity. To be sure, Kim's essay leaves the reader demanding to know what, exactly, constitutes a “Korean” flavor or the danger of a literary work being “Japanized.” Ōe Kenzaburō and Ri Kaisei mention having these questions in a roundtable discussion with Kim printed in *Kotoba no jubaku*, but the latter refuses to answer them over and over.³⁶ Therein lies the key to understanding Kim's conceptualization of the Korean nation: it is not a reified entity with a set of cultural or other characteristics that can be defined and stereotyped. Rather, it is an imagined construct, deployed for the purpose of creating a space in which to articulate a specifically *non-reified* difference as an act of postcolonial resistance.

In this way, Kim's grappling with language politics illuminates the underlying question in the discourse on Jameson's statement on national allegory: what can be written (or read) into a text, and by whom? Jameson's essay is less about the relative merits of national allegory versus any other mode of writing, employed in the First World or otherwise, and more about the question of what is possible for Third World authors to write in the first place. Where Jameson concludes that a first-world libidinal narrative is an impossibility for the third-world writer,

35 Ibid., 102.

36 Ibid., 135–156.

Kim's question is, predictably, even more desperate: is even the national narrative Jameson describes a possibility for the Zainichi writer? In other words, is it even possible for Kim to articulate a Korean identity in any language—in language itself—much less in Japanese?

These questions highlight the specificity of Kim Sökpöm's position within Zainichi literature and the status of Zainichi literature as “third world” without necessarily having access to a “nation” to allegorize. Kim is acknowledged as a kind of exception within the genre of Zainichi literature for writing mainly about the events of the 4.3 Incident, in which thousands of residents of Cheju-do, an island off the southern coast of the Korean peninsula, were massacred following an armed uprising to protest the 1948 elections that set up two divided Korean states, rather than about Korean characters in Japan.³⁷ The 4.3 Incident is the setting of the two major works from the early part of Kim's career, *Karasu no shi* (The Death of a Crow, 1957) and *Mandogi yūrei kitan* (The Curious Tale of Mandogi's Ghost, 1970). *Karasu no shi* is the story of Kijun, who is employed as an interpreter for the military police, but acts as a double agent, passing secrets to the rebels hiding in the mountains. Meanwhile, he is in love with their leader's sister, Yangsun. The story reaches its climax when, in order to maintain his cover as a spy, Kijun must watch in silence as Yangsun and her elderly parents are killed in a mass execution. *Mandogi yūrei kitan*, on the other hand, chronicles the life of Mandogi, a “dimwitted” temple boy who unwittingly becomes involved in the incident and is arrested by the police. He, too, is to be shot in a mass execution, but the bullet fails to kill him, and he returns as a “ghost” to wreak havoc on the authorities.³⁸ Eventually, he burns down the temple he has served for so long and is seen going into the hills, presumably to join the guerrillas there in their fight.

37 For a detailed account of the events of the uprising, see John Merrill, “The Cheju-Do Rebellion,” *Journal of Korean Studies* 2 (1980): 139–97.

38 In Christopher Scott's reading, it remains ambiguous whether Mandogi escapes execution and becomes a “ghost” or actually dies and becomes a ghost. Scott, “Invisible Men: The Zainichi Korean Presence in Postwar Japanese Culture.”

Both novels have been read as allegories for the Zainichi experience. These readings attempt to domesticate his work—to locate in his writings on Cheju-do an underlying concern with Japan or its Korean minority. At the most basic level, 4.3 is of interest to Koreans in Japan because so many of them—including Kim's parents—trace their roots to the island, as ferry lines connected it directly to the Japanese islands during the colonial period, and thousands more fled to Japan after World War II in order to escape the chaos of the massacre. This is often the first piece of evidence cited in answers to the begged question of how Kim's work relates to the Korean presence in Japan,³⁹ but critics also go on to assert that Kim's Cheju-do narratives, at a more profound level, are in fact narratives of the ambiguous, intermediary status of Zainichi Koreans. Elise Foxworth suggests that Kijun in *Karasu no shi* is actually representative of Koreans in Japan, who are similarly caught in a marginal or intermediary position, and have the option of passing for Japanese just as the spy character must pass before his American employers.⁴⁰ Christopher Scott makes a similar argument, viewing the *Mandogi yūrei kitan* as a rewriting of the 4.3 Incident into the history of Japan, rather than as a novel of Korea to be dismissed as foreign by its Japanese-language readership. Scott further relates the novel to Japan by, again, reading Mandogi as an allegory or stand-in for resident Koreans, “focusing on the narrative representation of Mandogi's 'ghost' (i.e., ghost writing) as an allegory about the identity and agency of the Zainichi Korean writer (i.e., ghostwriting).”⁴¹ He summarizes his own position as follows:

39 For instance, Foxworth, “The Trope of the Ghost,” 237; Scott, “Invisible Men: The Zainichi Korean Presence in Postwar Japanese Culture,” 109–110.

40 Elise Foxworth, “A Tribute to the Japanese Literature of Korean Writers in Japan,” *New Voices* 1 (December 2006): 48–49. Foxworth also makes a similar argument about Mandogi, contending that “by writing a ghost story about a character with a hybrid cultural identity (Mandogi is at once 'authentic' Korean and diasporic Korean) and a hybrid mortality (Mandogi is at once a human and a ghost), Kim obfuscates the boundaries that normally limit a given identity.” Foxworth, “The Trope of the Ghost,” 237–238.

41 Scott, “Invisible Men: The Zainichi Korean Presence in Postwar Japanese Culture,” 105.

Mandogi is first and foremost an allegory about the 4.3 Incident.... Kim has been writing about the incident in Japanese for nearly fifty years, but Japanese critics often see his work as far removed from Japan or Japanese literature. *Mandogi*, in particular, has been read as a foreign text. I, however, see *Mandogi* more in terms of its hybridity, its doubleness, or what one critic has called its “Zainichi-ness.”⁴² ... The mystery of *Mandogi* also haunts the narrator, who is unable—or, as I will contend, reluctant—to retell *Mandogi*'s story accurately or faithfully. This unreliable narrator embodies the dilemma of the Zainichi Korean writer, who often feels fake or inauthentic because of living in Japan and writing in Japanese.⁴³

Through his incisive analysis, Scott is able to see the allegory operating at a higher level: not only is *Mandogi*'s ambiguous identity a comment on Zainichi identity, the narrator, too, stands for the Zainichi writer and his fraught position within Japanese or Japanese-language literature. In either case, the novel is rescued from its status as a “foreign text” and its “Zainichi-ness” is reasserted.

While such allegorical readings of Kim's work are certainly productive, revealing a depth in the texts that is not readily apparent, they may run the risk of reproducing the structures of power and privilege critiqued in the context of Jameson's original deployment of national allegory. What is especially visible in these readings of Kim is what Shu-Mei Shih calls the “time lag” or “nostalgia” of allegory:

Allegory is only one kind of meaning-producing form, and it is also but one of the hermeneutical codes we can bring to the reading of texts. Clever readers can, I would suggest, interpret any text as an allegory, as long as they labor to do so. The temporal gap between the literal and the allegorical meaning of a text is then the designated field of interpretive labor. In the end, it is in the politics of allegorical interpretation as a value-producing labor—who has the privilege of doing it, who is forced to do it, who has the luxury not to do it—that the nostalgia of the First World theorist becomes legible and can be fruitfully critiqued. The time lag of allegorical meaning production in the movement from the literal to the figural evokes the belated temporality of Third World culture in modernity.⁴⁴

To be sure, this “interpretive labor” is highly visible in attempts to read Kim Sōkpōm's *Cheju-do* fiction as Zainichi allegory, even where such a figurative meaning is not obviously present. As

42 Ono Teijirō, *Sonzai no genki: Kim Sōkpōm bungaku* (Tokyo: Shinkansha, 1998), 65 (Scott's citation).

43 Scott, “Invisible Men: The Zainichi Korean Presence in Postwar Japanese Culture,” 105–106.

44 Shih, “Global Literature and the Technologies of Recognition,” 21.

readers labor to interpret Kim's stories in this particular way, they reproduce a narrow conception of what Zainichi literature categorically is: representative of the Zainichi experience. They participate in a circular process, in which the very genre of Zainichi literature is constituted by a specifically ethnic experience, and the framework of Zainichi literature inscribes that same experience of “Zainichi-ness” on the texts within its purview.⁴⁵

In this way, the construction of Zainichi literature as a genre is mimetic of the process outlined and problematized in the Jameson debate. That is, if Jameson's national allegory is implicated in the reification and homogenization of the non-West for the purpose of reproducing the West as dominant and unmolested hegemon, then we can see an analogous process at work in the categorization of Zainichi literature, in which the formula for inclusion in the genre erases many of the complexities and contradictions present in the postcolonial situation. The impulse to create allegorical meaning in the works of Kim Sökpöm can be seen as one consequence of this hegemonic structure.⁴⁶

Where these readings depart from the national allegory framework is in the entity that is ostensibly allegorized. Rather than allegories of the broader Korean nation—whatever that might entail—the collectivity that Kim cannot but represent in his stories is specifically the Korean minority in Japan. As we have seen, the discourse on national allegory is often not particularly invested in the nation versus other subjugated collectivities (including minority groups) but here a more careful look at Kim's explicit goals might offer another angle from which to approach the

45 On other potential consequences of such categorizations, or “textual identities,” see Edward Mack, “Paracolonial Literature: Japanese-language Literature in Brazil,” *Ilbon yöngu* 16 (2011): 89-128.

46 All the same, my purpose here is not to invalidate such metaphorical readings of Kim's or other Zainichi authors' works. Perhaps, as Margaret Hillenbrand contends in the case of contemporary Taiwanese literature, allegory provides a productive site for Korean authors in Japan and their readers to work out some of the contradictions inherent in postcolonial literary production: see Hillenbrand, “The National Allegory Revisited.” In the end, it is fruitless to suggest that allegory be banished completely from the interpretive toolbox of readers of literature from any “world.” Its traps are evident, but as Jameson and his defenders might argue, perhaps still worth stepping into. How, when, by whom, and to what ends (national) allegory should be deployed ultimately remain fraught questions.

question of what specific role the nation might play in the reading and writing of third-world texts. It is clear from his essays that Kim is not interested in espousing a hybrid identity. As soon as Japan becomes part of the equation, Kim already feels a loss, able only to view his existence in Japan as a painful legacy of colonial injustices that created the *Zainichi* situation in the first place. Moreover, for Kim, accepting “*Zainichi*” as the group to which he belongs is tantamount to accepting the permanent division of the Korean peninsula and the impossibility of a whole and complete Korean nation. Although Kim's position on this issue is not mainstream in the *Zainichi* community—and has in fact been roundly criticized by other high-profile members of it⁴⁷—it offers one potential scenario in which a minority or ethnic identity may be expressly at odds with the nation. While adopting a hybrid identity like *Zainichi* may be a liberating move in many situations, in this case at least it also runs the risk of foreclosing other potential options for identification, such as the Korean nation of Kim's imagination.

I want to stress again that this is not to suggest that the category of *Zainichi* be dropped in favor of reinforcing normative national or nation-state boundaries. The Korean nation-states established on the peninsula in the wake of the Korean War have provided ample evidence that such a model is just as capable of producing oppression as imperialism. In the first place, *Zainichi* identity is a perfectly valid option, which members of the community choose to perform in any number of diverse and empowering ways. But one must also recognize that a non-reified nation like the one Kim sets out to create in his fiction has its own liberating potential. In fact, the thorough ethnicization of the Korean nation(s) and the *Zainichi* community can reproduce the same imperialist rhetoric that these groups set out to refute. The nation, carefully deployed, may offer more potential to be explicitly imaginary, to wear its unreality on its sleeve.

47 Ri Kaisei, “‘Mukokusekisha’ no ikikata: Kim Sōkpōm shi e no hentō,” *Sekai* 657 (January 1999): 257–69.

Thus it becomes crucial to unravel the process of the Zainichi community's contingent transformation from displaced or exiled members of a Korean nation at large to a minoritized ethnic group, defined always within and with respect to Japan. This brings us back to one more potential problem with reading *Karasu no shi* and *Mandogi yūrei kitan* through the same lens of Zainichi allegory: its ahistoricity. That is to say, “Korea” (not to mention “Zainichi”) simply did not mean the same thing to Kim when he debuted with *Karasu* in the late 1950s versus his re-entry into the Japanese-language literary scene with *Mandogi* in the early 1970s. Over this short span, during which Kim Sōkpōm attempted and abandoned a writing career in the Korean language, the Korea that acted as the binding force for the identity of Zainichi underwent a shift from nation to ethnicity, and in a parallel process, the collective itself shifted from one of exile to one of minority—where “exile” is understood as emphasizing physical displacement from the real or imagined space of a nation, and “minority” as emphasizing the hereditary difference of ethnicity. These parallel shifts took place due to a range of Cold War political factors, but most illuminating for our purposes here is the shifting politics of language.

Kim Sōkpōm's early career in particular demonstrates that authors like himself, who would eventually be called Zainichi Korean authors, were not always so isolated, linguistically and otherwise, from the Korean peninsula, especially in the first decades following the end of World War II and Japan's colonization of Korea. It was only later, toward the 1970s, that Zainichi literature became codified as a minority literature of Japan. Kim's fiction and essays reveal the situation to be more fluid and complex in the early postwar years, and they shift in response to political changes and concomitant new understandings of the position of Koreans in Japan and the body of literature they produce. Teasing apart the role that language politics plays in the process of reifying Zainichi as ethnic minority and literary genre opens a path to challenging a

minoritizing conceptualization of Zainichi literature that obscures the complex network of linguistic possibilities⁴⁸ open to these authors, allowing for a more radical critique of the notion of an ethnically pure Japanese literature. In Kim's novellas, we can see very different responses to these changing politico-linguistic circumstances, as well as the manifold ways that politics and language are intertwined in Kim's struggle to enunciate a liberating Korean identity.

