



Afterlives of the Culture: Engaging with the Trans-East Asian Cultural Tradition in Modern Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Taiwanese Literatures, 1880s-1940s

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Afterlives of the Culture:
Engaging with the Trans-East Asian Cultural Tradition in Modern Chinese, Japanese,
Korean, and Taiwanese Literatures, 1880s-1940s

A dissertation presented

by

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to

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Abstract

This dissertation examines how modern literature in China, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan in the late-nineteenth to the early-twentieth centuries was practiced within contexts of these countries' deeply interrelated literary traditions. Premodern East Asian literatures developed out of a millennia-long history of dynamic intra-regional cultural communication, particularly mediated by classical Chinese, the shared traditional literary language of the region. Despite this transnational history, modern East Asian literatures have thus far been examined predominantly as distinct *national* processes. Challenging this conventional approach, my dissertation focuses on the translational and intertextual relationships among literary works from China, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan, and argues that these countries' writers and critics, while transculturating modern Western aesthetics, actively engaged with the East Asian cultural tradition in heterogeneous ways in their creations of modern literature. I claim that this transnational tradition was fundamentally involved in the formation of national literary identities, and that it enabled East Asian literati to envision alternative forms of modern civilization beyond national particularity.

The dissertation is divided into three parts according to the region's changing linguistic conditions. Part I, "Proto-Nationalisms in Exile, 1880s-1910s," studies the Chinese literatus Liang Qichao's interrupted translation and adaptations of a Japanese political novel by the *ex-samurai* writer Shiba Shirō; and the Korean translation and adaptations of Liang Qichao's political literature by the historian Sin Ch'aeho. While these writers created in transitional pre-vernacular styles directly deriving from classical Chinese, authors examined in Part II, "Modernism as Self-Criticism, 1900s-1930s," wrote in newly invented literary vernaculars. This part considers the critical essays and the modernist aesthetics of fiction by Lu Xun, Yi Kwangsu, and Natsume Sōseki, founding figures of modern national literature in China, Korea, and Japan, respectively. Part III, "Transcolonial Resistances, 1930s-40s," addresses the wartime period, when the Japanese Empire exploited the regional civilizational tradition to fabricate the rhetoric of the legitimacy of its colonial rule. This part especially explores the semicolonial Chinese writer Zhou Zuoren, and the colonial Korean and Taiwanese writers Kim Saryang and Long Yingzong, who leveraged that same civilizational tradition and the critiques thereof, in order to deconstruct Japanese cultural imperialism outside of nationalist discourses.

For Yunju, Sophia, and Sage

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And finally, to my wife Yunju, thank you for being a firmest supporter and a sharpest critic of my work. She, and our children Sophia and Sage, enable me to explore not only what I study, but also why. With love, I dedicate this work to them.

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General Introduction

Topologies of World Literature

In *The World Republic of Letters*, one of the seminal studies of world literature, Pascale Casanova distinguishes three structurally different phases in the genesis of modern literature as a world system. The first, she argues, came in the mid-sixteenth century, when the French Pléiade poets reinvented vernacular French as a literary language by appropriating the tradition of the secular Latin; the second came in the late-eighteenth century with the “Herderian revolution,” which founded literariness upon the nation’s popular tradition; and the third in the wake of post-World War II decolonization, which engendered postcolonial literature.¹ By elaborating on the 1970s literary system theory and Pierre Bourdieu’s literary sociology, Casanova’s “distant reading” has illuminated the function of modern literature as constituting what she calls “the world republic of letters,” a universal aesthetic institution independent of the political or economic power of the states.² In one of her few comments on East Asia, Casanova mentions modern Japanese literature as an example of the “national literature” created according to the Herderian paradigm.³ Her view reflects the widely shared notion in research on modern East Asian literature that each country of the region, starting in the mid-nineteenth century when modern concepts of civilization were introduced from the

¹ Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, p.47-8.

² For “distant reading,” see: Franco Moretti, “Conjectures on World Literature.”

³ Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, p.106-7.

West, created a national literature based upon *its particular national tradition*. An in-depth exploration of the history of the development of modern literature in East Asia, however, not only puts into question the legitimacy of such conventional understandings, but, more importantly, the essential theoretical premise that underpins it.

Casanova's mapping of world literature is based on the orthodox framework of the Hegelian dialectics of the universal and the particular, in which the universal value of "literariness" is constantly defined, challenged, and reestablished in the struggles for recognition of the particular creative practices of individual authors. In the "world republic of letters," it is writers and critics in Western Europe — especially in Paris, the "capital" of the "republic" — who represent and defend the universal value of literariness, while artists of the nations on the peripheries are the ones who continue to create novel literature and redefine that aesthetic value. It would be possible, to be sure, to some extent to criticize this scheme as Eurocentric — or Paris-centric, if you will⁴ —; however, a more fundamental question to be raised, I argue, is concerned with the validity of the very framework that historicizes modern world literature in terms of the dialectic process of the universal and the particular, in which particular nations on the peripheries engage with the universal institution of "literature" originating in Western Europe. I claim this is one of the questions that the history of modern East Asian literature poses, *and* can be essentially relevant to the general studies of literature and of world literature.

⁴ Jaime Hanneken, for instance, cites in her critique of Casanova's book several examples of such criticism by researchers of Latin American literature. See: Jaime Hanneken, "Going *Mundial*: What It Really Means to Desire Paris," p.130.

One crucial aspect of world literature that is conspicuously overlooked in this dialectical configuration is the fact that in many areas of the premodern world, there existed regional cultural traditions that possessed their proper ideas of “literariness,” which were considered “universal” within the respective regions — the counterparts to the Greek and Latin traditions in Europe.⁵ In the case of East Asia, that “universal” literariness, while its meaning had changed constantly, was expressed in the region’s premodern medium for transnational literary communication, classical Chinese, and designated by the Chinese-character concept of “文” (pronounced “*wen*” in Chinese, “*bun*” in Japanese, and “*mun*” in Korean), which I translate in the title of this dissertation “the Culture.” In China, this cultural value had been inherited and practiced not only by the ethnic Han, but also by other ethnically identified peoples, such as the Jurchens, Mongols, and Manchus throughout history; and beyond China, it had also been inherited and practiced by the Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese elite literati for centuries. When the region’s intellectuals began to re-institutionalize literature as *national* endeavors in the mid-nineteenth century, therefore, East Asian intellectuals were faced with the daunting challenge of grappling with this *transnational* literary tradition that had been a central and indivisible part of their own literary cultures.

⁵ Sheldon Pollock’s *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men* is an excellent study of the regional Sanskrit literary tradition which had existed in South and Southeast Asia. Also notable are *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe* (ed. by Marcel Cornis-Pope, et al.), a collaborative attempt at producing a literary history of East-Central Europe from a regional perspective; and Ronit Ricci, *Islam Translated: Literature, Conversion, and the Arabic Cosmopolis in South and Southeast Asia*. Among a number of studies that regard “European literature” as an integrated civilizational tradition, my research has been particularly inspired by the following two classic books: Ernst Robert Curtius’s *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* and Erich Auerbach’s *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*. Either in English, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, or other languages, there have been few attempts to historicize the trans-East Asian literary tradition or to examine its modern afterlives from a comparative perspective, although there are a number of specific case studies on Sino-Japanese, Sino-Korean, Korean-Japanese, and other trans-East Asian literary communications.

In the case of China, Japan, and Korea, intellectuals engaged with this tradition in a variety of manners. Some in the late-nineteenth to early-twentieth centuries invented new, non-vernacular prose styles that directly derived from classical Chinese, and used them to produce modern literary works.⁶ Others referred to the nations' popular cultures to create new literary vernaculars.⁷ These modernists particularly regarded classical Chinese, as well as its derivative forms, as symbolic of an elitist and already irrelevant premodern culture, and dismissed it as the principal obstacle to literary modernization, some of them, for instance, labeling it as “the shadows of ghosts” haunting the vernacular writing,⁸ the sign of “poverty” of the national language,⁹ and a threat to national cultural

⁶ This approach, which is particularly under-discussed in current scholarship, can be represented by unique prose styles devised in the late-nineteenth century. In China, though a range of different styles were experimented, what is called the “new style” (*xin wenti* 新文體) attributed to Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873-1929), the Chinese literatus examined in Chapters One and Two, is a representative case of such transitional styles. In Japan, the prose style called “*kanbun kundoku tai* 漢文訓讀體” was widely used in a variety of modern publication, including the novel. This style originated from a method used by premodern Japanese literati to read classical Chinese according to their native pronunciation and grammar. The novel discussed in Chapter One is entirely written in this style. In Korea, the exact counterpart of this Japanese prose form is a style known as “*kuk'an mun honyong ch'e* 國韓文 혼용체,” or, “the style mixing the national and Chinese writings,” which I will discuss in Chapter Two. Writing in this form was likewise prevalent in early-modern Korean publication.

⁷ The vernacularization of literary language was pursued first in Japan starting from the 1880s, and then in China and Korea from the 1910s.

⁸ Hu Shi 胡適 (1891-1962), a spearhead of the Chinese May Fourth vernacular literary movement, wrote in a 1927 letter to a friend, “Fairly speaking, our generation belongs to classical writing; so our struggles for a decade or two, or even for two or three decades, will have to end up leaving a stain of the shadows of ghosts. Complete deconstruction [of this old style] will be difficult. Look at me. I can barely produce pure vernacular writing only when I pour the entirety of my spirit into composition; a moment of relaxation ... suffices to make a ‘halfway’ writing.” It is Liang Qichao’s prose that Hu Shi in this same letter attacks as an example of such a “halfway” writing. See: “Zhengli guogu yu ‘dagui’ 整理國故與‘打鬼’” in *Hu Shi quanji*, vol.3, p.145. Translations from Chinese, Japanese, and Korean in this dissertation are mine unless otherwise noted.

⁹ The renowned Japanese reformist educationist Mori Arinori 森有礼 (1847-1889), for instance, wrote in his collection of letters in English, *Education in Japan* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1873): “Without the aid of the Chinese, our language has never been taught or used for any purpose of communication. This shows its poverty.” (Original in English.) In *Mori Arinori zenshū*, vol.3, p.266.

independence.¹⁰ However, in both critical and creative works of those writers of modern national literature, this problematic literary tradition, which had epitomized aesthetically refined writing for centuries in these countries, is often conjured up and engaged with. Later, this trans-regional cultural tradition became the foremost resource for the Japanese imperialists to abuse in order to forge a regional cultural identity and legitimize their colonial rule; but the same tradition and the critiques thereof also inspired colonial Taiwanese and Korean, and semi-colonial Chinese intellectuals to resist cultural imperialism.¹¹ If literary modernity means constant engagement with the literary past, then the developments of the national literatures in this region are inextricably intertwined. For these nations' literary pasts were interlaced with each other, having been created through a millennia-long process of transnational movements and communications of people, voices, and texts, particularly mediated through the tradition of classical Chinese. I argue, therefore, that just as the modernization of European literature from the time of Dante on was a transnational history, so was the modern transformation of East Asian letters a civilizational, rather than a national, event. Literary modernization in East Asia was pursued in a polysystemic field in which not only national traditions and Western discourses, but also the region's civilizational tradition were brought to interactions and negotiations, producing overdetermined literary identities. Those identities cannot be fully accounted for within cultural politics based on the standard dialectic configuration, which would merely represent them as distinct

¹⁰ Yi Kwangsu 이광수 (1892-1950), a prominent founding figure of modern Korean literature, criticized the nation's premodern literature for excessive influence from Chinese thought. See: "Munhak iran ha o munhak i ran ha o," (1916), in *Yi Kwangsu chŏnjip*, vol.1, pp.551, 555. I will discuss Yi Kwangsu's literary criticism in Chapter Three.