If we understand the literature produced by Zainichi Koreans today and in recent decades to have relatively little literary contact with Korean literature from the peninsula, a wealth of new studies have convincingly shown that the opposite was true during the period of Japan's colonization of Korea, 1910-1945. Karen Thornber, for instance, explores the vast networks of “readerly contact, writerly contact, and textual contact” that existed within and throughout the Japanese empire, through which texts of all kinds were filtered, exchanged, and transformed.⁴⁹ Not only literary texts, but also the authors themselves moved frequently and with relative ease between major hubs, especially Tokyo. Major writers of Korean fiction in the colonial period studied in Tokyo nearly without exception, and many published in Japanese as well. Yun Kōnch'a writes of this period, “it would be difficult to distinguish between Koreans living on the Korean peninsula and Koreans living in Japan—they were all just Koreans moving back and forth.”⁵⁰ Here Yun is attempting to demarcate the category of Zainichi literature by excluding works from before 1945, arguing that even those writers in Japan could not be separated from colonial Korean literature, but what he ends up demonstrating is that Korean literature itself could not be so easily disentangled from Japanese literature, much less the Japanese language. His comment

48 I am borrowing the term “linguistic possibilities” from Nayoung Aimee Kwon.

49 Karen Thornber, *Empire of Texts in Motion: Chinese, Korean, and Taiwanese Transculturations of Japanese Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center (Distributed by Harvard University Press), 2009), 2. For a sense of the incredible scope and complexity of literary exchange throughout the empire, see especially Chapter 1.

50 Yun Kōnch'a, “Henyō gainen to shite no Zainichisei: Zainichi Chōsenjin bungaku/Zainichi bungaku o kangaeru,” 62.

resonates with recent work by Nayoung Aimee Kwon exploring the fluctuating geographical and linguistic location of Korean literature through its encounters with the imperial language. Kwon writes:

At a time when the past seemed to be melting away, imperial borders were in flux, and the distances between the metropole and the colony appeared to be shrinking fast through technologies of imperial expansion and assimilation, cultural productions from the colony became notably contentious sites. The boundaries of Korean Literature seemed anything but self-evident, and the question ‘What is Korean Literature?’ was being posed with different registers of significance from the colony to the metropole. In the colony, the discourse of *Chosŏn munhak* embodied the urgent desire to construct a national literary canon amidst rising anxieties about the fluctuating borderlines of the assimilated colony and its (absent or exiled) nation.⁵¹

If Korean literature was constructed around a nation in absentia, then Zainichi literature seems much more like its natural heir than a distinct phenomenon requiring mutual exclusion. What obscures this continuity is the assumption—belied by the very texts in question—of a natural linkage between the Japanese or Korean national literature rubrics and their respective (ethnicized) languages. The myth of postwar rupture that renders Zainichi literature incommensurate with Korean literature is created by the disavowal of the imperial/colonial past in both Korea and Japan in the context of the Cold War, and in turn serves to conceal the immense and painful process of that disavowal in the construction of independent ethno-national literatures.⁵²

In fact, the chaotic linguistic, social, and practical conditions that gave rise to this kind of exchange in the colonial period did not instantly vanish with the end of Japan's colonization of

51 Nayoung Aimee Kwon, “Colonial Modernity and the Conundrum of Representation: Korean Literature in the Japanese Empire,” *Postcolonial Studies* 13, no. 4 (December 2010): 425–426.

52 Recent studies exposing this disavowed past and the Cold War politics of the labor to erase it include Ko Youngran, “*Sengo*” to *iu ideorogī: rekishi, kioku, bunka* (Tokyo: Fujiwara Shoten, 2010); Theodore Hughes, *Literature and Film in Cold War South Korea: Freedom's Frontier* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012); Nayoung Aimee Kwon, *Intimate Empire: Collaboration and Colonial Modernity in Korea and Japan* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015); Serk-Bae Suh, *Treacherous Translation: Culture, Nationalism, and Colonialism in Korea and Japan from the 1910s to the 1960s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013); Christina Yi, “Fissured Languages of Empire: Gender, Ethnicity, and Literature in Japan and Korea, 1930s--1950s” (Ph.D., Columbia University, 2013); Jonathan Glade, “Occupied Liberation: Transforming Literary Boundaries in Japan and Southern Korea, 1945-1952” (Ph.D., The University of Chicago, 2013).

Korea. With many of the restrictive wartime-mobilization policies lifted in 1945, communication channels reopened, and socialist and other suppressed groups began to reemerge on the literary scene (though many would later be shut down or censored again by the American occupation).⁵³ The years immediately following Korea's release from Japanese colonial rule saw an outpouring of Korean-language fiction on the peninsula when the ban on publishing in Korean was lifted, and Japanese-language publications all but disappeared from Korea. However, Korean writers and intellectuals in Japan continued to write and publish in Japanese, and obviously writers on the peninsula—many of whom admit that they were more comfortable writing in Japanese than in Korean—did not forget the Japanese language overnight, so literary and intellectual exchange across the strait was still possible on a bilingual basis even into the postwar.⁵⁴ In addition, people were still migrating in large numbers between Japan and Korea in the first few years of the postwar: Japanese settlers in Korea repatriating to Japan, conscripted Korean laborers returning to Korea, and, not insignificantly, Korean refugees fleeing political turmoil on the peninsula and especially in Cheju-do. Thus, in many ways the early postwar years resembled those of the colonial period in terms of circulation of both humans and texts.

Kim Sökpöm's early career reinforces this picture of movement and circulation in the years of the liberation space, the American occupation, the Korean War, and even into the 1960s. Born in Osaka to parents from Cheju-do, Kim spent the years leading up to 1945 doing menial jobs and studying independently in Osaka for the most part, though he was able to travel to Cheju-do and mainland Korea to study Korean and develop contacts. After the war, Kim

53 Ko Youngran offers insightful essays on the position of Koreans within Japanese socialist organizations and literary circles during the occupation. See "*Sengo*" to *iu ideorogī*, especially Chapters 6 and 7. See also Samuel Perry, *Recasting Red Culture in Proletarian Japan: Childhood, Korea, and the Historical Avant-Garde* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2014).

54 In fact, periodizations of Korean literature refer to writers who first published in the 1970s and 1980s as the "*hangül* generation," emphasizing the fact that those born after 1945 were the first generation of Korean writers to be mostly educated in Korean, rather than Japanese, or classical Chinese before that. See Suh, *Treacherous Translation* on the rise of (a never inevitable) monolingualism in post-1945 Korea.

continued to exchange letters with some of the activists he had met in Korea, and started working with left-wing organizations and Korean nationalist groups in Japan, teaching school as well as editing and writing for their publications.⁵⁵ Much of Kim's contact with other Korean writers and activists in the postwar came through organizations like Ch'ongnyŏn (Sōren in Japanese),⁵⁶ the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan, which is considered an overseas branch of the North Korean government dedicated to the advancement of Zainichi Korean rights and education. An earlier left-wing Zainichi Korean group with which Kim was involved, Choryŏn,⁵⁷ or the League of Koreans, was dissolved in 1949 by the American occupation, which viewed it as “an anti-democratic, terrorist organization.”⁵⁸

Because Ch'ongnyŏn and its branch organizations, including the Alliance of Zainichi Korean Writers and Artists,⁵⁹ which published newspapers and magazines for which Kim Sōkpŏm edited and wrote, were associated with and financially supported by the North Korean government, its activists and writers were still very connected to life and literature on the peninsula (or at least the northern half) when Kim's literary career was beginning. The organizations also created venues for writing in Korean to be published in Japan, which helped to maintain Korean-speaking and bilingual communities. As was the case on the peninsula, where many of the active intellectuals in the 1950s and 1960s were bilingual due to having been educated in Japanese during the colonial period, the Korean community in Japan was knowledgeable in both Korean and Japanese. Unlike those in Korea, however, Zainichi Koreans were actually able to write and publish in both languages.

55 Hiratsuka Tsuyoshi, “Shōsai nenbu,” in *Kim Sōkpŏm sakuhinshū*, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2005), 605–606.

56 Ch'ongnyŏn is short for Chae Ilbon Chosŏnin Ch'ongnyŏn Haphoe in Korean, Zai Nihon Chōsenjin Sōren Gōkai in Japanese.

57 K.: Chae-il Chosŏnin Ryŏnmaeng; J.: Zainichi Chōsenjin Renmei

58 Hiromitsu Inokuchi, “Korean Ethnic Schools in Occupied Japan, 1945-1952,” in *Koreans in Japan: Critical Voices from the Margin*, ed. Sonia Ryang (New York: Routledge, 2000), 154.

59 J.: Zai Nihon Chōsenjin Bungaku Geijutsuka Dōmei; K.: Chae Ilbon Chosŏnin Munhak Yesulga Tongmaeng.

Still, most writers chose one language or another, and Kim is one of the few who wrote and published significantly in both Japanese and Korean after 1945. After publishing several works of fiction in Japanese, including *Karasu no shi*, in the late 1950s, Kim wrote almost exclusively in Korean during the 1960s until his return to the Japanese-language literary scene in the early 1970s.⁶⁰ During this period, he was also in regular contact with recent immigrants from Korea, including those fleeing Cheju-do.⁶¹ It is crucial, then, when looking at Kim's work from these early decades of his career (even his work in Japanese), to remember that Kim was positioned as much or more closely to the Korean literary and political worlds as to those in Japan, though again, the gulf between the two was much less wide at that moment than it would be just a few years later.

By the time Kim re-entered the Japanese-language literary scene in the 1970s, Kim's linguistic and political freedom to connect with his Korean “nation” had been drastically reduced. By this point, the prospects of reunification for the two states on the Korean peninsula were dwindling, and more importantly for Koreans in Japan, diplomatic relations were established between Japan and the South Korean regime in 1965, at which point resident Koreans, who were essentially stateless at the time, were offered Republic of Korea citizenship and allowed to apply for passports. Many took advantage of the increased privileges and rights made available to them by becoming citizens of South Korea, even as others were starting to take on Japanese citizenship. The latter was just one indicator of a general trend toward the kind of assimilation that Kim extolled the need to fight against. By the early 1970s, first generation resident Koreans were outnumbered by the second generation, many of whom had little or no experience with the Korean “homeland” or the Korean language, and were generally more fully

60 Song Hyewŏn, “Kim Sŏkpŏm no Chōsengo sakuhin ni tsuite,” in *Kim Sŏkpŏm sakuhinshū*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2005), 562–64.

61 Hiratsuka Tsuyoshi, “Shōsai nenbu,” 608.

integrated into Japanese society than their parents had been. Organizations like Ch'ongnyŏn and its ROK-affiliated counterpart, Mindan, shifted their focus from repatriation toward increased rights and improved status for Koreans as a minority in Japan.⁶² The political status of Zainichi Koreans was increasingly framed in the context of the defense of their rights in Japan rather than in Korea, a process that necessarily involved a rhetoric of minoritization and the assertion of a Korean ethnic identity.

Simultaneously, attention to Zainichi writers and their work was growing, culminating with the awarding of the Akutagawa Prize to Ri Kaisei in 1971, a moment that signified the acceptance of Korean writers into the canon of Japanese literature. When Kim Sŏkpŏm returned to writing in Japanese with *Kyomutan* (Tale of an Empty Dream) in 1969 and *Mandogi yūrei kitan* in 1970, the transformation of resident Korean literature from a segment of Korean literature in exile to a minority literature of Japan was almost complete. Meanwhile, Kim had ceased writing in Korean due to political differences with the organizations that had been publishing his work. Now, rather than writing for bilingual Koreans (possibly even those on the peninsula), Kim could expect a substantial Japanese readership, as well as a resident Korean audience that functioned almost completely in Japanese. In this way, the change in (language) politics that occurred from the early post-war to the 1970s closed off many of the options available to Kim for remaining attached to the Korean nation.

However, his response to these changes in his actual life offers a clue to reading his literary texts in the context of this transition. Rather than taking on South Korean citizenship or naturalizing as Japanese, Kim chose to maintain his status as a resident alien originating from *Chōsen* (Korea). He explains that this was less a declaration of allegiance to the DPRK and more

62 Changsoo Lee, "Organizational Division and Conflict: Ch'ongnyŏn and Mindan," in *Koreans in Japan: Ethnic Conflict and Accommodation*, ed. Changsoo Lee and George De Vos (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 123–124.

an insistence on his connection to a unified Korea—never mind the fact that, since the division of the peninsula, no such state exists. When Ri Kaisei chose to apply for South Korean citizenship over thirty years later, Kim publicly took him to task, arguing that Zainichi Koreans enjoy a privilege of sorts, in that they may choose to identify with an imaginary Korean nation rather than being forced to pledge allegiance to one of the two states and consolidate the structure of division even outside the space of the peninsula.⁶³ Paradoxically, the clearly more marginalized status of Chōsen citizenship becomes the more liberating option, precisely because the nation that grounds it is not real. In the same way, Kim's novels from this period reveal a deepening sense of crisis as Zainichi is codified and other potential avenues for identification are foreclosed. Nevertheless, from that deeper crisis emerges an ever more fluid and imaginary “Korean” space in which radical difference can be performed.

4.3 Being as Resistance: Korea(n) in the Space of Japan(ese)

This deepening sense of crisis, as Kim Sōkpōm perceived his choices as Zainichi Korean narrowing to assimilation and minoritized difference, manifests itself in the struggles encountered by the characters in *Karasu no shi* and *Mandogi yūrei kitan*. The ethnicization of Zainichi is readily apparent in the gap between the positions of Kijun and Mandogi, the protagonists of the two novels. As previous scholarship has pointed out, both men occupy a tenuous or ambiguous position that can be likened to that of the Zainichi in general (with the above caveats about representation in effect). Presumably, this amounts to a lack of power, and indeed the disempowerment and marginalization of Kijun and Mandogi are central concerns in *Karasu no shi* and *Mandogi yūrei kitan*, respectively. However, the quality of and conditions for

63 Kim Sōkpōm, “Ima, ‘Zainichi’ ni totte ‘kokuseki’ to wa nani ka: Ri Kaisei kun e no tegami,” *Sekai* 653 (October 1998): 131–42. See also a discussion of this essay and Kim's attitude toward citizenship and nationality in Melissa Wender, *Lamentation as History: Narratives by Koreans in Japan, 1965-2000* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 195.

such disempowerment differ significantly across the two novels in a way that corresponds to differences in the political conditions of their respective historical moments.

In *Karasu no shi*, Kijun's lack of power arises, counterintuitively, from his role as a spy. In fact, much of the drama in the novel turns on this irony: even as Kijun's spying places him in a dynamic position, allowing him movement across languages and spaces, its pressures in turn impose restrictions on his speech and actions. His indispensability as a double agent forces him to place the needs of the party before his own, and results over and over in his inability to say or do what he wishes. Though he is loyal to the cause of the partisans, led by his dear friend Chang Yongsök, Kijun at one point grumbles to himself, “Ah, I want to be freed from this mute-like existence, and I too want to pick up a gun and fight with all my heart like him,”⁶⁴ emphasizing his “mute-like” silence as the symbol of his lack of freedom as a spy. The novel follows Kijun through increasingly difficult moments of forced silence, culminating when he must watch, without revealing his inner anguish or compassion, as Chang's parents and sister are massacred by his employers. Yangsun, Yongsök's sister and Kijun's love interest, dies believing Kijun to be a traitor, and he is not even allowed the liberty to confess his love for her, nor to explain that he remains loyal.

The novel brings home the tragic irony of Kijun's position in a scene in which he is confronted by Yi Sanggün, the dissipated son of a wealthy islander, who suspects that Kijun is a spy. Sanggün taunts Kijun by mentioning that he is thinking of becoming a spy and elaborating on how liberated and powerful spies must be. Being aligned with neither side of the conflict, he says, is real power: “My actions have nothing to do with either of them, and in that way, I'm free. It must be the same way for a spy. And if that's the case, I should be able to get to the top of the

64 Kim Sökpöm, “Karasu no shi,” in *Karasu no shi; Yume, kusa fukashi* (Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 1999), 46.

pyramid.”⁶⁵ Kijun's only option is to respond vaguely lest he reveal too much, but his inner monologue is narrated as follows:

Yi Sanggŭn could know nothing of the dim world of the spy. He could know nothing of that dark part of your mind—more like the bottom of a pit beneath a pyramid than the top of it—where you struggled with an unseen tension, constantly wracked with horror by a sense of yourself as a tiny hero and then a demon. Kijun was barely able to suppress his voice, rising sickly sweet in his throat to say, “You know, real spying isn't like that at all.”⁶⁶

Again, Kijun finds himself unable to speak his mind, reprising the very powerlessness he faces as a spy that has brought him a pain that Sanggŭn, lacking similar experience, fails to understand. However, at every turn, including this climactic scene, Kijun's silence is ultimately voluntary. He struggles with his own desire to leave his post and join the fighters in the mountains or flee from the island altogether, but he always chooses to endure. The powerlessness, silencing, and marginalization that he experiences are, in the end, the result of a political position he has chosen for himself—in contrast to the embodied marginality of Mandogi. Whereas Kijun's marginalization is a consequence of circumstances within his control to some extent, Mandogi's very birth is seized upon to subject him to ridicule and exclusion.

In the first place, Mandogi is cognitively disabled, frequently addressed by characters in the novel simply as “dimwit” (*usunoro*) or “stupid” (*baka*). If Kijun suffers from an excess of linguistic ability, doomed to spying by his knowledge of English, Korean, and presumably Japanese, then Mandogi certainly lies at the opposite end of the spectrum. The narrative specifies more than once that Mandogi does not “understand a word of Japanese,”⁶⁷ and his Korean (uncannily represented in Japanese) seems also to be somewhat limited, with Mother Seoul, his

65 Ibid., 90.

66 Ibid., 91.

67 Kim Sŏkpŏm, “Mandogi yŭrei kitan,” in *Mandogi yŭrei kitan; Sagishi* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1991), 11, 110. Translations are based on Kim Sŏk-pŏm, *The Curious Tale of Mandogi's Ghost*, trans. Cindi Textor (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

abusive mother figure at the temple, once exclaiming that she thought he was mute.⁶⁸ Mandogi's biological mother is also described as “nearly mute,”⁶⁹ suggesting that Mandogi's own disability is hereditary. This word “mute” (*oshi*) is the same that Kijun uses to lament his obligatory silence in *Karasu no shi*, but in the case of Mandogi, that silence is embodied. The linguistic impossibilities faced by Mandogi are no longer a matter of choice, or even the illusion of choice, but instead are inscribed in his body and obliquely attributed to heritage. If Mandogi is to be read as an allegorical Zainichi figure, he is a thoroughly ethnicized one, in the sense that his lack of voice is attributable foremost to biology rather than to external politics.

Mandogi is also marginalized in other ways by the circumstances of his birth, namely his lack of official parentage or place of origin. As the novel explains in its very first pages, Mandogi was dropped off at a temple as a small child by his mother. Mandogi's father is given no name, ethnicity, or other identifying markers, and is described only as having appeared one day at the Osaka temple where his mother was employed, eventually raping her in a closet.⁷⁰ Mandogi's identity, then, at least in terms of ethnic or social origins, is completely ambiguous. This alienates Mandogi not only at the affective level, but also at an official level, as it excludes him from the *koseki* family registry system. Nonetheless, just as Kijun's ostensible power as a spy turns against him, Mandogi's marginalization is turned around, becoming a disruption for the systems of power Mandogi encounters. For instance, the novel opens with a discussion of Mandogi's namelessness and mysterious origins, but quickly hints that this may be more of a problem for the police than for Mandogi himself.

He had been nameless since birth, with no family register, so when he was asked for his name, age, parents' names, and permanent residence, he didn't have a good answer. This kind of person, the kind without any distinguishing data, became a nuisance for the draft

68 Kim Sōkpōm, “Mandogi yūrei kitan,” 32.

69 Ibid., 15.

70 Scott suggests that Mandogi's father may be Japanese, making his ethnicity hybrid or ambiguous. If so, Mandogi is literally born from a colonial metaphor.

officials making the lists. The vagabonds with no addresses were no problem, as they could be arrested and sent straight to the work camps, but those without definite birth dates, and especially those without definite names, were even difficult to put on the draft list.⁷¹

Whenever Mandogi encounters bureaucracy, on the occasion of his conscription into forced labor at a mine or his arrest in the middle of the 4.3 incident, his lack of “data,” up to and including his name, becomes in its own way a kind of guerrilla tactic. Later, after Mandogi's botched execution, his continued actions after his disappearance from all records creates an even graver problem for the police. As a “ghost,” Mandogi's marginal status is *disembodied*, which on the surface should oppress him that much more, but actually renders him impossible to control. Eventually, Mandogi burns down the temple headquarters and goes up the mountain to join the resistance, all made possible by his reduction (elevation?) to a non-entity. Even as Mandogi is thrown into greater crisis, he is able to maneuver into a position of resistance.

The same type of reaction to crisis can be seen at the stylistic level in the bilingual play that Kim includes in both novels. The hybrid nature of the language in these texts could itself be seen as a representation of sorts of the Zainichi experience, the caught-between positionality that is so often supposed to define what it is to be Zainichi and to write Zainichi literature. However, I would argue that the uncanniness of the language in Kim's texts goes beyond a simple admixture of Korean and Japanese, and instead radically challenges the spatial consistency of those languages. Kim fights in the texts against the “spellbinding of language,” works to destroy the Japanese language, along with its ethnic logic, from the inside out. Although this labor is evident in both *Karasu no shi* and *Mandogi yūrei kitan*, a closer examination reveals different strategies in play between the two novels according to the politicolinguistic conditions of the moment.

71 Kim Sōkpōm, “Mandogi yūrei kitan,” 11.

The complicated, hybrid language that Kim employs in *Karasu no shi* provides evidence for the ongoing complexity of the linguistic environment into which it was published in 1957. The work was published in Japanese and it is clear that the author intended it for a Japanese audience, as he includes explanatory notes for Korean concepts and objects that may be unfamiliar to the Japanese reader. For instance, he uses the word *paji* for traditional Korean trousers, and includes a note explaining that they resemble Japanese *mompe* pants.⁷² On the other hand, Kim peppers his Japanese with Korean place and personal names, all glossed with *katakana*, which serves as a constant reminder that story is somewhat removed from Japan, and assumes a certain knowledge of the Korean peninsula. In more extreme cases, he glosses a known character with a phonetic representation of a Korean word. For example, in dialogue, Kim uses the character for “red” to indicate the communists, but he glosses it with the *katakana* *barugan'i* for the Korean *ppalgaeng'i* (commie) a device that adds nothing to the understanding of readers who do not already know the Korean word in question.⁷³ It is easy to guess from context and from the presence of the Japanese character in the main level of the text that the gloss must be the Korean word for “commie,” but this operation reverses the usual structure of a gloss, wherein the *furigana* adds meaning to the word in question. In this case, Japanese-language readers must either decipher and provide meaning for the gloss, or simply ignore it and move on. So at some level, the novel is intended for, or at least offers a more rich textual experience to bilingual readers.

One of the most interesting examples of this kind of playful or disruptive linguistic practice comes from a work published just months before *Karasu no shi*, Kim's earliest attempt to fictionalize the history of the 4.3 Incident, *Kansha Paku Soban* (Pak Söbang the Jailer,

72 Kim Sökpȫm, “*Karasu no shi*,” 45.

73 *Ibid.*, 40.

1957).⁷⁴ The work's title character is described in various instances as having a pock-marked face, and one of the female prisoners in his charge calls him a *nassumikan* in order to insult him. The word refers to a kind of citrus fruit that grows in Japan with a rough, lumpy rind that presumably resembles Pak's face. In Japanese, the fruit is called *natsu mikan*, the closest Korean phonetic approximation of which is *nassŭ mik'an*. What appears in the story, *nassumikan* in Japanese *katakana*, must be read as a Japanese approximation of the Korean approximation of the original Japanese.

Kim draws extra attention to these layered contortions within the plot of the story as well, as Pak is initially confused by this word and consults with an acquaintance about its meaning and origins, suspecting it to be a word from the Cheju dialect. He tells this friend, Chin, that he has heard people saying that Chin's face looks like a *nassumikan*, distancing himself from the insult, and asks if he has any clue what it means. This leads to a humorous scene in which the two puzzle over the meaning of the word with similar *mikan* fruit literally right in front of their noses. Eventually one of the local government officials who was educated in Japan stops by and solves the mystery, explains that a *nassumikan* is a Japanese word, and adding that it is ridiculous for people to say that Chin resembles the fruit, though “oddly enough, Pak Sŏbang's face looks just like one!”⁷⁵ Again, the linguistic play in this scene is certainly not confusing enough to leave readers with only the Japanese language out of the joke, but those who can hear the Korean pronunciation behind the Japanese representation of the word spot right away the source of Pak's confusion, and get to enjoy an additional layer of ironic humor.

It is not impossible to read these language acrobatics as themselves a sort of convoluted allegory for the hybridity and in-between status of resident Koreans in Japan, but they are more

74 Kim Sŏkpŏm, “Kansha Paku soban,” in *Kim Sŏkpŏm sakuhinshū*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2005), 7–42.

75 *Ibid.*, 13.

easily explained by the highly fluid linguistic environment into which the texts were inserted. Kim was publishing in journals supported by Ch'ongnyŏn (and, by extension, the North Korean government), which was staffed by and aimed its programs at Koreans in Japan, who in most cases could read Kim's novels in Japanese, but also appreciate his references to the Korean language, as well as his attempts to Koreanize the Japanese language itself by working in borrowings from the Korean language and parenthetical explanations of their meanings. Though this kind of bilingual text may seem cumbersome decades later in the absence of a substantial Korean-Japanese bilingual population, at the time there were plenty of readers who would not have found this hybrid style unusual.

Kim's linguistic strategy also changes subtly over the years separating his debut from his return to Japanese-language writing. In *Mandogi*, rather than assuming a fairly bilingual audience, Kim writes for readers, whether Korean or Japanese, who have little or no familiarity with the Korean language. However, this is not to say that *Mandogi* contains none of the linguistic complexity and playfulness of earlier novels like *Karasu no shi* and *Kansha Paku Soban*. Kim still includes many Korean words in the text, but rather than inserting Korean by glossing standard Japanese words or compounds with phonetic Korean readings, Kim uses unfamiliar compounds of Chinese characters that appear in the Korean language but not in Japanese. For example, Kim repeatedly refers to Mandogi's fate using a four character compound commonly used in Korean but not present in Japanese, sometimes glossed in *katakana* as *saju paruja* for the Korean *saju p'alja*, and elsewhere glossed in *hiragana* as the Japanese word *unmei*.⁷⁶

If the insertion of Korean into earlier works seems almost like a game, simply providing additional layers of meaning and humor for an assumed audience of bilingual readers, then the

76 Kim Sŏkpŏm, "Mandogi yŏrei kitan," 12–13.

device at work here seems to have a greater sense of crisis. Whereas before both reader and writer could be comfortable in the existence of this kind of playful linguistic space outside the range of either Korean or Japanese as unified sets of rules, now Kim seems to be desperately trying to create such a space, to push back against the bounds of a language that suddenly feels oppressively Japanese. He is attempting to teach a Korean word to his readership, in a way; and indeed, on numerous other occasions in the novel, he goes out of his way to provide extensive definitions and notes on Korean words that appear in his text, sometimes in long, awkward parentheticals, and other times digressing for paragraphs at a time in the narrative itself. Now one senses the author in battle with the Japanese language. Kim's greatest weapon in this battle with Nihongo is the potential of these linguistic acrobatics to create the new, imaginary space that he seeks as other potential spaces of identity close off around him. He plays with the visual and oral elements of text in such a way that violates the boundaries of the Japanese and Korean languages, occupying the always particular "universal" space of literature that Kim refers to in "Gengo to jiyū."

If we return to Kim Sōkpōm's fiction with this line of thinking in mind, we can see how he creates a Korea in his work that is liberated from claims to authenticity or truth. In *Karasu no shi*, for example, this freedom arises as the work draws attention to its own uncanniness by never allowing the reader to forget that what is being represented in Japanese is Korean speech in a Korean setting. Nearly all of the character and place names in the work are glossed with *katakana* representing the Korean pronunciations of the names, such that the sense of place in the novel is tightly tied to the sounds of the Korean language. But the more interesting device is the insertion of Korean glosses into the spoken lines of the characters themselves.

For instance, in one scene in *Karasu no shi*, two minor characters have the following brief exchange:

“Heh heh heh. The sun, he's a bit of bastard, eh? Sometimes even I smoke the *yangdambae* [Western cigarettes], y'know. Ee hee hee hee.”

“Ha ha, *yōnggam* (*jijii*) [old man].”

「へへへっ、おてんとさんもちとがねえな、たまにあおらでもをふかすんでさあ. . . いっひひひ」

「ははっ、(爺い)」⁷⁷

Despite being more or less throwaway lines in the context of the story, this brief dialogue embodies the many facets of the language play present in the novel. First, the *furigana* Japanese gloss of the word *jō*, the contractions and elisions of sounds (“tama ni wa” spoken as “tama ni a,” for example), and the phonetic representations of laughter lend an overall oral quality to the lines, forcing the reader to hear them rather than just reading or seeing them, even as the parenthetical gloss of *jijii* (old man) indicating the meaning of the Korean word *yōnggam* interferes with the transfer from written to spoken word by adding untransmittable, strictly visual or semantic information. But then, the Korean *furigana* glosses have the potential to cause the reader not just to hear the words of this conversation, but to hear them in Korean. If the creation of a Korean space within the Japanese-language work of fiction is the definition of “Korean flavor,” then *Karasu no shi* can clearly be seen as a successful implementation of this “flavor.”