¹¹ For more on the relationship between the trans-regional cultural tradition and Japanese imperialism, see the fifth and sixth chapters of this dissertation.

particularities in the universal institution of modern literature. Absent in such an orthodox representation is the insight that in East Asian literary modernities, a nation's *particular* literary identity was always and already in negotiation with the trans-regional, "universal" literary tradition.

Critique of the dialectics of the universal and the particular, a defining ideology of modern cultural and identity politics, has been attempted especially by postcolonial critics. With regard to the case of East Asia, the eminent critic of this field, Naoki Sakai, for example, has formulated the question as follows in his well-received book, *Translation and Subjectivity*. He takes the example of the representation of "Japan" within American academic discourse:

A privileged object of discourse called Japan is thus constituted in order to show *us* [i.e., America] the supposedly concrete instance of particularism, in contrast to which *our* universalism is ascertained. Japan is defined as a specific and unitary particularity in universal terms: Japan's uniqueness and identity are provided insofar as Japan stands out as a particular object in the field of the West. Only when it is integrated into Western universalism does it gain its own identity as a particularity. In other words, Japan becomes endowed with and aware of its own "self" only when it is recognized by the West ... Contrary to what has been advertised by both sides, universalism and particularism reinforce and supplement each other; they are never in real conflict; they need each other and have to seek to form a symmetrical, mutually supporting relationship by every means in order to avoid a dialogic encounter that would necessarily jeopardize their reputedly secure and harmonized monologic worlds. Universalism and particularism endorse each other's defect in order to conceal their own; they are intimately tied to each other in their complicity. In this respect, a particularism such as nationalism can never be a serious critique of universalism, for it is an accomplice thereof.¹²

In a gesture drawing upon the Derridean critique of the metaphysics of presence, Sakai seeks to overcome this "monologic" dialectics of the universal and the particular by

¹² Naoki Sakai, *Translation and Subjectivity*, p.163.

criticizing its “will to represent everything, the will essential for modern subjectivity,” and, ultimately, by “resist[ing] subjectivity” itself.¹³ Sakai’s discussion, exemplifying the postcolonial deconstruction of the modern system of representation, thus tries to envision possibilities of more diverse formations of identities. This attempt provides me with a theoretical point of reference onto which I want to graft my discussion in this dissertation. But my study takes a radically different approach. It foregrounds an aspect that is not properly represented either in the modern cultural politics or the postcolonial criticism thereof: the relationship between the peripheries, or, the *trans-Asian relationship*. Exploring modern literary communication between peripheral nations whose cultural identities had been formed through centuries-long histories of trans-regional civilizational interaction, I claim, is integral to our more heterogeneously global understanding of modern world literature; it will also contribute to our pursuits of a new cultural politics that can represent diverse identity formations contingent upon different cultural historical conditions. This study thus examines how modern literature in China, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan in the late-nineteenth to the early-twentieth centuries was practiced within contexts of these countries’ deeply interrelated literary traditions. It thereby considers East Asian literary modernity not as a national, but as a civilizational phenomenon, and by so doing, it aspires to become part of this hitherto under-studied area of humanistic research.

¹³ Ibid., p.175.

Rhizomatic Transculturation

In this dissertation, I use the term “transculturation” as a primary analytical concept. First coined by the Cuban ethnographer Fernando Ortiz in the 1940s and then adapted by the Uruguayan critic Angel Rama for literary studies, “transculturation” has recently become an indispensable critical concept, particularly in colonial and postcolonial literary and cultural studies.¹⁴ As a replacement for the reductionist view that only considers the transmission of culture from the metropolis to the colonies in terms of unilateral introduction, this new term has given researchers a new tool with which to focus on the complexities of *agency* working on the receiving side, on “how subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant or metropolitan culture.”¹⁵ As it is typically the case in imperial formations, “[s]imultaneously affirming and undermining cultural capital and authority at the same time that it creates identities, transculturating almost always entails negotiating power dynamics.”¹⁶

The concept of transculturation is also functional in shedding light on one of the central questions in the studies of East Asian literature: the genesis of “modern literature.” Against the backdrop of the introduction of modern civilization from the West, literary practice in East Asian societies underwent a sea change, and one of the most powerful agents in this transformation was precisely the cultural capital and

¹⁴ Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tabaco and Sugar*; Angel Rama, *Writing Across Cultures: Narrative Transculturation in Latin America*.

¹⁵ Marie Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p.7.

¹⁶ Karen Thornber, *Empire of Texts in Motion*, p.1.

authority of Western literature. Not only were works of Western European writers avidly translated into Chinese, Japanese, and Korean starting in the mid-nineteenth century, but also the concept of “literature” itself went through a fundamental redefinition. One case in point is Yi Kwangsu 이광수 (1892-1950), a founding figure of modern Korean literature, who asserted in 1916, “In sum, Korean literature only has a future; it does not have a past.” Yi’s hyperbole that denies the entire “past” of Korean literature is a performative statement establishing “literature” in modern Korea as a radically different practice than premodern times. Underpinning Yi’s argument is the transculturation of Western discourse; as he explains that the term “*munhak* 문학” (here translated as “literature”) now no longer stands for “what people have [thus far] understood [by this term],” but designates the “translation of the words ‘*Literature*’ or ‘*literature*,’ which are used in the West.”¹⁷ Just as Yi suggests, modern literature in East Asia is always already a transculturation of the West.

In the studies of modern East Asian literature, scholars have therefore paid due attention to how Western literature and aesthetic discourse were transposed into the region, bringing about new, modern literary practices.¹⁸ But if the region’s modern literatures were in themselves transcultural practices, then they existed within polyphonic fields where not only Western literature, but also multiple agents that were mutually interrelated claimed cultural capital and authority. It is within such multilayered literary

¹⁷ Yi employs the original words “Literature” and “literature” in this quote. See: Yi Kwangsu, *Yi Kwangsu chŏnjip*, vol.1, p.555.

¹⁸ Among the many studies regarding this question, I was benefitted most from: Lydia Liu, *Translingual Practice*; Hodök Hwang, *Kūndae neisyŏn kwa kū p’yosangdül*; Kōjin Karatani, *Nihon kindai bungaku no kigen*; Atsuko Ueda, *Concealment of Politics, Politics of Concealment: The Production of “Literature” in Meiji Japan*.

fields that individual writers negotiated their creative positions and identities in various ways. The configuration of those literary fields, moreover, transformed dramatically over time, according to the region's shifting sociopolitical and linguistic conditions from the late-nineteenth to the early-twentieth centuries, adding diachronic diversity to the overdetermined formations of literary and cultural identities in modern East Asia.

This dissertation consists of three Parts, each of which is meant to capture an aspect of those diachronically changing literary fields. Part One, focusing on the period from the 1880s to the 1910s, is concerned with Chinese, Japanese, and Korean writers who, while undertaking to reform literature in these countries, attempted to re-appropriate the traditional cultural capital of classical Chinese. My examination of the works of these writers, as well as of the translational and intertextual relationships between those texts, indicates that these authors positioned themselves not only vis-à-vis the authority of Western literature, but also that of the tradition of classical Chinese verse and prose. For these East Asian writers, transculturation of Western literature necessarily entailed grappling with, and above all, reinterpreting premodern literary authority; and only through such richly multilayered practice of transculturation were they able to conceptualize and create national literatures of modern significance.

Part Two, concerning the period from the 1900s to the 1930s, examines writers who, in transculturating Western discourse, first and foremost denied the traditional cultural capital of classical Chinese. Yi Kwangsu represents this group of authors. For those writers, it is Western literature that had the most powerful authority, but to a lesser extent, Japanese literature also began to accumulate literary capital during this time, not only domestically, but also throughout East Asia, adding another layer to the complex

constructs of the region's literary fields.¹⁹ The transculturation of Western discourse that those writers began to undertake in earnest led to subscribing the region's newly conceptualized *national* literatures to the universal institution of modern literature, or in Casanova's words, "the world republic of letters." This "modernization" of East Asian letters, then, almost always involved, on its flip side, the suppression of *another* universality — that is, the *regional universality* of the traditional cultural capital of classical Chinese writing. As my examination in Part Two particularly attempts to demonstrate, however, that censored tradition was nevertheless referred to in the works of the founding figures of modern national literature in significant, yet fundamentally different ways than the writers discussed in Part One. This renders the transculturated national literary identities in East Asia ever more nuanced and multifaceted.

Then in Part Three, I consider the 1930s and 40s, with a particular focus on the period of the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945), when the Japanese Empire exploited the trans-regional cultural tradition in East Asia to fabricate a regional cultural identity, forging the rhetoric of legitimacy of its colonial rule and imperialist aggression in the region. It was during this time that Japanese imperialists began to institutionalize, for political purposes, the cultural capital of Japanese literature by creating an integrated, so-called "Great East Asian" literary field centered on the metropolis, Tokyo. The colonial Korean and Taiwanese writers whom I focus on endeavored to establish themselves as writers within this imperialized literary field, writing in Japanese and sending their works to literary competitions organized by Tokyo-based literary journals. Despite inevitable participation in this cultural economy, these writers nevertheless

¹⁹ For the transculturation of Japanese literature in China, Korea, and Taiwan, see: Karen Thornber, *Empire of Texts in Motion*.

expressed admiration of various Western authors, and, as I especially want to illuminate, intertextualized works of a modern Chinese writer, Lu Xun 鲁迅 (1881-1936). For these writers, Lu Xun represented an *alternative*, trans-colonial literary capital. Furthermore, a semicolonial Chinese writer whom I discuss in Chapter Five also keenly transculturated Japanese literature, and during the wartime era, he even collaborated with the imperial government to help implement its cultural policies in China. But in his essays during that time, he leveraged the same trans-regional tradition that the imperialists had taken advantage of, in order to try to restore to it its inherent, original creative dynamics that could not be appropriated by any particular political regime. By evoking once again the traditional cultural capital of classical Chinese, this writer thus attempted to secure a precarious creative position that was not to be subsumed into either nationalist or imperialist literary identities. Japanese imperialism and various forms of critical engagement with it, therefore, add other fascinating, yet thus far under-studied, twists to the formation of modern East Asian literary identities that is a transcultural practice.