In the end, however, we are forced to remember that the Korean space and Korean sounds created in the novel are nothing more than fiction. Even if the Japanese text of the novel represents in reality an audible Korean language, ultimately that “reality” is not real at all. But what is crucial here is not that these Korean sounds do not exist, but that even in their utter emptiness they have the power to destabilize the imposing presence of the Japanese language and to open up new possibilities within it. In the same way, it is precisely the essential emptiness and

⁷⁷ Kim Sōkpōm, “*Karasu no shi*,” 54.

unreality of the Korean nation of Kim's imagination that allows it to become a weapon against assimilation and the erosion of productive difference. This imagined difference stands in stark contrast to the reified difference produced by the discourse of ethnicization, which tends to compartmentalize Zainichi literature as a minority literature that always remains at a distance—at times produced by the “time lag” of allegory—from Japanese literature, ultimately reinforcing the very notion of an ethnically pure national literature that Zainichi literature and its readers are attempting to problematize. The Korea that Kim posits in the tension between the orality and visuality of the words on the page has radical potential as a space of escape.

Kim pushes this space further in *Mandogi*. Its narrator has a much more oral storyteller quality; the long, sometimes rambling paragraphs, rhetorical questions and speculative sentence endings create a character within the narrating voice itself, and its indirect style of quotation that foregoes quotation marks blends characters' voices directly into the narrative. This style makes it difficult to parse whether characters have actually “said” their quoted lines, adding another layer of ambiguity to that arising from the translated nature of the dialogue, which, as in *Karasu*, must have occurred initially in Korean. Even in the absence of quotation marks, however, the dialogue retains a direct quality due to its marked orality. Or, interpreted another way, the dialogue is indirect, but reported with a high degree of oral flavor by the narrator—either way, the important thing is that it goes out of its way to report *sound*, not just meaning, to the reader.

As in *Karasu*, this “oral” Japanese paradoxically creates the imaginary space in which the reader can “hear” the Korean sound of the dialogue even as it stands in for and covers over that “original” Korean in its position as pseudo-translation. At certain moments in *Mandogi*, however, the two languages seem to come into competition with each other for primacy. In one such moment, Mandogi is calling out for Mother Seoul as he chases her down the mountain: “ソウル

ぼさつまァ！ (Souru bosatsu samaa).”⁷⁸ The lengthened vowel at the end of his exclamation emphasizes that this is spoken language, directly quoted even if not punctuated as such. Mandogi then discovers that at some point he has switched to shouting for his mother: “おっ母さん [glossed with オモニ] (Okkasan/Ōmōni).”⁷⁹ If Kim is assuming a generally monolingual Japanese-language reader, the “ōmōni” (omoni) gloss can only be there to offer the Korean word as a potential or prescriptive phonetic reading of the characters “おっ母さん.” However, this puts the original(?) Japanese word in a peculiar position, because “okkasan” depends on its own orality to distinguish it from the more neutral “okaasan” for “mother.” That is, if we assume a sort of division of labor between the Japanese and Korean words in the dialogue, wherein the Japanese represents the translated meaning of the characters' speech and the Korean sounds reflect the actual linguistic environment of the story's reality, then that logic necessarily breaks down here. The Japanese “okkasan” clearly takes on a phonetic role in addition to its perhaps primarily semantic role, just as the Korean “omoni” gloss influences the reading at the level of the meaning in addition to sound. Not only does this situation exemplify the inseparability of sound from meaning—signifier from signified—in a linguistic sign, it also locks the Japanese main text in dialectic with its Korean rubrics, an unresolvable conflict over which is the original and which is translated.

The most enticing example of this kind of device, however, is Mandogi's name itself. Kim invites a careful consideration of the function and composition of Mandogi's name by discussing it frequently and at length, including the very opening of the novel, which explains that Mandogi is simultaneously “nameless” and has many not-quite names, including “dimwit,” “temple boy,” and “Keiton” (Korean “kaettong,” glossed as “dog shit” in the text). At one time

78 Kim Sōkpōm, “Mandogi yūrei kitan,” 30.

79 Ibid.

the narrator notes that the main utility of Mandogi's name is as an audible signal (*oto no shirushi*) to come when he is called,⁸⁰ and the pronunciation of his name is very much at issue when he is given a Japanese name in a reference to the imperial policy of *sōshi kaimei*:

At the time, the officials attached the Japanese given name “Ichirō” to the name “Mandogi,” making his given name “Mandogi” into his surname, and they gave him the strange name “Mantoku Ichirō.” But Mandogi couldn’t understand a word of Japanese. “I ain’t Mantoku Ichirō. That’s not my name. My name’s not Mantoku, but the priest’s name, ‘Man...dogi.’” Licking the pencil, he painstakingly wrote down the two Chinese characters and showed the page to the official.

そのとき「一郎」という日本式の名を「万徳」という名の下にくっつけて、つまり名である「万徳」を姓に変えて当局は、という妙な名前を付けた。ところが万徳はまるっきり日本語を解さない。わっしは万徳一郎ではない。それは自分の名前ではない。自分の名前はマントクではなく、法名といってマンドギの「万徳」なんだと、漢字のその二文字を、わざわざ紙を置いて、鉛筆を舐め舐め、ていねいに書いて見せる。⁸¹

Invoking the memory of *sōshi kaimei*, Kim is able to show how essential the pronunciation of a name is to someone like Mandogi. Even if the characters remain the same between “Mantoku” and “Mandogi,” they are, in both political and affective senses, completely different names—different identities, perhaps. At the same time, because it exists in a written medium, strictly speaking, Mandogi's name is represented (or exists) only visually. Though it occasionally appears in phonetic katakana, in almost every instance it appears only in Chinese characters, which, as is demonstrated in this very early scene, contain the potential for “misreading.” Indeed, Kim plays with this potential by very selectively glossing the name. Although it is glossed in its first appearance in the text, it is not glossed in the title,⁸² and thereafter is glossed almost exclusively in instances where it is spoken aloud. Considering the fact that Kim glosses words like “kongyangju” and “Halla-san” in nearly every single appearance, it is possible that he leaves

80 Ibid., 10.

81 Ibid., 11.

82 Kim had glossed “Soban” in the title of “Kanshu Pak Soban,” so it would not have been unprecedented for him to do so.

the characters in Mandogi's name without gloss specifically to emphasize the multifarious possibilities for its reading.

To further complicate the matter, it should be pointed out that “Mandogi” is not a possible Korean reading for the characters 万徳, which would be read “Mandök.” “Mandogi” is the product of the addition of a diminutive suffix “i,” which can be added to names ending in consonants, in this case causing the preceding consonant to be voiced. In hangŭl, this looks like: 만덕 (Mandök) + 이 (i), 만덕이 (Mandögi). In katakana, on the other hand, the final consonant of the Korean reading of the Chinese characters gets attached to the vowel sound in the diminutive suffix and represented in a single character: マンドギ (ma-n-do-gi). The katakana gloss is not simply representative of the Korean pronunciation of Mandogi's characters, then. Not only does the gloss overload the characters with more than their reading would produce in Korean, it creates a wholly new name in the process, one that would not be possible in normative Korean or Japanese.

Whereas *Karasu no shi* posits an imaginary Korean space that manages to escape the pressures of assimilation and minoritized reification, *Mandogi yūrei kitan* offers not only the space but the possibility of a being or non-being that occupies that space. Mandogi, even before he takes on his ghostly form, is never quite present in the text. There is always an element of Mandogi that is deferred to another plane, but never wholly absent either. In a sense, this is the source of Mandogi's marginalization: just as his lack of proper name, birth, heritage, *koseki* prevent him from enjoying complete existence, disenfranchising him with respect to the various systems in which he is embedded, the uncanny representation of his name, which can never be fully accommodated by the system of language in which it is embedded, makes it a non-name—yet one more way in which Mandogi, with his surplus of names, is nameless. Nevertheless, just

as Mandogi's "ghost" lives, and through his very "existence" as a non-entity comes to disrupt the political system that "kills" him in the first place, Mandogi's name, as a non-name, haunts the Japanese language without retreating to an equally "spellbinding" Korean. What begins as marginality, in the unique created by the text, can become empowerment: a radical mode of being or becoming *in* a space of non-existence.

To conclude, I return to Kim Sökpöm's utilization of the *pulgasari* in his illustration of the problem of "kotoba no jubaku," the spellbinding of language:

It is said that in Chosön [Korea] there is a strange-looking imaginary creature called a "pulgasari," which can dissolve iron and swallow it down, and I wonder, could "Nihongo" [the Japanese language] be about to dissolve me, to swallow me completely into its stomach, "Nihonteki" [Japanese-ness]? Or rather, I wonder, say I were eaten by "Nihongo," is there some way I could, as the "pulgasari" does, chew my way through its iron stomach and break free? Could there be a way, somehow?⁸³

The image of an otherworldly ravenous beast allows Kim to vividly describe the sense of crisis imposed by the Japanese language and the colonial and post-colonial conditions that made Japanese the only linguistic space available to Kim as a writer. However, from this position of vulnerability, Kim himself sets out to be the pulgasari, to somehow take back the upper hand having already been completely devoured, having already lost the battle. As with Mandogi, who can pick up a weapon and fight back only after he is "killed," it is from the moment of greatest crisis that Kim qua pulgasari can explode the system from within its iron stomach.

Yet this passage also offers a more subtle clue as to how the escape from that stomach might take place. Within the first mention of the pulgasari is a strangeness that hints at the radical space of difference that Mandogi comes to occupy. "In Chosön there is a strange-looking imaginary creature called a 'pulgasari.'" In other words, a creature that explicitly does not exist

83 Kim Sökpöm, "Gengo to jiyū: Nihongo de kaku to iu koto," 82.

still manages to be “in” Korea without ever being at all. It is in this imaginary but still particularly Korean space that a radical, productive difference—ever elusive—may be located.

Chapter 5. Disability, Ethnicity, and the Intersectional Politics of Speaking: Kin Kakuei's *Kogoeru kuchi*

Kin Kakuei¹ (1938-1985), like so many major writers of *Zainichi* literature, worked within a fraught relationship to the genre itself.² This was largely a result of his similarly fraught relationship with the political priorities of Koreans in Japan during his career, with the feminist critic Chōng Yōnghae crediting Kin as one of the first *Zainichi* writers to turn a critical eye toward the internal contradictions of *Zainichi* nationalism, which was ideologically dominant at the time.³ Although other critics have seen this as reactionary or assimilationist, what Chōng sees in Kin Kakuei's politics is akin to what we would recognize today as a sensitivity to intersectionality, an acknowledgement of gender and other positional differences experienced by individual members of the *Zainichi* ethnic collective. Kin himself often couches these ideas in terms of the personal versus the political—a dichotomy his own writing reveals as false—with personal issues set up as a hindrance to enthusiastic participation in collective politics. In Kin's case, such personal issues almost always take the form of his or his fictional characters' struggle with stuttering.

In *Kogoeru kuchi* (Frozen Mouth, 1970), his best known work, he writes in the words of the story's narrator, Sai,⁴ an autobiographical stand-in for the author himself, about the pressing *Zainichi* issue of the day, the normalization talks between Japan and the South Korean regime:

- 1 Also known by the Korean pronunciation of his name, Kim Hagyoŋg. Here I use the Japanese pronunciation of his characters, Kin Kakuei, deferring to his own apparent preference.
- 2 Prominent examples include Yu Miri, who refused to have her writing included in the ironically named 2006 collection, "*Zainichi*" *bungaku zenshū* [The Complete Works of "Zainichi" Literature], Sagisawa Megumu, sometimes excluded on the basis of her multiethnic heritage and use of a Japanese name, and Kim Sōkpōm. See Chapter 3.
- 3 Chōng Yōnghae, "Aidentiti o koete," in *Sabetsu to kyōsei no shakaigaku*, ed. Inoue Jun, Iwanami kōza gendai shakaigaku 15 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1996), 10; cited by Melissa Wender, *Lamentation as History: Narratives by Koreans in Japan, 1965-2000* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 54.
- 4 Ch'oi in Korean. It is unclear which way the name should be read, which will be discussed in further detail later on.

To tell the truth, the South Korea-Japan talks are a secondary problem to me. It's the stutter that I have to deal with first and foremost, the stutter that is the most pressing problem holding me back. Compared to that, the South Korea-Japan talks, and not only that but all political problems—no, not just political problems but any problems besides the stutter—barely feel like problems at all.⁵

This passage comes near the end of the story, which focuses on Sai's isolation as a result of his stutter, with the exception of a close friendship with Isogai, a fellow stutterer who commits suicide and posthumously narrates the suicide of his mother following an affair with a Korean man also named Sai in protest of her abusive marriage. What I want to focus on in this chapter, which explores representations of disability and identity in *Kogoeru kuchi*, is the stance taken in this passage and throughout the text—that of being disabled first, Korean second—and more importantly, the surrounding politics that prompt such a distinction in the first place. This must entail a careful consideration of interactions between multiple axes of identity such as disability and ethnicity within a single subject, or what Elizabeth Spelman has theorized in terms of gender and race as “the ampersand problem,” that is, the notion that categories like gender and race do not simply add but rather slide across one another in complex, often unpredictable ways in the process of constructing identity.⁶ The question, then, is how the problems of disability and ethnicity overlap in Kin Kakuei's text and the discourses surrounding it.

The way most readings of *Kogoeru kuchi* and Kin Kakuei's work at large answer this question is by viewing the speech disability as an allegory for ethnic subjugation and the obstacles to “speaking” from a minority position, especially from that of the *Zainichi*, for whom language politics were so much at issue in the decades of Kin's career.⁷ With criticism of Kin's

5 Kin Kakuei, “Kogoeru kuchi,” in “*Zainichi*” *bungaku zenshū*, ed. Isogai Jirō and Kuroko Kazuo, vol. 6 (Tokyo: Bensei Shuppan, 2006), 85; hereafter cited parenthetically.

6 Elizabeth Spelman, *Inessential Woman: Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988). See especially Chapter 5, “Gender & Race: The Ampersand Problem in Feminist Thought,” 114-132.

7 Such readings include Takeda Seiji, “*Zainichi*” *to iu konkyo: Ri Kaisei, Kim Sōkpōm, Kin Kakuei* (Tokyo: Kokubunsha, 1983), 126–133; Pak Yuha's interpretations in Kim Sōkpōm et al., “*Zainichi Chōsenjin bungaku: Nihongo bungaku to Nihon bungaku*,” *Subaru* 23, no. 10 (October 2001): 239; and views espoused by the participants in the roundtable discussion, Ozawa Nobuo et al., “‘Kyōkaisen’ no bungaku: *Zainichi Chōsenjin sakka no imi*,” *Shin Nihon bungaku* 25, no. 9 (September 1970): 56.

work so dominated by readings of the stutter as metaphor, disability tends to fade into the background, whereas ethnicity is the primary lens through which his texts are received. In fact, Kin's own writing on his precarious position as at once disabled and ethnically marginalized reflects this imbalance, as evidenced by the fact that he frames disability as his own personal issue, as opposed to the larger politics of ethnic nationalism. Even as he attempts to highlight the contributions of his disability to his particular identity politics, the politics of such an identity are effaced.

In light of this problem, I set out to bring *Kogoeru kuchi* into conversation with a range of interventions from disability studies, most crucially the notion that disability, too, can be seen as the socially constructed product of political hierarchy.⁸ Not only does disability studies offer a framework for such an identity politics of disability, its ideas also illuminate what I see as the central tension of Kin's text: the struggle to narrate the othered body. However, if this struggle is typically viewed as driven above all by ethnic concerns, then interpreting it in terms of disability only would be equally problematic. The erasure of ethnicity obscures the vital role ethnicity plays in the representational politics of *Kogoeru kuchi*, regardless of Kin's insistence that ethnicity is only secondary to his personal struggle. Thus, my analysis strives to remain intersectional. I argue that reading the novel through this disability-inflected intersectional lens opens up spaces within and outside the text that enable new possibilities for the representation of identity, ethnic, disabled, and otherwise.

8 See, for instance, Tobin Siebers, *Disability Theory* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008); David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder, eds., *The Body and Physical Difference: Discourses of Disability* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1997).

5.1 The Immaterial Body

One of the most conspicuous aspects of Kin Kakuei's *Kogoeru kuchi* is its constant references to the physical body. The word “body” (身体, *shintai*) occurs repeatedly throughout the text, not to mention the abundance of references to parts of the body: the chest (*mune*), the throat (*nodo*), and of course the mouth (*kuchi*) of the title with particular frequency. While many of these references describe bodily sensations related to the central character's emotional state, the most conspicuous of these phrases are the ones describing the physiological aspects of his stutter as part of the main thread of the narrative. Arguably, much of the novel's treatment of stuttering hinges on whether the stutter is a disability of the body or the mind, and to what extent the physical and mental aspects of the stutter can be separated from each other.

On one hand, the narrator makes it clear from very early on that his stutter is not only a psychological problem, but that there are physical properties to it as well. In the opening chapter the narrator describes his disability as follows: “As for me, my thoughts don't translate smoothly into words. I can't say anything easily. I'm not saying I can't psychologically, it's that I physically can't” (13). Hence, perhaps, the emphasis on the body throughout the text. Whatever traits of personality, social position, or mental state might create obstacles to Sai's speaking, he emphasizes that these are not what ultimately create the impediment. It is not, in other words, in his head. The stutter is grounded in the material reality of the body.

This is not to say that Sai's stutter, or stuttering in general (according to him), does not have non-physical causes. He explains:

In a certain atmosphere, I have trouble—stutterers have trouble saying anything at all. When we try to voice our thoughts, no sound comes out. Even the stutterer himself doesn't understand why this happens. In this atmosphere, the mind and body (*shinshin*, 心身) grow tense. This tension exerts a sort of influence over the diaphragm, the vocal chords, the throat, the tongue, the lips, and other organs related to breathing and speaking,

causing a kind of cramping, and that is most likely what blocks the voice from coming out. (14)

It is worth noting at the outset that Sai conflates his own experience of stuttering with that of stutterers (*kitsuonsha*) in general. He starts the first sentence making himself the subject (*boku wa*), then immediately expands the subject to be categorical (*kitsuonsha wa*). With this move, he creates a collectivity based on shared bodily experience, with himself as its representative. What follows sounds scientific, like a description of stuttering in medical terms, but it remains unclear whether this description is actually generalizable or merely extrapolated from Sai's personal experience of stuttering. Ironically, whereas the medical (or possibly pseudo-medical) explanation of stuttering lends it a sort of authority to apply generally to all stutterers, its emphasis on the body, if it is Sai's body, makes the process described impenetrably personal, happening within Sai's body and inaccessible to anyone outside. The body is at once the grounds for universalization and for irreducible differentiation. (Incidentally, we should recognize here a tenet of intersectionality—the irreducible heterogeneity of any collective.)

This contradiction comes close to a problem outlined by Tobin Siebers in one of the foundational texts of disability studies, “Tender Organs, Narcissism, and Identity Politics.” In this essay, Siebers advocates for the recognition of disability as a social category and basis for identity politics. In doing so, he outlines the complexities of organizing a political collective around such a category when the discourse surrounding disability is so focused on medical solutions to individualized problems rather than the struggle for rights of disabled people as a coalition. While this “hyperindividualization” has been imposed on people with disabilities, they themselves have been blamed for it through accusations of narcissism, the inability to see beyond their own problems (a charge leveraged at other forms of identity politics as well).⁹

9 Tobin Siebers, “Tender Organs, Narcissism, and Identity Politics,” in *Disability Studies: Enabling the Humanities*, ed. Sharon Snyder, Brenda Jo Brueggemann, and Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2002), 41, 47-49.

In fact, Kin Kakuei has been accused of narcissism, if not in so many words. For example, in comparing Kin Kakuei rather unfavorably to his contemporary, Ri Kaisei, one critic argues the main difference between the two is that whereas Ri is concerned with both the personal and the political, Kin's work is concerned first and foremost with “whatever is inside himself, in his case the stutter, but in the same way that if someone were born with a toothache that went on for twenty years, he could never face an external problem without first dealing with the toothache.”¹⁰ Even more favorable assessments see Kin's contribution to Zainichi literature as a reassertion of the personal, as opposed to the collective.¹¹ According to Siebers, it is this perceived link between disability and narcissism that renders an identity politics of disability so difficult to form. In his words:

The association between narcissism and disability makes it almost impossible to view people with disabilities as anything other than absolutely different from each other. Physical and mental disability are more difficult to overcome than prejudices against race and sex not only because people are less likely to identify with a blind person, for example, but because the perception of the individual with a disability is antithetical to the formation of political identity—which is to say that individuality itself is disabled for political use in the case of people with disabilities.¹²

While I am not certain disability is “more difficult to overcome” than racism or sexism (nor, for that matter, whether such a comparison is fruitful), the idea that disability is difficult to collectivize when viewed as an experience of the individual body certainly resonates with Kin Kakuei's writing and its reception. More than as its own form of collective, political identification, disability in Kin's life and work is viewed as something that can only differentiate his individual experience from that of the Zainichi collective. Only the ethnic aspects of identity can be connected to a larger, external politics; the stutter, as a matter of the body, can only be narrated in terms of the individuated inner self. However, this difficulty in reconciling individual

10 Ozawa Nobuo et al., “‘Kyōkaisen’ no bungaku: Zainichi Chōsenjin sakka no imi,” 56–57. This particular remark belongs to Kobayashi Masaru, speaking in a roundtable setting.

11 Most notably, Takeda Seiji, “*Zainichi*” to *iu konkyō*, 121–196.

12 Siebers, “Tender Organs, Narcissism, and Identity Politics,” 49.

and collective concerns also calls to mind one of the central tenets of intersectionality, which sees this problem as not limited to disability, but as implicated in the politics of race and sex as well. It is worth remembering, then, that Zainichi politics act on individual bodies as well, not merely at an abstracted, always outward-facing collective level.

On the other hand, returning to issues of the body in *Kogoeru kuchi*, after thoroughly grounding Sai's stutter in the body at the outset, the novel goes on to exhibit a slippage, attributing the stutter to mental or often contextual factors rather than portraying it in terms of the body. This slippage arises in part because of a slippage in Sai's actual stutter, which disappears and reappears depending on the context. In a stressful environment, such as Sai's research presentation in front of the lab, he is able to speak without stuttering at all until about halfway through the talk, when his concentration is broken by a single difficult word. Despite having read pages of complicated scientific material (several paragraphs of which are actually reproduced in the text), Sai finds the one word "tetrahydrofuran" (*tetorahidorofuran*) almost impossible to pronounce without stuttering. (Many readers, I imagine, can empathize.) Once that barrier is broken, Sai enters a vicious cycle in which his stuttering makes him more nervous and his nervousness makes him stutter all the more, and he struggles through the second half of his presentation in this manner. In this scene, the main textual appearance of Sai's disability, the physical aspects of his stutter are barely mentioned, with the focus squarely on his emotional state and its effect on the quality of his speech. In other words, the stutter originates from a nervous energy in Sai's mind which then manifests itself on the body, rather than the other way around. This dynamic seems to be confirmed by the fact that Sai never stutters in front of Isogai: in the absence of the fear of stuttering, Sai's stutter ceases to exist.

In this way, the actual functioning of Sai's stutter over the course of the text conforms less to his initial physiologically grounded description of his disability, and more to the qualified version of that description that follows shortly thereafter: “If a word feels difficult to say, it's fair to say I almost always stutter. Or perhaps I stutter *because* a word feels difficult to say. Perhaps it is this feeling that a word is difficult to say that manipulates my organs into hindering my speech” (16). He continues, “In my case, the stutter was not just a stutter anymore, but had become a neurosis” (16). Here the narrator particularizes his own stutter as opposed to earlier descriptions generalizing it to represent all cases of stuttering. Rather than a strictly physiological process observable across any number of equivalent stuttering bodies, the narrator's stutter is now a product of his unique psyche, which, according to the conceits of the novel, is never fully transmittable to the outside world. He quickly establishes the stutter as something incommensurable itself, even as the stutter is, if not the cause for, then at least a metaphor for incommensurability in general.

The stutter is not the only isolating bodily stigma explored in Kin Kakuei's text, however. Just as the trope of the stutter is employed to establish the absolute difference of Sai and Isogai, isolating them from the social circles that surround them, Isogai is further isolated through the stigma of disease. Isogai confesses in his letter to Sai that he had contracted a sexually transmitted disease (*seibyō*),¹³ and that he had been diagnosed with tuberculosis shortly before his suicide. He also implies that the two illnesses are linked, though presumably not causally. In any case, Isogai's diseased body takes on a peculiar role in the narrative. On the one hand, Isogai insists that he feels no sense of stigma from his sexually transmitted disease, arguing rightly enough that there is nothing inherently more stigmatic about it than tuberculosis. The stigma

13 I am using “sexually transmitted disease” or “STD” here rather than the less stigmatizing “sexually transmitted infection” (STI) because it is a closer equivalent of the Japanese *seibyō*, which is similarly stigmatizing in a way that is at issue in Kin Kakuei's novel. More recently, the term *sei kansenshō* has started to come into use as an equivalent for STI.

surrounding the former is due solely to the stigmatization of sex itself. Despite his insistence to this effect, Isogai still describes his own body as “filthy” (*fuketsu*) and “decaying” (*fushoku shi, fuhai shite itteiru*) (73). He even suggests that the debasement the disease brings to his body is a fitting complement to his similarly dysfunctional emotional state: “Ever since I can remember, I've been mentally no good. And now that I have an STD, I'm physically no good too. I'm worthless, mind and body to the letter” (76).

In fact, one way to read Isogai's disease is as a physical manifestation of mental ills. A stigma that he always sensed becomes material in the form of infection, sexually transmitted and otherwise, closing the gap between his decimated psyche and healthy body. However, the disease, as he describes it, stops short of rendering the problem visible to the outside world. He writes, “My genitals returned to normal and all outer traces of the illness disappeared. It went latent inside my body, and even now I am not showing any symptoms of which I am aware. What I do know is that without my noticing, slowly but surely, the disease is ceaselessly eating away at my body and mind” (75). In a way, Isogai's mental and physical maladies operate in a cycle: the STD functions as an outward manifestation of his inner, emotional turmoil, but then quickly vanishes, returning to the Isogai's “interior,” something he cannot or will not communicate to others, except in his written confession to Sai.

Ironically, then, Isogai's disease becomes an invisible mark of difference. It lurks inside his body where no one can know it without Isogai's confession bringing it out into the open, but at the same time it obtains an inescapable materiality. It is an unbridgeable difference inscribed on Isogai's body. Where Isogai's isolation may have been strictly abstract, the mark of difference on the body offers it a naturalizing materiality. In this sense the disease is comparable to Sai's stuttering, in that it exists in a circular relationship with his abstract sense of isolation. It is the

feeling of an unbridgeable gap between himself and others that drives Isogai to the prostitute through whom he is infected, just as the same feeling drives Sai to stutter. At the same time, that unbridgeable gap is itself generated by the stutter, or in Isogai's case by his inner “disease,” first at the mental level, then only later manifested on his body. Since this cycle of difference has no discernible origin, it must acquire a sort of anchor in the body, where it becomes reified and inescapable even after it is once again concealed. The mark of difference is inscribed on the body, even where there is no legible mark at all.

The inscription of visible marks of difference on the body is by no means unfamiliar in critiques of racial or ethnic hierarchies. Even within discourse on the construction of ethnic difference in imperial Japan, we see examples of this kind of thinking. Watanabe Naomi discusses an “*écriture* of discrimination” that functioned to impart visible markings of difference to the bodies of *burakumin* whose social marks of difference had been erased by the legal abolition of their outcast(e) status in Meiji Japan.¹⁴ Building on Watanabe's work, Michael Bourdaghs argues that disease was a crucial tool for rendering this invisible difference legible to the “normal” Japanese subject of the gaze:

This constructed visibility, a power/knowledge disciplinary complex, functioned to co-opt *burakumin* characters into the politics of specularities, thereby containing the social difference they seemed to threaten. Disease constituted one of the most important visual markings. ... Fictional works, and journalism from the period, tended to portray *burakumin* as diseased, an inversion typical of this *écriture* in that it shifted the cause of prejudice away from social structure and onto the bodies of those who suffered from prejudice.¹⁵

Bourdaghs goes on to discuss tuberculosis in *burakumin* characters in Shimazaki Tōson's *Hakai* (The Broken Commandment, 1906) as the main exemplar of disease as visual sign of otherness, though curiously, as in the case of Isogai, tuberculosis is not necessarily visually noticeable.