The practices of modern literature in East Asia — and, ultimately, the trajectories of the identities of individual writers that they express —, therefore, consist of multiple forms of transculturation that engage with different configurations of cultural capital and authority within diverse contexts of changing geopolitical conditions, forms that cannot be reduced to any variants of the “East-West” dichotomy. Therefore, instead of confining East Asian texts to a particular national context as most conventional approaches do, this dissertation opens them up to a rhizomatic textual network that had been created through the millennia-long history of trans-regional cultural communication, and was newly integrated into global modernity. I call literary negotiations that take place within such

multilayered literary field *rhizomatic transculturation*. I do not claim, in this dissertation, to paint a comprehensive picture of this complex literary dynamics, or coin a single notion to explain its systematic working; rather, I attempt to particularly illuminate, by especially exploring the translational and intertextual relationships between East Asian works, how the region's modern writers, while grappling with Western discourse, engaged with the trans-regional tradition of East Asian letters, which had been created through mediation by classical Chinese.

Critical Aesthetics

Just as much as transculturation entails negotiations of power dynamics, literary practices in modern East Asia can be read as political allegories. The creation of modern literature constituted an inextricable part of the world-historical process in which the East Asian nations introduced modern civilization from the West, establishing nation-states. The region's writers from the late-nineteenth to early-twentieth centuries were thus inseparably involved in the sociopolitical dynamics of modernization, and wrestled with this stark historical reality in radically diverse and creative ways, within distinct historical contexts. In this precise sense, reflecting upon the moral and political significance of modern literary endeavor in East Asia provides a functional — and essential — point of view in exploring the region's modern literary history. Throughout this dissertation, therefore, I try to append such reflections to my textual and intertextual analyses.

One thread that the writers examined in this dissertation share in their creation of modern literature is the critical envisioning of a new culture: in their creative as well as

critical works, these writers expressed aspirational imaginations envisaging new collective cultures and cultural identities to be realized *as a critique of* the so-called “modernization” through simple introduction of modern sociopolitical institutions from Western Europe. Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873-1929), the prominent reformist Chinese intellectual whose literary experiments I examine extensively in Part One, for example, epitomizes such critical aspirations. Liang, exiled in Japan, contended in 1902, “If the new people are born [in China], why would you worry about the absence of new institutions, new governments, or new states?”; and famously argued that in order to “renovate the people of a nation, the fictional literature of that nation must first be renovated.”²⁰ Liang thus claimed that China, while adopting modern institutions from the West, needed to first and foremost reform its people, and that to do so, it must engender a new culture, particularly “new fiction.” His literary work therefore embodied a cultural imagination that envisioned modern China as a new collectivity conditioned by, yet irreducible to institutional introduction of Western civilization. If in so arguing, Liang could still draw upon the traditional authority of elite literati, Lu Xun, who passionately distanced himself from such a cultural legacy, also made a well-known retrospective statement, in 1922, amidst the post-May Fourth cultural crises, explaining the rationale for his conversion from medicine to literature, “The most important thing, therefore, was to change their [i.e., Chinese people’s] spirit; and since at that time I felt that literature was the best means to this end, I decided to promote a literary movement.”²¹ Though in distinct manners, Lu Xun likewise insisted that his engagement in literature was

²⁰ Liang Qichao, “Xin min shuo 新民說,” in *Yinbingshi heji: zhuanji*, vol.4, p.2; “Lun xiaoshuo yu qunzhi zhi guanxi 論小說與群治之關係,” in *Yinbingshi heji: wenji*, vol.10, p.6.

²¹ Lu Xun, *Nahan* 吶喊, in *Lu Xun quanji*, vol.1, p.439.

motivated by the urge to envisage the identity of a new Chinese nation that could not be born out of merely adopting modern scientific episteme.

Examining the political implications of modern literary practices in East Asia may contribute to exploration of one of the pivotal notions of modern Western aesthetics: “aesthetic education,” whose contemporary significance has recently been highlighted in two distinct theoretical inquiries: Spivak’s *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization* and Rancière’s *Le Partage du sensible*.²² I want to revisit for a moment a Romantic origin of this discourse: Friedrich Schiller’s *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*.

Schiller inherits the problematic of beauty from Kant’s critical philosophy, as he formulates, “... the distance between matter and form, passivity and activity, feeling and thought, is *infinite*, and there exists nothing that can conceivably mediate between them. How, then, are we to resolve this contradiction?”²³ Schiller, in a manner that Paul de Man blamed for essentially misreading Kant,²⁴ tries to overcome this antinomy through the idea of the “play drive” (*Spieltrieb*), the playful free act of art seeking for a balanced middle ground between these contradicting terms as beauty. According to Schiller, in order for that creative imagination to work fully and freely, one needs to go back to a state of pure “determinability” (*Bestimmbarkeit*),²⁵ a state that Rancière calls that of “dual cancellation” where “both the activity of the understanding and sensible passivity” are

²² Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization*; Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*.

²³ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, p.123.

²⁴ Paul de Man, *Aesthetic Ideology*, p.129-62. See also: Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, p.102-19.

²⁵ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, p.139-41.

suspended.²⁶ Aesthetic education is then assigned the difficult task of guiding us through this whole “labyrinth of aesthetics”²⁷:

He must learn to desire more nobly, so that he may not need to will sublimely. This is brought about by means of aesthetic education, which subjects to laws of beauty all those spheres of human behavior in which neither natural laws, nor yet rational laws, are binding upon human caprice, and which, in the form it gives to outer life, already opens up the inner.²⁸

While Schiller envisions within the process of aesthetic education “a pledge in the sensible world of a morality as yet unseen,”²⁹ the ultimate goal of this aesthetic program is set to be political, to found a “moral state” based on that morality.³⁰

My reflections on the moral-political implications of the modern East Asian literary practices take their inspiration from Spivak’s doubling down upon Schiller’s “mistake” in understanding Kant, through an “intended” misreading, “to bequeath a geography” to the Kantian-Schillerian aesthetic problematic.³¹ Inasmuch as beauty is to be envisaged by means of the search for a fine balance through the actual free exercises of imagination, and as the state of “determinability” in which such artistic experiments may take place has to be “real and active”³² (*realen und aktiven*), Schiller’s aesthetic

²⁶ Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, p.23-7.

²⁷ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, p.123.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.169.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.15.

³⁰ In a celebrated quote, Schiller strikingly contended, “I hope to convince you that the theme I have chosen is far less alien to the needs of our age than to its taste. More than this: if man is ever to solve that problem of politics in practice he will have to approach it through the problem of the aesthetic, because it is only through Beauty that man makes his way to Freedom.” *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, pp.9, 17.

³¹ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization*, p.20.

³² Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, p. 141.

program indeed must have actual geo-historical roots.³³ Thus, a “morality” and an ideal state institution to be envisioned through this process, too, must be contingent upon the actual socio-political conditions for the artistic endeavors. One may recall that Schiller’s epistolary essays constituting *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* were themselves written as a response to the changing political scene of late-eighteenth-century Germany.³⁴

The writers examined in this dissertation engaged in aesthetic endeavors, and in those practices, expressed, in diverse forms, imaginations of morality to be realized as the foundation of a new, modern culture as a critique of the material introduction of modern civilization. Not only were those imaginations *not* totally appropriated by certain formations of nation-states, but they were a *critical* engagement with real sociopolitical conditions. My trans-East Asian comparative perspective is functional in freeing those imaginations from the master narratives of the nation-states, thereby attempting a fuller illumination, against concrete historical backdrops that were often *transnational*, of the moral-political significances of those imaginations. Such a task, by appending a geographical and historical layer to the modern discourse of aesthetics, I hope, contributes to the ongoing exploration of the critical potentials of *the aesthetic* in the age of globalization.

³³ Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培 (1868-1940), the strong advocate of “aesthetic education” (*meiyu* 美育) in Republican China, in his own version of “misunderstanding” Kant, criticized the German philosopher’s formalism, “What Kant’s notion of aesthetic feeling advocates is pure formalism, and it also limits itself to subjective values. However, from the point of view of the fact that aesthetic feeling evolves [*meigan jinhua* 美感進化], form must gradually become complex as content becomes so.” (Cai Yuanpei, “Meixue guannian 美學觀念” [1916], in *Cai Yuanpei meixue wenxuan*, p.66.)

³⁴ See: Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, “Introduction,” p. xv-xx. These letters are addressed to Friedrich Christian, Duke of Augustenburg.

Chapter Organization

Chapter One examines Liang Qichao's interrupted translation of the Japanese political novel *Kajin no kigū* 佳人之奇遇 (Chance Meetings with Beautiful Women, 1885-97), put together by the ex-samurai writer Shiba Shirō 柴四郎 (1853-1922). Facilitated by the trans-regional civilizational tradition inherited both by the author and the translator, Liang Qichao's unique rendition transculturated Shiba Shirō's utopian imagination that envisioned a future world where imperialism would be obsolete, and reinterpreted aesthetic and moral values deriving from classical Chinese poetry and Confucian ethics would come to have universal relevance. Liang Qichao then intertextualized Shiba Shirō's idiosyncratic civilizational imagination in the literary works he produced in exile in Japan, particularly his own political novel, *Xin Zhongguo weilai ji* 新中國未來記 (The Future of New China, 1902-3), also an unfinished work.

Liang Qichao's *oeuvres* in exile were avidly read, translated, and adapted by reform-minded intellectuals in turn-of-the-century Korea. Chapter Two analyses the Korean nationalist historian Sin Ch'aeho's 신채호 (1880-1936) translation and adaptations of Liang Qichao's literary account of the Italian nation-building history, which itself was a lyricized adaptation of the Japanese translation of an Italian history written by a British scholar. Through this multilayered translational process, Liang Qichao transformed Italian nationalist politicians into heroes exemplifying universal moral values that he appropriated from traditional Chinese poetry and fiction. Aided by the East Asian civilizational tradition, Sin Ch'aeho presented those heroes as examples to be emulated by Korean nationalists, and further developed the imagination of the

exemplary national subject in his creative biographies of Korean historical figures and his later fantastic historical fiction written in exile in China, where he recovered universal moral values by radically reinterpreting traditional Korean historiographies.

Chapters Three and Four examine, from a trans-East Asian comparative perspective, the works of Lu Xun, Yi Kwangsu, and Natsume Sōseki 夏目漱石 (1867-1916), three of the founding figures of modern literature in China, Korea, and Japan, respectively. Chapter Three begins with considering Lu Xun's critical writings and, by particularly comparing his transculturation of Byronic poetry with that of Liang Qichao in *Xin zhongguo weilai ji*, examines Lu Xun's conception and practice of transculturation, which underpins his creation of modern literature. It then considers the early Yi Kwangsu's criticism and his seminal debut novel, *Mujǒng* 무정 (Heartless, 1917), discussing how Yi's fictional narrative of enlightenment is constructed through rhizomatic transculturation, grappling both with Western discourse and trans-East Asian literary tradition.