14 Watanabe Naomi, *Nihon kindai bungaku to “sabetsu”* (Tokyo: Ōta Shuppan, 1994). Cited in Michael Bourdaghs, *The Dawn That Never Comes: Shimazaki Tōson and Japanese Nationalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 56.

15 Bourdaghs, *The Dawn That Never Comes*, 57.

In another potential parallel between *Hakai* and *Kogoeru kuchi*, Bourdaghs's reading reveals a heterogeneous rather than binary othering in the novel, stretching what is purported to be a normal, ostensibly homogenous Japanese national body at the center to margins of difference further and further removed. The surmountable difference of upper-class *burakumin* represented by contagious disease (tuberculosis) stands between the healthy Japanese body and the incommensurably other lower-class *burakumin*, who is portrayed as hereditarily diseased; in the same way, Bourdaghs reads the not-so-otherness of the *burakumin* figure as a potential “vaccination” against the more pathogenic otherness of Koreans, Taiwanese, and other colonial subjects.¹⁶ This chained structure of alterity could be applied to a reading of *Kogoeru kuchi* as well, with Isogai's diseased body standing in as the pathogenic other that makes Sai innocuous by comparison, and Sai, the mediator between the “normal” reading subject and the incommensurable Isogai, acting as vaccine.

Beyond this point of comparison, however, the chain of difference in *Kogoeru kuchi* is complicated by a number of factors, including the issue of sex and gender, brought to the fore by the sexually transmitted nature of Isogai's mysterious disease and its ambiguous connection to tuberculosis as an already overloaded symbol. In the novel, sex—in addition to and in fraught collaboration with disability and disease—is at once a sort of medium for exclusion as well as for community formation, bonding, and belonging. In other words, even if a singular healthy, normal body is posited at the center, in opposition to Sai and Isogai's marginalized disabled bodies, the addition of links (via gender and sexuality) to this tangled chain of alterity allows other centers to form, complete with their own modes of exclusion and politics of belonging mediated by the body. Specifically, the sexually transmitted disease creates a separation between Isogai and Sai, who are otherwise bonded in a community precisely because of their separation from “normal

16 Ibid., 71.

people” (*futsūjin*). But just as the stutter that isolates Sai from others allows him to connect with Isogai, the sexually transmitted disease that isolates Isogai from Sai forms a bond between Isogai and his nameless female sexual partner. Since her story falls outside the bounds of the novel, her degraded female body falls at the end of the chain of shared difference qua community identity. When she is cut off from Isogai (and thus from Sai, and thus, ultimately, from the reader), she disappears from the world of the novel rather than connecting with her own community of like others. There is no solidarity for her. Her disappearance echoes the death of Isogai's mother, who, once cut off from her Sai, her comrade in otherness, is isolated in an absolute sense. Her beaten and bleeding body, like the prostitute's infected body, is mediated by Isogai and his letter, never accessible as a subject of solidarity, only an object of marginalization. Like the conditional acceptance of the *burakumin* into the national body to immunize it from wilder strains of other, Isogai acts as the vaccine that rebuffs these damaged women's bodies, keeping them from sullyng the hygienic normal (masculine) self.

What further complicates this reading is the reversal of the ethnicity vector. Sai the Korean is positioned closer than the Japanese Isogai with respect to the presumably normal (Japanese) location of the reader. In this case, if disability and disease are meant to be metaphors for Sai's marginalization on the basis of ethnicity, then the stigmatization and alienation of Isogai interferes with the analogy. In fact, *Kogoeru kuchi* seems to go out of its way to layer ethnic and disabled concerns together often inconsonantly rather than analogously. And yet, so many readings of the work are dominated by the issue of ethnicity, reducing disability to a symbol of the disabling or exclusionary politics of race.¹⁷ Not only is disability as symbol charged with the

17 These readings are also in line with Kyeong-Hee Choi's study of disability in colonial Korean literature, in which she views the outpouring of images of disabled bodies in texts from this period as symbolic of colonial subjugation and literary censorship: “I view the trope of disability as a metaphor linking the character, the writer, and the text: the character, the literally 'ill-formed,' who is hampered by an environment that imposes material and conceptual limits; the writer, as disabled as his or her main character by the constraint of censorship imposed from without and internalized within; and finally, the censored literary work that is

burden of representing these politics, it is at the same time precluded from representing the exclusionary politics of disability itself as a socially constructed category.

This preclusion is a prototypical example of what David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder have termed “narrative prosthesis.”¹⁸ Narrative prosthesis refers to the notion that literary narratives constantly depend on disability as a means of representing difference, which, according to Mitchell, is the necessary condition for the telling of all stories, which “operate out of a desire to compensate for a limitation or to reign in excessiveness. This narrative approach to difference identifies the literary object par excellence as that which has somehow become out of the ordinary—a deviation from a widely accepted cultural norm.”¹⁹ However, even as disability functions as an avatar for any number of modes of social difference, it is almost never recognized as its own mode of difference or identification.

Literature borrows the potency of the lure of difference that a socially stigmatized condition provides. Yet the reliance on disability in narrative rarely develops into a means of identifying people with disabilities as a disenfranchised cultural constituency. The ascription of absolute singularity to disability performs a contradictory operation: a character stands out as a result of an attributed blemish, but this exceptionality disqualifies the character from possessing a shared social identity.²⁰

In short, disability is co-opted to represent any kind of difference but itself.

Reading Sai's stutter as a metaphor for mere ethnic disempowerment, then, is not only an oversimplification of the novel's complexly intertwined modes of difference and belonging, but is also tantamount to the erasure of disability itself as one such mode. If the stuttering body is meant to represent the repressed state of being Zainichi, then it necessarily imagines Zainichi as

impaired, like both its creator and its protagonist, as a textual body.” Again, disability is seen as a mode of narrating a variety of disempowerments other than itself. Kyeong-Hee Choi, “Impaired Body as Colonial Trope: Kang Kyōng’ae’s ‘Underground Village,’” *Public Culture* 13, no. 3 (2001): 434.

18 David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2001).

19 David Mitchell, “Narrative Prosthesis and the Materiality of Metaphor,” in *Disability Studies: Enabling the Humanities*, ed. Sharon Snyder, Brenda Jo Brueggemann, and Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2002), 20.

20 *Ibid.*, 23.

a collective to which many (strictly metaphorically) stuttering, disabled members can tie themselves to attain a sense of belonging. But ironically, it is Sai's *actual* stutter that precludes the possibility of such ethnic belonging. His stutter is the means of his exclusion from the ethnic collective and its politics, not his claim to inclusion or solidarity—unless we allow for the construction of community around the solidarity of the disabled, such as the one posited between Sai and Isogai despite their ethnic difference. If the stutter is merely a stand-in for the mark of ethnicity, then this solidarity is precluded. At the same time, privileging disability and ignoring ethnicity presents the same problem in reverse. Only by viewing ethnicity and disability as overlapping and entangled modes of identification, rather than as two nodes of the same semiotic dyad, does this entangled network of solidarities and recognitions emerge from the text.

Moreover, the erasure of disability as a category of social difference is only one part of the problem with narrative prosthesis. As Mitchell goes on to explain, once the representation of disability has set the narrative in motion, the actual limitations imposed by the disability in question can be largely ignored: “the identification of deficiency inaugurates the need for a story but then is quickly forgotten once the difference is established.”²¹ *Kogoeru kuchi* adheres to this pattern. In the case of Isogai in particular, his stutter—a far more severe case than the narrator's, we are told—is established at the outset of both the novel itself and Isogai's self-narrated testimony of his own personal history. In its prosthetic function, the stutter marks Isogai, as well as Sai himself, as the aberrant object that necessitates the story's telling—not only for the reader of Kin Kakuei's text, but also for Sai, the reader of Isogai's text within the narrative. Sai meets Isogai for the first time when each student is called on to introduce himself in one of his university classes, and states that “it was because he stuttered [that I noticed him]. If he hadn't stuttered, I probably would have forgotten his name, would never have given it a second thought,

21 Ibid., 24.

just as I could have cared less about the rest of my classmates' names” (45-46). And indeed, Sai the narrator never relays any other students' names to the reader. The only one worthy of notice is Isogai, made so by his disability.²²

Nevertheless, once Isogai's aberrance is established, his stutter plays no role at all in propelling his story forward. He mentions that he has always struggled with the stutter at the beginning of his letter to Sai, but afterward continues with the story of his family's dysfunction and eventual shattering, and on to his own mental and physical breakdown, leading to his suicide, without ever mentioning his speech again. In fact, even outside the letter, it is easy to forget Isogai's stutter as it is, unlike Sai's, never mimetically represented in the text. Whereas Sai's stutter is occasionally emphasized with the use of extra punctuation, such commas and ellipses occupying the space of the pauses, Isogai's is mentioned only at the diegetic level. Though we know that Sai accepts Isogai's reticence because he too is hesitant to make conversation, we never learn what if any effect Isogai's stuttering had on his relationships with his family. Isogai also develops an intimate relationship with the prostitute he sees, but the stutter never comes into play in reference to her either. Once Isogai is presented as an object of interest, his stutter becomes a non-factor in the development of his character and the plot of the story in general. His disability starts the narrative, but then plays no part in it—another sense in which disability in the novel is able to represent anything but itself.

But in a broader sense, how could disability ever represent itself in this sense? Insofar as disability is a physical reality of the body, how could it possibly represent itself in text or any other discursive medium? In fact, because the textual body is not a body at all, a textual disability never actually disables the body. We can see this slippage in *Kogoeru kuchi*, wherein

22 Notably, in Isogai's confession, he singles out the same moment, recalling that he remembered Sai's name in particular because it was a Korean name, and because he had known another man named Sai (65). Here we see ethnicity acting as the marker of difference that prosthetically enables the narrative in direct parallel with Isogai's stuttering.

Isogai's stuttering voice is translated into text that is completely stripped of the mark of deviance or deficiency. As noted above, Sai's voice, by contrast, is occasionally punctuated in a way that mimics the stuttering voice, but the very inconsistency of this mechanic reinforces the inconsistency of Sai's stutter itself. Both Sai's and Isogai's stutters seem to vanish any time it is convenient for the narrative. This is particularly true when they interact with female characters, whose "bodies" inexplicably act as the antidote for the physical and mental maladies that supposedly prevent Sai and Isogai from connecting with other human beings. Ironically, within the narrow bounds of Kin Kakuei's text, the stutter as disability serves in almost all instances to *enable* the stuttering character to speak, to form the human connections that Sai and Isogai, in their respective layers of the narrative, repeatedly lament being unable to achieve. Whereas the disability is deployed to conjure the mark of difference, it never produces actual disability—it never could.

Reading *Kogoeru kuchi* in this light has the potential, in turn, to complicate Mitchell and Snyder's schema of narrative prosthesis. In discussing disability as the central metaphor that allows for the expression of difference, Mitchell states that "the corporeal metaphor offers narrative the one thing it cannot possess—an anchor in materiality. Such a process embodies what I term the materiality of metaphor."²³ What must be emphasized in this context is that this materiality is an oxymoron, as it is, in the end, a strictly imagined materiality. The textual body, because it is not a body at all, can have no disability that is not strictly discursive. While the text can create an illusion of grounding in the material body, the material body is always displaced, existing only in an extratextual space only posited by the text, never coming into being in either physical *or* textual form. Its paradoxically immaterial substance supplies a medium for representing the impossible, which is to say a space of escape from the double bind of identity. If

23 Mitchell, "Narrative Prosthesis and the Materiality of Metaphor," 28.

the problem of identity is a struggle to find modes of being that are grounded in but not confined by the politics of difference, then the enabling potential of disability lies in its location at the point where culture collides with the body.

Mark Jeffreys makes this point in his essay, “The Visible Cripple,” arguing that an “epistemology born of both the cultural materialism of historicist constructivism and the biological materialism of naturalist empiricism may offer a new materialist praxis that is less prone to either cultural or biological determinism.”²⁴ However, whereas Jeffreys is focused on the “only partially reconstructable” physical reality of the body that creates a problem for constructivist critiques of disability,²⁵ I would argue that the rupture of the body from its physical reality that occurs in the process of representing disability in this extratextual space could rescue the body from an oppressive empiricist frame. Disability's uneasy shuttling between the physical and discursive realms creates a kind of radical potential as well. That is, the imagined/represented disabled body presents one sort of escape from the double bind of identity, which is articulable in terms of the dichotomy between real and imagined, the material and the discursive.

5.2 Confession as Identification

Kogoeru kuchi, like so many works of canonical Japanese fiction, revolves around an act of confession.²⁶ In fact, the novel is structured around at least two extended confessions: Isogai's

24 Mark Jeffreys, “The Visible Cripple (Scars and Other Disfiguring Displays Included),” in *Disability Studies: Enabling the Humanities*, ed. Sharon Snyder, Brenda Jo Brueggemann, and Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2002), 39.

25 *Ibid.*, 37.

26 For in-depth discussions of the trope of confession and its involvement in the making of the so-called “canon” of modern Japanese literature, see Karatani Kōjin, *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, trans. Brett de Bary (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993); Edward Fowler, *The Rhetoric of Confession: Shishōsetsu in Early Twentieth-Century Japanese Fiction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); and Tomi Suzuki, *Narrating the Self: Fictions of Japanese Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996). Notably, one common thread in criticism of Kin Kakuei is that he wrote in the “I-novel” mode, associated as it is with “Japanese literature” and the trope of confession. For a discussion of this issue, see Kim Sōkpōm et al., “Zainichi Chōsenjin bungaku: Nihongo bungaku to Nihon bungaku,” 235–237.

letter to Sai confessing his background and reasons for choosing to die, and the narrator's confession to the reader of his internal struggle with stuttering. A third (non-)confession—the confession that Sai wanted to make to Isogai but never actually carries out before Isogai's death, that he too was a stutterer—also haunts the narrative, its possibility foreclosed from the outset. This contradictory desire to confess but inability to do so exists alongside a paradox of identification; that is, how can Sai identify himself to Isogai as a stutterer when he never actually stutters in his presence? Is he a stutterer at all, to Isogai? And if not, was there any concealed identity to confess in the first place? These questions can further complicate our interpretation of the body in text and the process of identifying it as marked with difference.