Chapter Four is devoted to examining, in comparison with Lu Xun and Yi Kwangsu, the early criticism, novels, and a travelogue by Natsume Sōseki. The chapter first explores the early Sōseki's literary criticism, in which he attempted to break the ground for building "modern literature" in Japan between English literature, on one hand, and classical Chinese tradition, on the other. Next it focuses on three of Sōseki's novels: *Kusamakura* 草枕 (Kusamakura, 1906), *Gubijinsō* 虞美人草 (The Poppy, 1907), and *Kokoro* 心 (Kokoro, 1914); and considers how Sōseki tackled the question of the relationship between aesthetics and morality as an essential *aporia* of his modernist literature. It puts Sōseki's fiction in constellation with Lu Xun and Yi Kwangsu, thereby

illuminating its imagination of a new morality through self-critical engagement with the cultural past. Finally, this chapter concludes with reading Sōseki's imperialist language in his travelogue on Manchuria and Korea, and considering how the tradition of classical Chinese writing is self-consciously suppressed.

The prominent Chinese writer Zhou Zuoren's 周作人 (1885-1967) wartime collaboration with the Japanese is well known, but his work during this period has been little studied. Chapter Five is an examination of Zhou Zuoren's wartime essays in comparison with the works of Japanese critics and writers he intertextualized in those texts. Defying cultural nationalism, Zhou Zuoren defended aesthetic autonomy, and, through his aesthetic appreciation, interpreted Japanese and Chinese cultural texts — literature, art, and popular customs — from comparative perspectives, thereby imagining forms of regional culture transcending national particularism. I argue that Zhou Zuoren's aloof gestures as an aesthete constitute a transcultural critique of the Japanese imperial politicization of culture.

The sixth and last chapter considers colonial Korean and Taiwanese literatures during the wartime period, when publication in Korean and Chinese was severely restricted. An attempt at exploring East Asian colonial literature through a trans-colonial comparative approach, this chapter focuses on the intertextualizations of Lu Xun's early short stories in fiction by the Korean and Taiwanese writers, Kim Saryang 김사량 (1914–50) and Long Yingzong 龍瑛宗 (1911–99). Starting with an analysis of a newly discovered private letter sent by Kim Saryang to Long Yingzong in 1941, where Kim suggested Long to write as a “Taiwanese Lu Xun,” I examine how these colonial authors intertextualized Lu Xun's modernist self-critique of the Chinese civilizational tradition,

particularly Confucianism, to create *transnational allegories* that deconstructed, as self-criticisms, the imperialized culture in which they engaged, and thereby envisioned new cultures for the subaltern nations.

Chapter One

Universality, Particularity, Exemplarity

Liang Qichao's Interrupted Translation of *Chance Meetings with Beautiful Women*

Introduction

1. Translation on Board: Contexts
2. Paradoxical Politics of Double Translation
3. Cultural Utopia in Philadelphia: Identity as Exemplarity
4. Interrupted Translation: Politics of Imagination
5. In Search of the Exemplary Subject: The "New People" and "New Fiction"

Conclusion

Introduction

This chapter examines what is considered to be the first attempt at translating the modern Japanese novel into Chinese, the translation of a late-nineteenth-century Japanese political novel called *Kajin no kigū* 佳人之奇遇 (Chance Meetings with Beautiful Women, 1885-97), written by an ex-*samurai* writer and politician by the name of Shiba Shirō 柴四朗 (1853-1922). The translation was done by the prominent Chinese literatus Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873-1929), and serialized beginning in the inaugural issue of the journal *Qing yi bao* 清議報 (The China Discussion, 1898-1901), which Liang edited in Yokohama, Japan, where he was exiled between 1898 and 1912. Following the analysis of this translation, this chapter further considers Liang Qichao's experimental political

novel *Xin Zhongguo weilai ji* 新中國未來記 (The Future of New China, 1902-3), which he also created in exile.

Liang Qichao, in his translation of the Japanese novel, radically changed the identity of its Chinese hero. Moreover, he not only terminated the serialization of this translation as of the thirty-fifth issue of *Qing yi bao* (published in February 10, 1900), but he also stopped the creation of *Xin Zhongguo weilai ji* right at the story's prologue. My analysis especially focuses on these translational and creational decisions. I argue that the turn-of-the-century Sino-Japanese translation is to be understood not in terms of a relationship between particular national literatures, or that between the universal genre of the novel and its particular manifestations in East Asian nations; rather, it is overdetermined both by the modern dialectics of the universal and the particular, and by a relationship between different *exemplifications* of the traditional aesthetic and moral values shared by the author and the translator. I further claim that Liang, precisely by *terminating* the serialization of the translation, succeeded the Japanese novel's unique fictional imagination based on those shared traditional values, and further pursued it in *Xin Zhongguo weilai ji*, also a fragmentary work.

1. Translation on Board: Contexts

Born into a scholarly family in Canton in 1873, Liang Qichao is by consensus one of the most influential reformist intellectuals in late-nineteenth- to early-twentieth-

century China.³⁵ Like all of his contemporary scholarly peers, the young Liang Qichao pursued traditional education based on the Confucian Classics and sought to pass the imperial civil service examinations. But the encounter with Kang Youwei 康有為 (1858-1927), a towering reform-minded literatus, in 1890 definitively changed the course of Liang's life. Enthralled by Kang's erudition and innovative scholarship, Liang Qichao joined Kang's renowned academy in the following year and immersed himself in its idiosyncratic pedagogy, based both upon an archaist revival of a long-dismissed Confucian school and newly translated Western knowledge. In the aftermath of the humiliating defeat of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912) in the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-5), Kang Youwei and his now prominent disciple Liang Qichao led widespread reform movements, memorializing the emperor, establishing societies, and publishing newspapers. Their reformist attempts gained momentum as Kang was granted a formal audience by the Guangxu Emperor (r. 1875-1908) in 1898, resulting in a series of imperial decrees calling for institutional reforms, commonly known as the Hundred Day Reforms. This short-lived attempt was suppressed by the court's conservative factions gathered around the Empress Dowager Cixi (1835-1908), and several of Kang's students were captured and executed. In imminent danger, Liang Qichao was sailed in the Japanese gunship *Ōshima* bound for Hiroshima and went into exile in Japan. It is said that he was offered by the ship's captain a copy of *Kajin no kigū*, and was so impressed that he started translating it into Chinese while still on board. The translation, compiled with the aid of other Chinese intellectuals based in Japan and entitled *Jiaren qiyu* 佳人奇

³⁵ For a biographical account of Liang Qichao in English, see: Joseph Levenson, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and the Mind of Modern China*.

遇 (Chance Meetings with Beautiful Women), was serialized in *Qing yi bao*, the journal Liang edited. While he made a few fundraising trips to North America, Hawaii, and Australia to aid reform activities at home, Liang Qichao spent most of his exiled years in Japan, where he published a colossal number of articles, translations, and creative works, and edited four prominent journals, including one of the first Chinese-language literary journals *Xin xiaoshuo* 新小説 (New Fiction, 1902-6). Liang's prolific literary work was based on the conviction that a reform of the popular forms of literature, namely the novel, would be essential to materializing sociopolitical renovation in China. Liang finally repatriated in 1912, one year after the Republican Revolution (1911), which overthrew the Qing Dynasty.

The author of *Kajin no kigū* (hereafter abbreviated as “*Chance Meetings*”), Shiba Shirō was born in 1853, two decades before Liang Qichao, to a vassal family of Aizu 会津, a feudal domain in northeast Japan.³⁶ During the course of the country's radical sociopolitical transformations in the mid-nineteenth century, Shiba Shirō's family, like many other elite *samurai*, chose to maintain loyalty to their feudal lords and the Tokugawa Shogunate, refusing to accept the legitimacy of the Meiji government established at the 1868 Meiji Restoration. Their loyalism brought them great atrocities, as the Boshin 戊辰 Civil War (1868-9), one of the series of civil wars waged by the new government against forces allied with the demised Shogunate, devastated the domain of Aizu, killing many of Shiba's relatives. This horrible experience at the tender age of fourteen and the adverse fates that followed it inscribed in the mind of this author a deep-

³⁶ For a biography of Shiba Shirō, see a memoir by his brother: Shiba Gorō, *Aru Meijijin no kiroku: Aizujin Shiba Gorō no isho*.

seated mistrust of the Meiji government, which is expressed by the Japanese hero of the novel, who identifies himself as “a loyalist of the lost country.” Shiba Shirō, like his peers with *samurai* backgrounds, had received formal education in the Confucian Classics since his youth, until he received support from the Iwasaki family, an emerging industrial tycoon, to go to the United States. He spent almost six years in the country, studying business and finance, eventually obtaining one of the first five Bachelors of Finance to be conferred by the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania. Soon after returning home in 1884, Shiba Shirō put together the first two volumes of the political novel *Chance Meetings* based on “random notes in Japanese, classical Chinese, and sometimes English” taken during his American years.³⁷ The publication was an immense success, encouraging Shiba to produce eight more sequel volumes by 1891.³⁸ *Chance Meetings* is recognized as one of the representative works of the Meiji political novel, which flourished in the context of the surge of the Freedom and Popular Rights Movements in the 1880s, mass political movements calling for democratic participation in the political process leading to the promulgation of the Meiji Constitution (1889) and the establishment of the Parliament (1890). Inspired by the nineteenth-century English political novel, the Meiji political novel engendered a crucial “public sphere” in print media amidst heavy governmental restrictions on public lectures and rallies during those political years. Shiba Shirō, then, published the novel’s last six volumes in 1897 after a six-year intermission, during which he was elected to the new Parliament.

³⁷ Shiba Shirō’s preface to *Chance Meetings with Beautiful Women*, in Shiba Shirō, *Kajin no kigū*, p.5.

³⁸ For the reception of *Chance Meetings with Beautiful Women* at the time of the original publication, see: Maeda Ai, “Meiji rekishi bungaku no genzō”; Sakaki Atsuko, “*Kajin no Kigū*: The Meiji Political Novel and the Boundaries of Literature.”

The full-length novel *Chance Meetings* is the story of expatriated heroes and heroines from Japan, China, Spain, and Ireland who encounter each other in Philadelphia and forge solidarity in their struggles against imperialist powers crippling their native societies. The Japanese hero, named Tōkai Sanshi after the author's own *nom de plume*, is from the Aizu domain; the Chinese character, Hankei, is a loyalist of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) in the original; the Spanish heroine, Yūran (likely Yolanda), is the daughter of a general of the legitimist Carlist Party; and the Irish female character, Kōren (likely Coleen), is a nationalist activist resisting British imperialism. Into their fictional adventures, the embroidered biographies of several anti-imperialist figures such as Toussaint Louverture (1743-1803), Ahmed Orabi (1841-1911), and Fanny Parnell (1848-82) are also interwoven. In the world of the novel, these multinational characters, fictional and historical, embody a unified identity: cultural exemplarity. The novel's protagonists practice traditional morality epitomized by the Confucian virtues, and improvise Chinese poems and exchange them to communicate moral and political emotions to each other; they venture to create a solidarity based upon the traditional cultural values in order to realize a new political subjectivity that could overturn Western imperialism and bring about a more just order in the modern world. But their great enterprise is met by powerful adversaries and misfortune, and its success only dreamed of at the moments of "change meetings" scattered throughout the long story, which produces suspense and a kind of utopian aspiration, the characteristic charms of this work.