First, it is useful to unpack the different ways that characters in the novel are identified specifically as “stutterers” (*kitsuonsha*). In the first instance of such an identification, the narrator, addressing the reader, declares that he is a stutterer. Because the narration of the text is our only window into the reality of its world, his statements do not simply reveal a reality of which he has privileged knowledge; they create that reality in the very moment he reveals it. Thus, the narrator's confessions regarding his own identity are the only mode through which his identity comes into existence, and constitute one of the main mechanisms the novel uses to (simultaneously) establish and determine identities. For a substantial portion of the novel, his statement that he is a stutterer is the reader's only way of identifying the narrator at all, since he does not confess to being Korean until the second chapter, and never reveals his name until the third. In terms of what the narrator declares that he is, he is a stutterer before he is Korean, and both before he is Sai.

Notably, however, he does not state directly, “I am a stutterer” (*Boku wa kitsuonsha*), but rather makes the revelation in the following context: “When [Isogai] committed suicide, I felt as

if a part of myself had died rather than someone else. Maybe it was because he was a stutterer like me (*boku to onaji yō ni kitsuonsha datta*). So perhaps I saw myself in him” (8). In other words, the narrator's first announcement to the reader of his stuttering—his initial confession—comes not as a revelation of a secret that marginalizes him, but rather as the establishment of an identity that constituted his connection with Isogai, whom he also identifies as a stutterer. From the beginning, from the very moment that the narrator becomes a stutterer by claiming such an identity, it is an identity that offers the possibility of a social bond. In fact, all of the acts of confession in the novel, both those actually taking place and Sai's confession that he merely wishes he had made, are involved in the formation and maintenance of this bond between Isogai and Sai.

However, it is important to recognize the difference in autonomy between the narrator identifying himself as a stutterer versus identifying Isogai as a stutterer; these two actions constitute two different mechanics of identification. In the former case, the narrator, speaking from his own subject position, identifies himself as a stutterer, making the choice to attach his sense of self to the stuttering identity. On the other hand, when the narrator describes Isogai as a stutterer, there is an objectification involved in this identification, even as it forges a connection between the narrating self and Isogai as other, albeit other in solidarity. The narrator, in other words, has all the power to decide who is attached to which identity markers, so his identification with the figure of the stutterer is necessarily volitional, whereas his identification of Isogai as stutterer is imposed upon the latter. There is an act of recognition involved in this sort of objective identification, which, again, is foregrounded in the scene in which Sai meets Isogai for the first time at their university. Sai sees—or, more accurately, hears—Isogai actually stuttering, and through this recognition identifies him as a stutterer. This scene serves to highlight the

complex relationship between the actual performance or embodiment of a given identity (in this case that of the stutterer) and the abstract statement of identity (Isogai *is* a stutterer), made by either the subject identifying or the subject identified. It is Sai's observation of Isogai stuttering, that is, *being* a stutterer, that allows him to make a statement identifying Isogai as a stutterer. If the narrator becomes a stutterer by confessing such an identity to the reader, then Isogai has neither the opportunity nor the need to make such a confession, because he is readily *recognizable* as a stutterer. His identity is visible (audible) on his body, allowing for his identification in the passive object position, and thus preempting his identification as stutterer in the active subject position.

In this way, the novel employs at least three modes of establishing identities: first, the enunciation of identity, the active identifying as or with a given identity category, such as that of the stutterer—this constitutes a potentially empowered or empowering act of self-definition; second, the recognition of identity, wherein an objectified other is identified by something external, neither inviting nor necessitating an enunciative act of self-identification; and third, the embodiment of identity, an actual performance of that which defines the identity, in this case becoming stutterer by stuttering. The three overlap in many of the same instances of identification in the novel, with embodiment especially involved in moments of enunciation and recognition, which is to say that a subject/agent may simultaneously embody and enunciate a given identity, and embodiment, as in the case of Isogai's performance of stuttering in the presence of Sai, is what enables the recognition of a given identity. To reiterate, however, Isogai's embodiment of the stutterer never actually happens in the text, not only because it is only relayed diegetically (which is to say, always already post-recognition), but also because, as we have seen,

embodiment is not possible in the medium of text, but only in the extratextual space the text posits, the only space where Isogai can actually stutter.

At the same time, the choice of stuttering as the specific disability that offers the characters a community of belonging further complicates these various schema of identification. This is because a stutter can only occur in the context of a speech act, meaning that a subject can both enunciate and embody an identity in a single action. In other words, Sai could simultaneously claim a disabled identity by saying “I am a stutterer” and, if he stuttered as he said it, embody the identity he was claiming through the very same speech act. In this hypothetical speech act, the two modes of identification are collapsed into the same utterance. By contrast, in *Kogoeru kuchi* itself, because Sai does not stutter in the presence of Isogai, a tension arises between the two types of speech act a character could use to become a stutterer: declaring himself to be one versus stuttering the physical act itself.

Importantly, this tension is not limited to the space of Kin Kakuei's novel, but could also attest to the convolution inherent in the concept of identity itself. Identity exists at the intersection of, or describes the complicated relationship among, these various modes of identification—claiming to be something, being that something (or performing that something), and being defined as that something by forces external to oneself. In the end, none of these modes operates independently of the others. Identity, as we can discover in any number of texts, is never about internal or external identifications alone, or, to rephrase, identity is never strictly volitional nor strictly imposed. Instead, I would suggest that identity refers to the tension between the subject's sense of its own interiority and the encroachment thereupon of external,

contextual forces. At the same time, this conceptualization relies on, even as it effaces, the instability and porousness of the border between self and other, interior and exterior.²⁷

Where this schema breaks down in *Kogoeru kuchi*, however, is in the context of the confession that is never to be, Sai's revelation to Isogai that he, too, is a stutterer. If the situation were simple, and it were fair to say that Sai is stably, internally, and essentially a stutterer, and that this true essence of his is hidden from Isogai's view, then the act of confession would constitute Sai's acceptance or admission of an identity that always was, and would reveal that "true" identity to Isogai, who could then recognize Sai as a stutterer and identify him as such. However, assuming that the situation is more complex, allowing that identity is unstable and dependent on the various mechanisms of identification in which the system of confession can involve itself, then the question of what it means that Isogai never knows Sai as a stutterer is much more suggestive. Here again, a greater complexity arises from the choice of stuttering specifically as the mark of difference (disability) that sets the story in motion. Because, as noted above, the basis of the stutter vacillates between the body and the psyche, the embodiment of stuttering is itself never a stable matter.

In more concrete terms, the narrator of *Kogoeru kuchi* portrays Sai's stutter as almost completely a matter of context. The stutter is more or less pronounced based on Sai's moods, his interlocutors, and, in an admittedly circular logic, whether he is already stuttering. Most conspicuously, he admits to the reader that in Isogai's presence, he never stuttered at all.

Any time I spoke to Isogai, I didn't stutter at all. Even I found it strange. Could it have been because of the relief that came from knowing he was a stutterer too, and in fact a more severe stutterer than I? Listening to his broken and faltering speech, it was as if my awareness of myself as a stutterer was absorbed by his stutter, and the stutter that usually inundated my whole self was drained away into nothing. To tell the truth, with Isogai, I should have been free to stutter without embarrassment. But whenever I'm free to stutter,

27 I am informed here by Karatani Kōjin's conceptualizations of interiority and confession. See Karatani Kōjin, *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, especially Chapter 3, "Confession as a System."

for whatever reason I don't. And whenever I can't bear to stutter, that's when I stutter the worst. And so, I had never once stuttered in front of Isogai. (51)

This being the case—that Sai never performs the act of stuttering in Isogai's presence, and thus never embodies a stutterer in the space he shares with Isogai—raises the question of what it would mean for Sai to confess to being a stutterer when he is demonstrably *not* a stutterer, by virtue of never actually stuttering, in front of the person to whom he wishes to make this confession. At a more fundamental level, it raises the question of what it means to be a stutterer in the first place. It is certainly not enough to have had the experience of stuttering, a definition that would include almost everyone. But neither is it accurate to insist that stutterers always stutter, since Sai emphatically does not. Presumably there is no exact medium between these two poles that would produce a stable and consistently applicable definition of the stutterer as the mode of being with which Sai identifies. Again, the stutterer is not engendered solely by a root medical cause or its externalization in the form of a performance of stuttering, but necessarily involves acts of recognition and enunciation as well.

What makes Sai's desire to confess an identity as stutterer without ever actually becoming a stutterer truly puzzling, however, is that in addition to emphasizing the instability of the constructed category of “stutterer,” it also disrupts the smooth functioning of the interacting modes of identification. In other words, in a context in which Sai the stutterer does not stutter, it becomes clear that his identification as stutterer, whether through his own claim to such an identity or his recognition as such by an outside party, occurs independently of his actually being or embodying a stutterer. Whatever material, biological, or fundamental element of stuttering was involved in the process of Sai's identification, it vanishes from the moment he engages with Isogai, and can function only rhetorically. As a result, if enunciation, recognition, and

embodiment work together to shape a sense of identity, then here this mechanism is shattered into its constituent parts, and a coherent identity fails to take shape.

And yet, even in the midst of this confusion, the bond between Sai and Isogai, based on their common identity, is able to emerge. Even as Sai identifies as a stutterer yet fails to embody such an identity through the performance of stuttering, Isogai is still able, somehow, to recognize in Sai an affinity that we as readers know arises from their identity as fellow stutterers. While the narrator emphasizes that Sai and Isogai's mutual stuttering is the basis for their friendship, we receive no real insight into Isogai's perspective on what bonds the two friends until his suicide letter to Sai. There Isogai suggests that his affinity for Sai is related to his being Korean—perhaps an indication that he sees their mutual marginalization as their basis for camaraderie—but also subtly hints that Sai was uniquely able to understand the experience of stuttering. After insisting that Sai knows nothing about him, Isogai confesses to being a stutterer, while admitting that this confession is not necessary as Sai must already be aware. He continues, “You know that I have a stutter (*domori*), a quite severe stutter even. You know, and yet you never mentioned it. I know it was out of compassion and sympathy for me that you didn't” (64). Thus, Isogai's claim that Sai is the one who knows nothing about him (rather than the other way around) flips on its head the structure of knowledge privilege erected by Sai's unconfessed secret. Not only that, his hypothesis that Sai's lack of attention to the stutter was due to a sense of “sympathy” (*dōjō*) suggests that Isogai sensed in Sai a deeper understanding of his struggle with stuttering than that of a casual observer. Though it is impossible to say with any certainty how much Isogai had managed to guess about Sai by the time of his death, it seems that some recognition of mutual experience or understanding existed, even in the absence of recognition of Sai's stuttering

identity. Isogai's bonding with Sai amounts to a sort of recognition without recognition, or identification without identification.

The uncanniness of this situation gives rise to the possibility of confession even as it forecloses that same possibility. In other words, in order for Sai's confession to be possible, his identity must be hidden from Isogai, which can only happen because Sai never stutters in front of Isogai, thus never revealing the stutterer within. At the same time, Isogai's recognition without recognition defies the whole logic of confession. Once the two are placed into this ambiguously empathetic relationship, Sai's hypothetical confession to Isogai that "I am a stutterer (too)" could only result in confusion. Isogai's recognition, such as it is, would necessarily vanish in the face of this claim that appears false because Sai has never been recognizable as a stutterer, or has never embodied a stutterer before his eyes (or, more literally, his ears).

Nevertheless, simply by specifying his desire to confess, the narrator creates a sense of perpetual movement in the text toward this impossible confession that hence never reaches its final destination. Even if Sai's confession never occurs, never reveals his stuttering to Isogai—which would be pointless in the first place as that stuttering, as far as Isogai is concerned, never existed—his desire to confess in itself allows the narrator to take ownership of his identity as a stutterer without also having to own the disabling elements of it, neither the material stuttering nor the breakdown in communication or solidarity between him and Isogai. Ironically, the perpetually deferred confession allows this sense of community between the two characters to continue so long as the confession of common identity is not carried through. As a result, when Isogai ultimately dies and Sai's confession to him is rendered impossible, the unstable relationship among the enunciation, embodiment, and recognition of his identity—as well as all of the possibility that emerges from this unstable flux—can extend indefinitely into the horizon.

5.3 Aural-Visual Doppelgängers and the Medium of Text

Lingering in the background of any discussion of speech disability in a literary text is the question of medium, of whether and how the medium of text can represent spoken language. Speech, like the disabled body, is of course never literally present in text, but as with the disabled body, it is easy to imagine speech as prior to text, as that which the text sets out to represent, the authentic or original material that text can only mimic. Insofar as both speech and text are forms of language, and in the context of a modern phonocentric view of language, it is perhaps easier to lose sight of the gap between speech and text than that between text and the physical body. Furthermore, speech is privileged as a form of expression or political participation, as indicated by its use in various metaphors of representation, as in “freedom of speech,” or in Spivak's famous query, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”²⁸ Perhaps it is worth asking, can the subaltern write? Can the subaltern sign? Spivak's figurative point comes across regardless of the literal end of the language metaphor, but as disability theory reminds us, it is worth considering the particularity of various linguistic media, given that not everyone experiences the world first and foremost in terms of speech.²⁹ Text is metaphorical but not literal speech, which is perhaps a trivial distinction, but presumably one of which a speech-disabled subject is acutely aware.

Indeed, Kin Kakuei's text in particular utilizes this dynamic to develop what is arguably the main theme of the novel, the alienation of all modern subjects, not only those who stutter. However, it is not as simple as reading the stutterer as universally representative of the human condition, trapped within the narrow confines of the self by what Kin describes, in the case of Sai's stutter, as an inability “to transmit my thoughts to others just as they are,” which is to say

28 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 66–111.

29 See, for instance, Michael Davidson, “Hearing Things: The Scandal of Speech in Deaf Performance,” in *Disability Studies: Enabling the Humanities*, ed. Sharon Snyder, Brenda Jo Brueggemann, and Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2002), 76–87.

the inability “to be understood by others just as I am” (14).³⁰ This alienation is only a result of a metaphorical inability to speak, however, not a literal speech disability. Isogai, who ostensibly stutters so severely that he is more or less unable to communicate with those around him, makes use of written language in the form of his suicide letter to Sai in the single instance in which he claims to “want to be understood by another” (*tanin ni rikai shite moritai*) (64). If Isogai's speech disability (or the narrator/Sai's for that matter) is meant to serve as a metaphor for his inability to make himself understood to those around him, then the ease with which he seems to write undermines the utility of the metaphor. Isogai has no difficulty communicating his thoughts, bypassing the need for speech in the first place. If he is isolated by his disability, it is not because he is unable to speak, as it were, but rather because the disability marks him as other. His case highlights the gap between written and spoken media as they relate specifically to the body and its alterity, in addition to foregrounding the ablism inherent in the reduction of various forms of articulation and representation to “speech” through this type of metaphor.