Chance Meetings is written entirely in a Japanese pre-vernacular prose style called "kanbun kundoku tai 漢文訓讀體," and its narrative is punctuated by

approximately forty classical Chinese poems recited by the characters. This prose style, which was established in early Meiji, derived from a method used by premodern Japanese literati to read classical Chinese according to their native pronunciation and grammar; it was widely adopted in a variety of Meiji publications, from newspapers and translations of Western texts to official documents and laws. Shiba Shirō and his contemporaries first employed this style to produce the modern novel in the 1880s. Reflecting the educational background of the late-nineteenth-century Japanese intellectuals, this prose style retains many characteristics of classical Chinese writing in terms of vocabulary, grammar, rhetoric, and “topos.”³⁹ Shiba Shirō’s writing, in fact, makes a plethora of allusions to the Confucian Classics and other canonical Chinese texts, including the *Analects* and *Mencius*; *Shijing* 詩經 (The Classic of Poetry) and *Chuci* 楚辭 (The Song of the Chu), the pinnacles of classic Chinese poetry; the great sixth-century anthology *Wen xuan* 文選 (Selection of Refined Writings); and the late-imperial narrative literature, particularly its “scholar and beauty” (*caizi jiaren* 才子佳人) romance subgenre. The published text, moreover, contains numerous prefaces, postfaces, and marginal commentaries by the hands of the Japanese practitioners of Chinese verse and prose (*kan shi bun* 漢詩文) of the time; many of those paratexts are directly written in classical Chinese.⁴⁰

³⁹ The concept of “topos” is adapted from Chapter Five of Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*.

⁴⁰ Shiba Shirō and his peers used this antiquarian prose style (*kanbun kundoku tai*) to create a modern literature in Japan. Japanese writing in this style, then, inspired Liang Qichao to later advocate for the “prose revolution” (*wenjie geming* 文界革命) and practice what was dubbed the “new style” (*xin wenti* 新文體), in which Liang produced creative writings extensively in the first years of the twentieth century. As the literary landscapes shifted toward vernacular styles in both countries, the pre-vernacular styles in which Shiba Shirō and Liang Qichao created became targets of criticism, eventually vanishing from the literary scenes.

2. Paradoxical Politics of Double Translation

Apart from the changes made to the Chinese protagonist and the suspension of the serialization in *Qing yi bao*, Liang Qichao translated *Chance Meetings* into elegant Chinese prose and transposed most of the classical Chinese poems verbatim. That Liang already began to translate this work aboard the ship on the way into exile, even though his knowledge of the Japanese language at that time must have been rudimentary at best, is suggestive of how Chinese literati regarded this language. To Liang Qichao and many of his contemporary Chinese peers, Japanese was chiefly considered as the language for mediating translations of modern Western discourse into Chinese. In his 1899 essay “Lun xue Riben wen zhi yi 論學日本文之益” (Advantages of Learning Japanese), for example, Liang Qichao emphasized that China could introduce Western knowledge necessary for the country’s modernization much faster and more efficiently by using its Japanese translations as an intermediary than trying to directly grapple with the Western originals. While dismissively claiming that “there is nothing in Eastern [i.e., Japanese] scholarship that does not come from the West” and that “Eastern learning cannot match Western learning,”⁴¹ Liang still underlined the advantages of acquiring reading skills in Japanese due to the swiftness of the learning process, as he insisted, “those who learn Japanese can see initial results in a few days and completely master it in a few months.”⁴² For the Chinese who felt mounting worries about the fate of the country faced with the imminent

⁴¹ Liang Qichao, “Dongji yuedan, xulun 東籍月旦, 序論” (1902), in *Yinbingshi heji: wenji*, vol.4, p.82.

⁴² Liang Qichao, “Lun xue Riben wen zhi yi 論學日本文之益” (1899), in *Yinbingshi heji: wenji*, vol.4, p.81.

challenges of modernization, Japanese was such a useful tool that his teacher Kang Youwei extolled, “I will use the West as the cow, Japan as the farmer, and eat it [the essence of Western scholarship] in my armchair.”⁴³ Liang’s view of this language was crystalized in a reading manual that he and his fellow expatriates compiled around 1900. Entitled *Hewen handu fa* 和文漢讀法 (How to Read Written Japanese in Chinese), this popular textbook was premised on the eccentric concept that every single Japanese sentence had a corresponding Chinese phrase upon which it was based, and all it took to read it was just to recover that “original” phrase following a fixed set of simple rules. Three and a half decades later, Zhou Zuoren 周作人 (1885-1967), the prominent Chinese writer and scholar of Japanese literature, whom I examine in Chapter Five, lamented that Liang Qichao’s popularized method had caused so much misunderstanding, and criticized its underpinning idea that ignored the simple fact that “Japanese, in the end of the day, is a foreign language.”⁴⁴ While Zhou Zuoren thus recognized Japanese as a “foreign language,” and Japanese materials as originals with authority, Liang and his contemporaries took Japanese mainly as the language that mediates translation of Western texts into Chinese, seeing little literary value in Japanese writing itself.

The image of Japan as a medium for China to introduce modern civilization constitutes a cliché upheld by many scholars even today. Liang Qichao, in fact, understood his translation of *Chance Meetings* within this precise framework, arguing, “The political novel was most responsible for the day-to-day progress of the political worlds of the United States, England, Germany, France, Austria, Italy, and Japan. As a

⁴³ Kang Youwei, “Ribei shumu zhi, zixu 日本書目志, 自序” (c.1897), in *Kang Youwei quanji*, vol.3, p.268.

⁴⁴ Zhou Zuoren, “Hewen handu fa 和文漢讀法” (1935), in *Kuchu zaji*.

certain English gentleman has said, the novel is the soul of a nation. What could be truer than this? I have especially chosen one that was written by an eminent Japanese scholar and is closely related to the contemporary affairs of China. I shall translate it in installments and publish in the end of each issue. May the patriotic men appreciate it!”⁴⁵ So Liang Qichao closed his well-known preface to his translation of *Chance Meetings*, published in the first issue of *Qing yi bao* in 1898. By rendering into Chinese the political novel that had allegedly been “most responsible” for political modernization in Japan as well as in the West, Liang intended to similarly bring about political reforms in China. He thus took Shiba Shirō’s work as a medium through which a Chinese audience was to gain knowledge about modern civilization and introduce it into their country.

Scholars, however, have often overlooked the structural condition that made Japanese writing such a transparent and convenient intermediary for the Chinese to transplant Western knowledge. The status of Japanese as a functional medium for such double translation, in fact, constitutes the exact flipside of the fact that the unique translational relationship between the host and the intermediary languages, Chinese and Japanese, was built upon the thick trans-regional cultural tradition. The pre-vernacular prose style, the *kanbun kundoku tai*, prevailing in many early-modern Japanese publications including Shiba Shirō’s novel, played a particularly decisive role in Liang’s and his contemporary Chinese literati’s translation and interpretation of Western discourse, via Japanese. This early-modern Sino-Japanese translational relationship, therefore, bespeaks a paradoxical symbolic configuration where *the very working of the modern spread of knowledge following the civilizational hierarchy, which positions the*

⁴⁵ Liang Qichao, “Yi yin zhengzhi xiaoshuo xu 譯印政治小說序” (1898), *Qing yi bao* 1, reprint, vol.1, p.54.

West at the center, Japan on a periphery, and China on a further periphery, hinged on the East Asian transnational cultural tradition. To adapt Spivak’s oft-quoted notion, exploring this “politics of double translation” is undoubtedly a key to the understanding of early-twentieth-century East Asian cultural modernities.⁴⁶

The beginning of *Chance Meetings* and its translation illustrate this paradoxical structure. In the opening scene, the Japanese hero Tōkai Sanshi visits the Independence Hall in Philadelphia and recalls the history of the American Revolutionary War.⁴⁷

Original

東海散士一日費府ノ獨立閣ニ登リ 仰テ自由ノ破鐘ヲ觀 俯テ獨立ノ遺文ヲ讀ミ 當時米人ノ義旗ヲ挙テ英王ノ虐政ヲ除キ卒ニ能ク獨立自主ノ民タルノ高風ヲ追懷シ俯仰感慨ニ堪ヘズ 愴然トシテ窓ニ倚テ眺臨ス 会々二姫アリ 階ヲ繞テ登リ来ル 翠羅面ヲ覆ヒ暗影疎香白羽ノ春冠ヲ戴キ輕縠ノ短羅ヲ衣文華ノ長裾ヲ曳キ風雅高表実ニ人ヲ驚カス

Tōkai Sanshi one day climbed the Independence Hall in Philadelphia, and looked up to see the Liberty Bell and down to read the Declaration of Independence. He was overwhelmed by his emotions as he recalled the nobleness of the American people who had raised these righteous banners to remove the tyranny of the British king and could become an independent, free nation. With his emotions welling up, he was leaning against the window and looking out, when two women climbing up the spiral staircase suddenly caught his eye. They had their faces covered with thin green clothes, hidden in the shades; a slight fragrance lingered. They had hats with white feather, wore short silk crepes, and trailed gorgeously patterned long skirts. Their elegance was striking.

Chinese Translation

東海散士一日登費府獨立閣。仰觀自由之破鐘。俯讀獨立之遺文。愴然懷想。當時米人舉義旗。除英苛法。卒能獨立為自主之民。倚窓臨眺。追懷高風。俯仰感慨。俄見二妃繞階來登。翠羅覆面。暗影疎香。戴白羽之春冠。衣輕縠之短羅。曳文華之長裾。風雅高表。駘蕩精目。

Tōkai Sanshi one day climbed the Independence Hall in Philadelphia, and looked up to see the Liberty Bell and down to read the Declaration of Independence.

⁴⁶ See: Gayatri Spivak, “The Politics of Translation.”

⁴⁷ Shiba Shirō, *Kajin no kigū*, p.8. *Qing yi bao* 1, reprint, vol.1, p.55. Here and after, underlines are mine.

Deeply moved, he recalled the time when the American people had raised these righteous banners to remove the harsh laws imposed by the British and could finally become an independent, free nation. Leaning against the window and looking out, he remembered their noblesse; looking down and up, he felt a rush of emotion. Suddenly, two women climbed up the spiral staircase. They had their faces covered with thin green clothes, hidden in the shades; a slight fragrance lingered. They had hats with white feather, wore short silk crepes, and trailed gorgeously patterned long skirts. Their elegance appeared carefree and subtle.

In Shiba Shirō's original, composed against the backdrop of the rising Freedom and Popular Rights Movement, the narrator uses notions that were newly coined in Chinese characters to translate Western concepts, such as “*jiyū* 自由” (liberty), “*dokuritsu* 獨立” (independence), and “*jishu no tami* 自主ノ民” (free nation), thereby praising values of modern civilization embodied by the independence of the United States. Liang Qichao's Chinese translation transposes these words (“*ziyou* 自由,” “*duli* 獨立,” “*zizhu zhi min* 自主之民”), and thus provides the Chinese audience with the same perspective on modern civilization as that with which the original narrative opens. This perspective, however, soon becomes distracted as the silhouettes of two elegantly dressed women enter the protagonist's sight. At that very moment, the eyes of the readers of the Chinese translation must also be caught by the materiality of the host language, as Liang Qichao's translation starts to assume the formal characteristics of classical Chinese parallel prose (*pian ti wen* 駢體文).⁴⁸ Not only does the translator provide orthodox prosody based on four- and six-syllable phrase units, but he also appends a phrase not present in the original, “*daidang jingmu* 駘蕩精且” (carefree and subtle), in the end of the quoted passage to make a balancing couplet with the preceding expression, “*fengya gaobiao* 風

⁴⁸ Saitō Mareshi, in his examination of Liang Qichao's translation, also points out that this passage has the typical structure of the Chinese “parallel prose.” Saitō Mareshi, *Kanbunmyaku no kindai*, p.127.

雅高表” (elegance). (See the wave-underlined part.) In inviting Chinese readers to witness the archetypal landscape of modern civilization, Liang, in a contradictory gesture, treats their ears with a familiar rhythm.

The two women, who will soon turn out to be Yūran and Kōren, the expatriates from Spain and Ireland, also reflect on the history of the War of Independence and praise the American Revolution for its having given birth to “a wealthy and strong state of civilization.” Their voices, however, take on a lamenting tone, as they contrast the American achievement with the adverse situations of their nations. Overhearing their conversation, Sanshi evokes an anachronistic landscape that is completely heterogeneous to the scene in front of his eyes, the one of the “free” state of “civilization.”⁴⁹

Original

散士之ヲ聴テ以為ラク今這ノ嫵婉タル佳人自由ノ邦国ニ棲息シ文明ノ徳沢ニ沐浴シ而シテ慨歎悲哀此ノ如ク切ナル 恰モ晋廷ノ末路王導ガ諸人ト新亭ニ会合シ目ヲ拳ゲテ山河ノ異ナルヲ憤リ空ク南冠ヲ戴テ楚囚ノ涙ヲ灑グノ情アルガ如キハ何ゾヤ 怪訝自ラ禁ズル能ハズ

Listening to that [conversation between the two women], Sanshi could not help wondering why, those elegant, beautiful women, even though they lived in the country of liberty and were enjoying the benefits of civilization, were despairing and sorrowful so sincerely that they reminded him of the emotions of Wang Dao, who had gathered with his fellows at the New Pavilion in the last days of the Jin court, and been indignant at the sight of alien mountains and rivers and shed tears like the hostages of the Chu vainly wearing the crown of the south. Sanshi could not help being suspicious.

Chinese Translation

散士聽之。竊竊疑之。以為今此佳人棲息自由之邦國。沐浴文明之德澤。而慨歎悲哀如此。恰如晉廷末路諸名士新亭之會。作楚囚之對泣。歎山河之已非。甯非異事。

⁴⁹ Shiba Shirō, *Kajin no kigū*, p. 17. *Qing yi bao* 1, reprint, vol.1, p.57.

Listening to that [conversation between the two women], Sanshi secretly suspected, thinking that it was indeed odd that those beautiful women, even though they lived in the country of liberty and were enjoying the benefits of civilization, were despairing and sorrowful, just as the worthy men gathered at the New Pavilion in the last days of the Jin court had shed the face-to-face tears of the Chu hostage, lamenting that the mountains and rivers were already not the same.

In this odd passage, while the two heroines visualize the epic of modern nation building in the suburbs of Philadelphia, Sanshi imagines the landscape of the southern city of Jiankang 建康 in fourth-century China. This passage, in fact, alludes to an episode that appears in classic sources such as the eminent fifth-century compilation of tales, *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語 (The New Account of the Tales of the World). This well-known story goes that when the Western Jin Dynasty (265-316) fell and relocated its capital from the northwestern city of Luoyang 洛陽 to Jiankang in the unfamiliar south, the general Wang Dao 王導 (c.267-c.330) and his fellows gathered at the New Pavilion for feasts. A person remarked, “Though winds and sunshine are not unlike [Luoyang], mountains and rivers look truly different!” (*zheng zi you shanhe zhi yi* 正自有山河之異) and “everybody looked at each other and shed tears” (*jie xiang shi liulei* 皆相視流淚). Wang Dao then told them not to “face to each other like the hostages of the Chu” (*zuo Chu qiu xiang dui* 作楚囚相對) and work together to restore the dynasty.⁵⁰ Wang Dao is remembered for his contribution to the foundation of the Eastern Jin Dynasty (317-420) based in the south, which succeeded the Western Jin. These remarks by Wang Dao recorded in *Shishuo xinyu* further allude to an ancient anecdote that is documented in a canonical commentary, known as the *Zuo* commentary, to one of the Confucian Classics, *Chunqiu* 春秋 (The

⁵⁰ The “Yuyan 語言” chapter of *Shishuo xinyu*.

Spring and Autumn Annals, c.4th C. BCE). The episode is about “the hostages of the Chu,” the ancient southern state (?-223 BCE), who were captured by its adversary Jin (11th C. BCE-376 BCE) and “shackled, wearing the crown of the south” (*nanguan er zhi* 南冠而縶), remembering their home country.⁵¹ The Japanese author thus associates the Wang Dao anecdote taken from *Shishuo xinyu* with this ancient history that his source refers to, thereby composing a loaded phrase, “[Wang Dao and his fellows had] been indignant at the sight of alien mountains and rivers and shed tears like the hostages of the Chu vainly wearing the crown of the south.” Comprehending this network of signifiers based on the canons of classical Chinese literature, the translator Liang Qichao renders the convoluted Japanese passage succinctly into two six-syllable phrases, “[the two women appeared as though they] had shed the face-to-face tears of the Chu hostage, lamenting that mountains and rivers were already not the same.” Liang Qichao also adds a four-syllable phrase “*qieqie yizhi* 竊竊疑之” (secretly suspected) in the beginning of the passage, in order to maintain prosody in the style of parallel prose. (See the wave-underlined parts.)

This example indicates that just as Wang Dao and his peers, mentioned in *Shishuo xinyu*, expressed their emotions and loyalty to the fallen dynasty by alluding to the *Zuo* commentary in fourth-century Jiankang, so does the novel’s hero articulate the emotions he perceives in the voices of the women by referring to the precedents from classical Chinese literature. The Spanish and Irish expatriates imply the emotions of sorrow for the ruin of their countries and sustained loyalty to them, and they touch the heartstrings of

⁵¹ See: the entry for the ninth year of the reign of the Duke Cheng of Lu (*Chengong jiu nian* 成公九年) in the *Zuo* commentary to *Chunqiu*.

Sanshi, who, now on foreign soil, also experienced the demise of the regime he had pledged loyalty to. While the Chu hostage anecdote in the ancient *Zuo* commentary serves as a “topos” for conveying the emotion of loyalism in the narrative in the fifth-century Chinese source, that Wang Dao story likewise functions as a “topos” for describing the same emotion in the nineteenth-century Japanese political novel. Liang Qichao’s rendition, moreover, suggests that such a coded communication by means of the literary language is also realized between the Japanese author and the Chinese translator; fathoming the whole network of signifiers concerning loyalism in the original, Liang Qichao succeeds in transposing into Chinese a narrative woven with intricate references to these literary precedents. By associating the modern imperative of building a “wealthy and strong state of civilization” with the old emotions of dynastic loyalism and civilizational restoration articulated in Wang Dao’s reference to the ancient Chu hostage tale, the Japanese text transforms the meanings of the universal ideas of modernity — such as “liberty,” “[national] independence,” and “civilization” — from those bestowed by the historical experience of the American Revolution. Such idiosyncratic reinterpretation is faithfully reproduced in the Chinese translation. This unique literary communication between the Japanese author and the Chinese translator, just like the one between Wang Dao and his fellows in the fourth century, is contingent upon their shared literary tradition.

3. Cultural Utopia in Philadelphia: Identity as Exemplarity

After the initial encounter at the Independence Hall, the protagonist Tōkai Sanshi meets the two women again by chance in Valley Forge, and is invited to their secluded residence. Upon learning that they are expatriates from Spain and Ireland, Yūran and Kōren, Sanshi reveals his background as a native of Aizu and identifies himself as a “loyal subject of the fallen country.” In the Japanese original, the Chinese hero Hankei, who has disguised himself as a servant at the house, listens to their conversations and discloses his true identity as a loyalist of the Ming Dynasty. These four men and women then forge a transnational solidarity as individuals who have lost their home countries, and worry about the fates of their nations from abroad. Compared by the narrator to the great fifth-century Chinese poet Tao Yuanming’s 陶淵明 (365?-471) archi-image of utopia, “peach blossom spring” (*tao hua yuan* 桃花源), this serendipitous gathering in the Philadelphia suburbs is lead to a climactic banquet where the protagonists exchange improvised poems in classical Chinese. In the poetry exchange, they strengthen their bonds by virtue of cultural identity; though from different nations, they are equally subjects who exemplify shared cultural values, namely aesthetic taste and traditional morality. Their virtue, then, becomes the core of their struggles against the modern politics of power represented by imperialism. The subsequent volumes of *Chance Meetings* relate the story of their political struggles against the imperial powers, namely England and France, staged in Europe, the Middle East, and East Asia. While fueled by the utopian imagination, their endeavor is in reality confronted with one difficulty after

another; the chance meeting in Philadelphia is repeatedly recalled in nostalgic tones as an ideal moment, serving as the matrix of the whole story.

The translator Liang Qichao faithfully rendered the whole banquet scene into Chinese, except that he removed the Chinese protagonist Hankei entirely from this crucial part, and moved his first appearance to the very end of the gathering. The exclusion of Hankei from this key scene indicates that the translator, while replicating the traditional cultural values structuralizing the narrative, took issue with the original's imagination about the modern Chinese subjectivity that exemplifies those values.