Isogai's confessional letter also offers an implicit critique of the autobiographical novel as transparent window to the self, in that it disrupts the flow of Kin Kakuei's I-novelesque narrative and reconfigures the structure of the novel as a sort of I-novel within an I-novel, creating a series of doubles that accompany this telescoping structure.³¹ Whereas the structure itself doubles the layers of written media obstructing what is supposed to be an uninterrupted flow from the narrator-as-author's self to the audience, the doubling of the self in question further undermines this flow. As we know, by virtue of their shared struggle with stuttering, Sai views Isogai as a

30 The underlying assumption here that “normal” people can make themselves understood transparently through language belies a misunderstanding of the inherently mediated nature of language. Later in the novel, Kin seems to recognize this, as he begins to present the stutterer as a stand-in for all human beings, who are comparably unable to make themselves known.

31 Christina Yi and Christopher Scott have written in depth on the position of Zainichi literature with respect to what Tomi Suzuki has termed “I-novel discourse.” See Christina Yi, “Fissured Languages of Empire: Gender, Ethnicity, and Literature in Japan and Korea, 1930s--1950s” (Ph.D., Columbia University, 2013), 53–67; Christopher Scott, “Invisible Men: The Zainichi Korean Presence in Postwar Japanese Culture” (Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 2006), 14–57.

part of himself, which is perhaps one reason that Isogai's autobiography is embedded in his own autobiographical narrative. The two selves being revealed here, due to the doubled structure of the novel, begin to overlap and eventually to blur into each other, with Sai inheriting Isogai's outlook, belongings, and his responsibility to his sister Michiko. As a result, Kin Kakuei's I-novel has no consistent "I." There is the "boku" (I) of the main outer narrative, and the "ore" (I) of Isogai's letter, and even this choice of pronoun is transferred to Sai at least once following the appearance of the suicide note. In a segment of Sai's inner monologue, when his Korean friend has just asked him to attend a political event, he thinks to himself, "But it's only my body I will be carrying there. My mind will be trapped somewhere else altogether. Somewhere else, not outside of me but within, inside my stutter" (85). In each case here the personal pronoun is "ore" rather than "boku," despite the fact that prior to this, Sai's inner monologue has always used the "boku" of the narrator's discourse. Not only does this pronoun slippage introduce a slippage into the "I" or "self" being related in the novel, this passage reiterates the mind-body fissure that is at issue throughout the narrative. In addition, the destabilization of the "I" reintroduces the question of whether his interiority could ever be transmitted to the outside—in other words, whether the whole exercise in self-revelation of the I-novel is inherently futile.³²

In fact, this questioning of the possibility of self-revelation, of being truly understood by another, is a refrain throughout Kin Kakuei's text. Isogai opens his confession with doubts about whether even Sai, his closest friend, could ever really understand him. Near the end of the same letter, Isogai introduces the metaphor of circumcision that is to be repeated throughout the remainder of the novel. We first see it in his quotation of the Book of Exodus, "[I] who am of

32 Melissa Wender suggests that the narrative itself "stutters," interrupted as it is by long passages of inscrutable scientific terminology and uncited passages from books Sai is reading. This would also presumably interrupt the smooth flow of knowledge from narrator to reader that the I-novel purports. Wender, *Lamentation as History*, 59.

uncircumcised lips” (74).³³ As Isogai explains, this is a reference to Moses, who argues that he should not serve as God's messenger because of his “uncircumcised lips,” which is usually interpreted as referring to some kind of speech impediment. Immediately after quoting this passage, Isogai rewords it as “[I] who am of uncircumcised heart,” offering this reinterpretation as a description of his own situation. “My heart will die without ever being circumcised, and thus, I will never have truly touched my heart to that of another, not even with her [the prostitute, Isogai's sexual partner]” (74).

This analogy is yet another piece of Sai's inheritance from Isogai, and he applies it to his own circumstances to bring the novel as a whole to a close. In fact, the narrator goes a step further and universalizes the notion of the uncircumcised heart: “Couldn't these words apply to every human being, not just Isogai? ...Can mutual understanding ever really go beyond an understanding of mutual isolation?” (96). He extends this discussion to incorporate the metaphor of the “uncircumcised lips” as well, arguing it is not only stutterers who can never fully express their thoughts to those around them, but all human beings:

When Moses uttered these words, “I who am of uncircumcised lips,” they were not just the words of Moses the stutterer. Wasn't he speaking as a representative [*daihyōsha*] of all humankind, including non-stutterers? The only one with truly circumcised lips, or as Isogai put it, the only one with a circumcised heart is God, and before him human beings, all of them, have uncircumcised lips which can never be circumcised, and their hearts remain uncircumcised as well. (97)

This, the conclusion of the novel, is its central conceit: that in the end, the stutterer is the “representative” of the world, trapped in his own mind, unable to make a real connection with another. In the end, the stutterer is normalized, perhaps assimilated, her difference from “all humankind” only a matter of degree. In this way, at least, *Kogoe ru kuchi* still falls into the trap of

33 Quoted from Exodus 6:12, “And Moses spake before the LORD, saying, Behold, the children of Israel have not hearkened unto me; how then shall Pharaoh hear me, who am of uncircumcised lips?” (King James Bible). In the Japanese, it is not “lips” but “mouth” (*kuchi*) that appears in the translation, the same “*kuchi*” as in the title of the novel.

narrative prosthesis, and the stutterer is explicitly “representative” of everything but the particularity of disabled experience.³⁴

Even this representation, however, is not direct, but rather filtered through the sets of doubles created by the novel's narrative structure.³⁵ Sai and Isogai are the most obvious set of doubles, both acting as the stuttering representatives of all humans in their alienation. Beyond this pair, the novel also compares Isogai to Moses himself several times, and it is through the figure of Moses that this idea of universal representation is introduced, so perhaps it is fair to think of Moses, or at least the image of Moses, as yet another double in the set of stuttering representatives. Furthermore, I-novel discourse suggests another double to add to this set—the author himself, who is presumed to be writing about his true self. By layering these figures together, just as Isogai's narrative is layered into Sai's, Kin Kakuei is able to destabilize the equation of author with protagonist, or protagonist as representative of the author. In the same way, the multifarious stuttering representatives of the human condition, each with his own particular set of circumstances, sabotage the universalizing function of the very logic of representation.

Curiously, even as Kin deploys all of this doubling to destabilizing effect, he eschews what is arguably the most visible instrument of doubling in the genealogy of colonial and Zainichi Korean literature in Japanese, the non-standard usage of *furigana*. *Kogoeru kuchi* displays none of the visible linguistic hybridity of texts by other major authors of this genealogy. As I have argued in the context of Kim Sōkpōm, the practice of bilingual glossing has a similar potential to create a doubling effect that draws attention to the text as medium and frustrates its claims to transparent representation. The layers of text created by the insertion of glosses

34 I would also be remiss not to note the masculinism of using the foreskin as universal metaphor for human isolation.

35 I thank Nathaniel Heneghan for drawing my attention to the various doppelgängers in *Kogoeru kuchi*, including most notably Sai and Isogai, and Sai and Sai (the narrator/protagonist and the Sai from Isogai's childhood).

between lines of the main narrative are similar to the layers Kin Kakuei creates with his nested autobiographies and doppelgängers. It is perhaps surprising, then, that he would not make at least some use of the more common bilingual *furigana* technique. One potential explanation for this decision is that Kin Kakuei knew much less Korean than contemporaries like Kim Sōkpōm and Ri Kaisei, but he would certainly have known enough to gloss proper nouns and the like, placing his text in the constellation of colonial and postcolonial writing frequently employing this technique, if he wished. In this context, the lack of glosses in *Kogoeru kuchi* has a much more deliberate effect, with each appearance of a term (especially a name) with the potential for glossing drawing attention, conversely, to the lack of gloss.

Where this effect is most striking is in the utter refusal to attach a *furigana* gloss to Sai's name. Even if Kin chose to eschew the extended use of heteroglossic *furigana* employed to playful and equivocal effect by writers like Kim Sōkpōm, he could easily have included a single gloss of the name in the first instance to determine whether it should be pronounced “Sai” as in the Japanese reading of the character, or “Ch'oi” as in the Korean. With the practice of *furigana* glossing so common in Korean and other (post)colonial Japanese-language texts, the lack of even a single gloss in *Kogoeru kuchi* is, counterintuitively, the more conspicuous choice. Especially with such a common Korean name, even Japanese-language readers with little to no background in Korean topics may be aware that this character is often glossed as “Choi” in *katakana* for the Korean “Ch'oi.” Thus, even readers with the greatest preference for reading the character as “Sai” may hesitate to wonder whether that reading is correct. Conversely, it is also possible to imagine a reader, perhaps one with Korean-language background, with a strong preference for reading the name as “Ch'oi.” But in the absence of a gloss deciding one way or the other, this reader too may hesitate without confirmation that Sai prefers to read his name “Ch'oi.” The

ambiguous reading of the name, then, is not merely one more signpost of the gap between text and speech as linguistic media, but is also a specific political choice. Rather than legitimizing one side of the fraught battle over how Zainichi Koreans should pronounce their names—which is itself embedded in a history of imperial efforts to erase the Korean language and Korean names—Kin leaves the reading ambiguous, such that this battle is refought each time the reader encounters the name and cannot decide how the name should sound.

This insistence on ambiguity—an invisible doubling of the reading of the name—is perhaps an even more radical practice than the insertion of the double directly into the text. Even in this case, when the possibility of reading the name as “Ch'oi” is not explicitly suggested by a gloss, the suggestion still emerges from the history—literary and otherwise—in which the text is embedded.³⁶ In other words, the double layers of sound attached to the character 崔 are still there, even when they are not visibly or physically there.³⁷ This invisible doubling, because it occurs at such a pivotal point in the text, on the central character's name, creates one final set of doppelgängers: “Sai” and “Ch'oi.” Furthermore, the coexistence of two selves that drive the narrative doubles the text itself, creating two separate paths for reading the novel once the split is made. There is the version of the story revolving around “Ch'oi,” and a different version revolving around “Sai.” In a text so concerned with the politics of sound and self-definition, as well as ethnicity and the colonial history of Koreans, the reader's choice of name for the novel's central character cannot help but color the entire story. Yet at the same time, a third option exists

36 The “Ch'oi” reading is also suggested within the narrative itself, which implies that the Sai/Ch'oi from Isogai's past preferred the reading “Ch'oi” without ever actually referencing the sound itself: “While the other Korean workers at the shop used two-character Japanese names, only Sai/Ch'oi called himself 'Sai/Ch'oi' in public, and never sought to hide the fact that he was Korean the way others would” (69). Again, he never reveals how this character would pronounce his one-character name, and either reading would acknowledge his identity as Korean, but if the point is that the man was proud and open about his Korean heritage, then “Ch'oi” seems more likely. Again, the presence of this Korean “sound” in the text, without its ever actually being present, is perhaps a more nefarious corruption of “pure” Japanese text.

37 In considering these issues, I have benefited from conversations with Chris Lowy on what he calls “invisible rubies,” the glosses supplied by readers for all *kanji* in the absence of an actual gloss.

for naming the character, the unpronounceable, strictly visual element of the name, 崔. The tension between the textual element of the name and its multifarious pronunciations draws our attention yet again to the particularity of linguistic media. Just as the visual medium of text enables the speech-disabled characters to speak, the rupture of text from sound draws attention to the phonocentrism (which amounts to a certain type of ablism) of speech-centered conceptualizations of language as it enables Kin Kakuei to create this invisible yet conspicuous hybridity.

I want to conclude by examining one last moment of linguistic doubling that occurs in *Kogoeru kuchi*: namely, the potential double meaning of its title. While its phonetic reading is unambiguous, and although it is impossible to separate the theme of the disabled, stuttering mouth from the “mouth” of the title, the text still hints at another possible interpretation of “frozen mouth.” The “frozen” component of the title, *kogoeru*, is a verb that means “to freeze,” but in a sense that entails numbing, or the restriction of motion. It is the “freezing” of freezing hands or feet, and is in fact often used in reference to the body. *Kuchi*, on the other hand, is the literal mouth, as well as an idiomatic way of referring to speech, as in the English “tongue.” Where I see a double meaning arising, however, is in yet another definition of *kuchi* as “opening,” as in a way in or out, a doorway to another space. Both words in *Kogoeru kuchi*, then, have a sense related to movement—*kogoeru* to its impediment, *kuchi* to its possibility.

Kogoeru in particular is repeated throughout the text in both senses of the word, that is, *kogoeru* as literally cold, chilled, or frozen and *kogoeru* as constricted, frustrated, or disabled. The text is rife with hot and cold imagery; Sai scarcely steps into a space without describing it as uncomfortably cold or, by contrast, warm and inviting. In these contexts, it is often the rest of his body, not simply his mouth, that is described as freezing or numb. On the other hand, the text

also makes incessant references to restrictions on motion: being bound (縛られる, *shibarareru*), imprisoned (囚われる, *torawareru*), blocked (詰まる, *tsumaru*), strangled (絞められる, *shimerareru*), and so on. In this way, nearly every scene of the novel is set up as a sort of confinement from which Sai must escape, and the *kogoeru* refers to the impossibility of such motion. One possible way of interpreting the novel's enigmatic opening sequence, which describes a dream in which Sai walks along a frigid street toward a bright, hot light, is to see this travel from cold to warm as simultaneously a move from constricted to open space. Indeed, the utter ecstasy with which Sai, in the dream, greets his arrival to this space of warmth suggests that it represents more than just a refuge from the cold. It is a space of escape.

With this image in mind, doubled by Sai's escape into the warmth of Michiko's embrace at the end of the novel, it is possible to read a hopeful element into the title of the novel. If it is possible for Sai to thaw from the literal cold that pervades so much of the story, then perhaps even his “frozen” mouth could be thawed. And if we abstract the “kogoeru kuchi” of the title one more level, then perhaps the blocked exits preventing his escape from the double-bind of identity—as well as the intersectional binds of ethnicity and disability—might also be freed.

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