As the heroes and heroines share their moral and political emotions as “loyal subjects” of the ruined countries, Sanshi invites them to a poetry exchange, remarking, “Someone in the past said, ‘The good time and the beautiful landscape, the appreciative minds and the joyful matters: these four things are rarely found complete.’” This quaint comment is indeed a reference to the towering fifth-century poet Xie Lingyun’s 謝靈運 (385-433) well-known “preface” to his own series of poems called “Ni Wei taizi Yezhong ji 擬魏太子鄴中集” (Imitating the Poems of the Wei Crown Prince’s Gathering at Ye). Liang Qichao’s translation renders the Japanese text to make it a verbatim quote from Xie Lingyun’s piece. This poetry series consists of eight poems, each composed in the imitated voice of a poet active during the Jian’an 建安 era (196-220), some two centuries before Xie Lingyun’s time. By “imitating” the styles of the Jian’an poets, who pioneered classical poetry in five syllable lines, Xie Lingyun imagined the poetry gathering at Ye as the archetypal scene for poetic composition, thereby contributing to the historicizing and canonizing of the tradition of classical poetry, which the fifth-

century poet prominently practiced himself. Prefaced by the allusion to Xie Lingyun’s “preface,” the subsequent poetry exchange in Shiba Shirō’s novel can be considered, if you will, as a further imitation of Xie Lingyun’s “imitation.” This gesture of allusion enables the Japanese novel to inherit the tradition of classical poetry, which Xie Lingyun played a significant part in developing in fifth-century southern China, and which had been trans-regionally passed on through centuries down to nineteenth-century Japan. In this sense, just like the imaginary poets from the Jian’an era that Xie Lingyun created in his “imitation,” the fictional characters in *Chance Meetings* become practitioners of this transnational lyrical tradition.

The poetry exchange in late-nineteenth-century Philadelphia suburbs articulates the modern world in the traditional poetic language. The poem attributed to the Irish heroine, for instance, draws on the traditional poetics known as “the merging of situation and emotion” (*qing jing xiang rong* 情景相容), and thus weaves the poet’s ethical-political feelings into the background of the joyful banquet. Ling Qichao’s translation transcribes this poem verbatim.

清夜会良友	In this pristine night I met with good friends;
花下酌芳罇	Under the flowers I poured flavorful wine.
春雁向北翔	Spring wild geese fly back to the north;
遙遙煙樹昏	Afar, the hazy trees appear dark.
落花隨風摧	Falling flowers break apart in the wind;
翩翩敷庭園	Dancing and carpeting the garden.
殘春看將尽	The remaining spring will be over in a blink;
難挽日月奔	No way to hold back the running time.
臂弱不堪戈	But my arms are too weak to hold a halberd;
幽憤空含冤	So my deep-seated anger vainly engenders hatred.
國仇未全雪	The enemies of my country have not been completely washed away;
甘心喪元	I have indulged myself in the idea of giving away my head.

情悲絃聲急 As my emotion becomes sorrowful, the sounds of the strings speed
up;
和我慷慨言 And they echo with my indignant words.⁵²

A retrospective gaze in the opening couplet commemorates the fortuitous encounter and the cheerful banquet with the friends. Then the poet's perspective, invited by the image of flying birds, shifts from time to space, visualizing the late-spring landscape extending to the limits of the sight. But this perspective brings in the sense of time to the banquet's utopian timelessness. As if in slow motion, it flashes the moment when the winds break the falling flowers into petals on which they have enjoyed the gathering. The passing of time is thus inscribed in the heart of the timeless joy: indeed, "[n]o way to hold back the running time." The intrusion of temporality, followed by the contrasting images of the floating petals and the arms too heavy to carry, awakens the poet to the reality as an Irish expatriate. Suddenly, the uncertain future looms. Alienated by the absence of agency, the political emotions only linger within the mind, losing voice. In the penultimate couplet, then, the inexpressible emotions ("Deep-seated anger thus vainly engenders hatred") are articulated in the voice of the illustrious third-century Chinese poet Cao Zhi 曹植 (192-232) from the Jian'an era, who is also imitated in Xie Lingyun's above-discussed compilation, "Ni Wei taizi Yezhong ji." The penultimate couplet, indeed, is an adaptation of a couplet from one of Cao Zhi's "Miscellaneous Poems": "The enemies of my country are truly persistent; / I have indulged myself in the idea of giving away my head" (*guo chou liang bu sai / gan xin si sang yuan* 國讎亮不塞 / 甘心思喪元).⁵³ In the closing

⁵² Shiba Shirō, *Kajin no kigū*, p.85. *Qing yi bao* 6, reprint, vol.1, p.384.

⁵³ The source is the sixth of Cao Zhi's "Zashi liu shou 雜詩六首." Cao Zhi, *Cao Zijian shi zhu*, p.28.

lines, which are a quote from the same Cao Zhi poem, the poet's emotions echo the music. Given an old poetic voice, the modern poet's emotions are thus sewn back into the perpetual economy of lyrical communication. By means of the classical poetics of "merging of the situation and the emotion," therefore, this fictional poem creates a poetic movement that translates modern emotions back into the lyrical tradition.

During this poetry exchange, the protagonists recite in unison the French national anthem *La Marseillaise*, yet in a translation that renders the whole lyrics into seven-syllable line verse, another standard prosody of classical Chinese poetry. Responding to the chanting, Sanshi and Hankei then recite the fourth of "Gushi shijiu shou 古詩十九首" (The Nineteen Old Poems), a canonical collection of classical poems anthologized in the sixth-century *Wen xuan*.⁵⁴ The wildly anachronistic echoing of "Gushi shijiu shou" with *La Marseillaise* not so much opens up a certain hybrid literary space, as illuminates this novel's narratological structure, which articulates the modern historical world in the old literary language. Resisting the world order that tolerates imperialist encroachment, the protagonists of the fiction, to be sure, embody nationalism, as it is typically expressed in the French national anthem. However, the actual content of their nationalism, even though it is rooted in the historical experiences of Spain, Ireland, Japan, and China, does not have anything to do with certain particular values proper to these nations. Paradoxical as it may sound, the characters in Shiba Shirō's fictional world can become nationalist subjects precisely by virtue of believing in and practicing certain "universal" moral and aesthetic values. Their subjectivities, therefore, *exemplify* the "universal" cultural values, where the "universality" is defined by the regional universality that those old values had

⁵⁴ See: Shiba Shirō, *Kajin no kigū*, p.80-3. In the Chinese translation, Hankei's voice is replaced by Yūran's.

in premodern East Asia. The poetic movement of Shiba Shirō's narrative enfolds the totality of the modern historical world within this "universal" cultural sphere. Unlike in modern cultural politics, an identity in the world described in Shiba Shirō's novel is not conditional on the recognition by the universalist West as a certain "particularity"; instead, it is formed as an *exemplarity* in a universalist cultural tradition. In the modern dialectics of the universal and the particular, the universal is appropriated by a privileged subject, the West, and a difference from it defines a particular identity, while in the novel's imagined world, the universal is embodied by traditional cultural values that, *de jure*, anyone can uphold and exemplify, and that cultural exemplarity constitutes a subject's identity.⁵⁵

Inheriting the same trans-regional cultural tradition, Liang Qichao succeeded in reproducing this same narratological structure in the Chinese text. Just like the multinational protagonists in the story, the author and the translator, as well as their intended audiences in late-nineteenth-century Japan and China, shared the literary tradition, and it is precisely due to this "chance meeting" that the protagonists in the translated story could equally exist as exemplary subjects. The translation, however, removes the Chinese protagonist from the entire scene of the Valley Forge gathering, erasing his lyrical voice. This translational decision, in fact, is the result of a remarkable wavering. The fourth issue of *Qing yi bao* (published on January 22, 1899) indeed carried a faithful translation of the scene where Hankei, disclosing his true identity as a Ming

⁵⁵ This system exhibits a striking similarity to what Hannah Arendt regards as the chief concept of Kant's aesthetics: "exemplary validity." According to Arendt, aesthetic experience — the judgment of beauty — is the "exemplar [that] is and remains a particular that in its particularity reveals the generality that otherwise could not be defined." See: Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, p.76-7. It could be extremely productive to compare Shiba Shirō's and Liang Qichao's engagement with the "universal" cultural values and Arendt's interpretation of Kantian aesthetics and political philosophy. This, however, is the subject of another study.

Dynasty loyalist, makes his first appearance in the story. But in the following fifth issue (published on February 1, 1899), that part was completely retranslated, removing the Chinese hero. Then after the whole sequence of the gathering, Hankei finally appears in the seventh issue (published on March 2, 1899) when the banquet is just over and the protagonists part from each other. Here is how the Chinese translation renders that scene:

Then, [Sanshi] was politely shaking hands [with the ladies] and was about to leave, when Yūran plucked a branch of white rose and stuck it in his collar, saying, ‘Sir, even though this flower withers, let us not abandon each other.’ Smiling, Sanshi replied, ‘I am one who takes care of flowers. I just wonder if you, the flower that speaks words, won’t fly away to someone else’s home.’ Turning her face away with a smile, Yūran sent off Sanshi for a long time. Hankei was a man of ambition from China. Indignant at the world and loathing the society, he had secluded himself in the wilderness. He had been a best friend of Sanshi; they had visited each other very often. He had also long heard about Yūran and Kōren. On the occasion of Sanshi’s trip [to their residence] that time, he had earlier made an appointment with Sanshi to meet where the boat was moored. By then, Hankei had already been waiting for a long time at the riverside. As they greeted each other upon leaving, Sanshi boarded the boat. The two ladies said, ‘Please take care, sir.’ Taking his hat off, Sanshi replied, ‘We shall see each other again.’⁵⁶

In the passage rather awkwardly appended to the romantic separation of Sanshi and Yūran (wave-underlined part), Hankei’s identity is altered from a Ming Dynast loyalist to an ambiguous one: “a man of ambition from China.” Sanshi and Hankei, who strike up friendship “by chance” in the original, become long-term friends; Hankei, moreover, is said to have already known about Sanshi’s visit to the residence, which in the Japanese version happens only because Sanshi re-encounters the two ladies “by chance.” In the translation, not only is the identity of the Chinese character obscured and his lyrical voice erased, but he is also disengaged from the core structure of this narrative: “chance meetings.”

⁵⁶ *Qing yi bao* 7, reprint, vol.1, p.444.

Hankei's equivocal existence in the translated story is not so much indicative of some intentional decision on the part of the translator, as the latter's indecisiveness about the identity of the Chinese subject. Shiba Shirō imagined that in addition to a loyalist of the Aizu domain, a Spanish legitimist, and an Irish nationalist, a Ming Dynasty loyalist would constitute an exemplary subject who practices traditional cultural values in the modern world. But Liang Qichao, while faithfully transposing this transnational solidarity into Chinese, left undecided the identity of the Chinese subject who takes part in the political community of cultural heroes and heroines. Even though Hankei, both in the original and the translation, acts as an exemplary hero in the epic struggles following the Valley Forge gathering, the translated "Hankei" exists in that story as an empty signifier, merely fulfilling that assigned role in the narrative, without being given a clear subjectivity. By translating *Chance Meetings*, therefore, Liang Qichao left to a new imagination different from that of the Japanese author's the question of what Chinese subject would become an exemplary hero who can put into practice the traditional cultural values in the modern world. This disagreement, therefore, suggests that the relationship between the Japanese original and the Chinese translation should be articulated as the one between different *exemplarities* in the common "universal" cultural tradition, rather than the one between different national particularities.

4. Interrupted Translation: Politics of Imagination

The subsequent story of the protagonists' fights against the imperialist powers progresses as news about their adventures reaches Sanshi, who alone remains in Philadelphia, worrying about the fates of his three friends. Betraying the promise of reunion, the friends meanwhile left for Europe. The story is thus narrated from Sanshi's perspective, and readers are whereby invited into the world imagined by the Japanese protagonist, who believes the modern relevance of the traditional values and aspires for creating a new political agency based thereupon to resist imperialism.

The Chinese literary historian C. T. Hsia, while critiquing Liang Qichao's literary thought, has claimed that Shiba Shirō's novel is "unreadable by modern standards."⁵⁷ In fact, in order to experience its imagined world and enjoy the thrill and suspense of the narrative, one needs to have significant knowledge of traditional Chinese literature, a different prerequisite from the "modern standards." *Chance Meetings* and its Chinese translation expect their readers to be familiar, for example, with late-imperial narrative literature, if not Shakespeare; Cao Zhi's well-known poems, if not Dante; and the Confucian Classics, if not Homer or the Bible. This novel, therefore, is admittedly almost "unreadable" today. But in late-nineteenth-century East Asia, it gained significant popularity when first published in Japan, and could even convince a reader from the neighboring country to translate it; and through the brilliant translation, it could also be circulated transnationally.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ C.T. Hsia, "Yen Fu and Liang Ch'i-ch'ao as Advocates of New Fiction," p.235.

⁵⁸ The Chinese translation of *Chance Meetings with Beautiful Women* was later reprinted in a book format, indicating its popularity among the Chinese audience.

The news that reaches Sanshi, however, is mostly bad. Challenges are mounting and misfortune befalling; only the memories of that serendipitous gathering at Valley Forge can sustain Sanshi's imagination and hope for the realization of a world free of imperialism. It is one of those adverse moments that Sanshi happens to meet Kōren at the grave of Fanny Parnell, the Irish nationalist, in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Kōren, who has just come back from Europe, tells Sanshi that the two other friends, Yūran and Hankei, went missing in a shipwreck in the Mediterranean, but delighted at the fortuitous re-encounter, she invites Sanshi to the house in Valley Forge. The two friends engage in an all-night conversation and another round of poetry exchange, hoping to reenact that joyful banquet. On the following morning, however, Sanshi still suffers from lingering angst, and tells his roommates about what happened the previous night:

Last night, I was tired of reading, and so I was watching the moon alone. I suddenly wanted to come down from the building and wander in the garden. Then, my legs took me to a recess of the mountains, while I was quietly reciting, wondering about the existence of the heavenly Way, and pondering upon human life and death. The more I thought, the more I lost myself. I became enraptured as if in a dream. I can't remember where I went or what I did any more. This must be what the Japanese would call 'fox possession.'⁵⁹

The reunion with Kōren reminded Sanshi of that authentic time of an imaginary return to the cultural homeland in the depths of Valley Forge, secluded from the alienating reality; but that delightful re-encounter can now only be recalled and reported as a confused illusion, implying that the moral determination and the aesthetic delight he had shared with the multinational friends might have been a mere fancy, without any significance or efficacy, once he left that utopian space. This decisive detail allegorizes a fundamental

⁵⁹ Shiba Shirō, *Kajin no kigū*, p.279. *Qing yi bao* 18, reprint, vol.3, p.1173.

question of *translation* for the turn-of-the-century East Asian literature, the question of whether the traditional cultural values that structuralize Shiba Shirō's narrative and Liang Qichao's translation have relevance outside their serendipitous translational relationship underpinned by the East Asian literary tradition, in the broader field of modern world literature. Sanshi in this utterance fails in this broader translation. Depressed, he is suspected if "he has finally gotten a nervous breakdown."⁶⁰

Sanshi nevertheless wishes to "devote [himself] to the nation and society far more than any ordinary person"; and he finally returns to Japan with "the ambition to travel around Eastern countries and spread his ideas," so that the global anti-imperialist battles can continue.⁶¹ But just as he is about to undertake his program, Sanshi abandons his political will and agrees to become an official for the Japanese government. The novel's last six volumes describe the official inspection trip to Europe and the Middle East in which Sanshi takes part. Though Sanshi still tries to put in practice traditional cultural values, he now represents a nation-state; his ambition to smash Western imperialism is represented as the goal to be achieved by strengthening the sovereignty of the state of Japan. The "universal" cultural values are now appropriated by a particular nation whose power on the international stage is to prove the relevance of those values in the modern world. As the hero's subjectivity is thus identified with a nation-state and embedded in the modern dialectics of the universal and the particular, Shiba Shirō's eccentric imagination shrinks: the epic fight between the transnational solidarity of virtue and the

⁶⁰ Shiba Shirō, *Kajin no kigū*, p.279. *Qing yi bao* 18, reprint, vol.3, p.1173.

⁶¹ Shiba Shirō, *Kajin no kigū*, p.437-8. *Qing yi bao* 28, reprint, vol.4, p.1849.

modern politics of power is replaced with the realpolitik of modern international relations, struggle for existence among nation-states.

When the inspection trip reaches Egypt, Sanshi happens to encounter the Spanish heroine Yūran, whom he believed to have been drowned in the shipwreck. Though pleased at the chance meeting, they do not engage in an emotional conversation any more, nor do they exchange a single poem. Sanshi soon thereafter leaves Yūran, stating, “I would be able to rescue you and go to Europe together, if only I were not bound by an order from the government. It is indeed a pity and regrettable.” On the pretext of an official appointment, Sanshi thus breaks with his friend, simply expecting help to come from the remnant forces of the Carlist Party or Cuba.⁶² Their unsympathetic attitudes are symbolic of the disappearance of imagination and idealism from the story. Indeed, the narrative’s utopian temporality, which staged one “chance meeting” after another, constantly deferring the realization of a better society and just world order toward an ideal future, is now replaced with a linear time that simply traces the itinerary of the official trip. Those readers who appreciated the poetic language and were inspired by the characters’ moral integrity in the novel’s first ten volumes should then be disappointed at the loss of aesthetic taste and moral emotion in its last six. It was right after this dramatic turning point of Shiba Shirō’s narrative that the Chinese translator decided to stop serializing the translation in *Qing yi bao*. In fact, without its unique sense of suspense or provocative imagination, the last volumes of *Chance Meetings* are tedious and monotonous, and probably too much so to be serialized in a periodical journal. Liang Qichao’s decision to interrupt the serialization, which must have been made ultimately

⁶² Shiba Shirō, *Kajin no kigū*, p.566.

due to concerns of the entertainment quality required from serialized fiction, is indicative of the politics of imagination that was at stake in the literary endeavors of Shiba Shirō and Liang Qichao. By means of fictional imagination, these turn-of-the-century East Asian writers conjured up old cultural values to envision a radical future that would replace the existing modern world order, the world order that had brought about imperialism; they sought to create a new political agency that would practice those traditional values in the modern world. That agency, embodied by the solidarity of the multinational heroes and heroines, was fundamentally a transnational one; but once the novel attributed it to a particular nation and embedded its working in the international struggles for hegemony, the novel's politics of imagination was suspended.

5. In Search of the Exemplary Subject: The “New People” and “New Fiction”

By interrupting the translation of the novel with shrunken imagination, however, Liang Qichao succeeded the fictional imagination of the first half of Shiba Shirō's work. In fact, it is representations of the Chinese exemplary subject that Liang Qichao, while in exile in Japan, continued to pursue in his literary endeavors. Those literary works include Liang's own political novel *Xin Zhongguo weilai ji*, which was serialized starting in the first issue of *Xin xiaoshuo*, a forerunner of the modern Chinese-language literary magazines, edited by Liang in Yokohama. They also consist of a number of his literary biographies of political heroes published in venues such as *Xinmin congbao* 新民叢報 (New People Journal, 1902-7), also edited by the exiled Liang, including the popularized

Yidali jianguo sanjie zhuan 意大利建國三傑傳 (*Biographies of the Three Italian Nation-Building Heroes*, 1902), whose Korean translation I will discuss in Chapter Two. The magazine *Xin xiaoshuo* and its inaugural editorial, entitled “Lun xiaoshuo yu qunzhi zhi guanxi 論小說與群治之關係” (On the Relationship between Fiction and the Organization of Society, 1902) are often mentioned on the first pages of modern Chinese literary histories as late-Qing precursors of modern Chinese literature. Liang Qichao, to be sure, practiced national literature in exile, and created national heroes in his works; but reexamined in constellation with the translation he had done just a few years before, it becomes clear that the national identity Liang imagined through literary creation cannot be best characterized as one that is *particular* to China as a nation, but should be considered as an *exemplary* identity, one that exemplifies universal cultural values. The comparative examination also helps us reconsider the identity of the “new people” (*xinmin* 新民), which Liang hoped to create by producing “new fiction” (*xin xiaoshuo* 新小說).

According to an advertisement run a few months before the launching of the journal *Xin xiaoshuo*, *Xin Zhongguo weilai ji* was originally conceived of as a colossal saga of Chinese nation building that the author imagined would take place in the coming sixty years.⁶³ The novel, however, was left unfinished at a point where the main story had barely begun. Composed in the traditional cycle chapter style (*zhanghui ti* 章回體), the existing five chapters open with a future scene where the imaginary Chinese state, which the author thought would be established within ten years from his time, is hosting a

⁶³ See: Xia Xiaohong, *Jueshi yu chuanshi*, p.42. Liang Qichao, *Xin Zhongguo weilai ji*, in *Yingbinshi heji: zhuanji*, vol.89.

World Expo to celebrate its fiftieth anniversary and show off its industrial and cultural prosperity to delegates from all over the world.⁶⁴ The illustrious sixty-year history of nation building is to be told by Kong Juemin, a descendant of Confucius, to the international audience gathered for the celebration. The nation building is driven by heroes, namely Huang Keqiang and Li Qubing, who strive to contribute their knowledge, acquired through study in Europe, to their country. At a high point of the extant parts, these two heroes engage in heated debates about the course of China's modernization, Huang Keqiang advocating constitutional monarchy and Li Qubing a republican revolution. Their dialogical reasoning epitomizes modern intelligence.

These enlightened heroes, however, are never culturally uprooted. Besides their backgrounds as the leading disciples of a prominent late-Qing Confucian, Huang Keqiang and Li Qubing are also practitioners of traditional literature. Upon returning home from study in Europe, the heroes witness the Russian occupation of the strategic Shanhai Pass region and express their indignation by alternately composing, phrase by phrase, a song lyric (*ci* 詞) to the traditional tune of “He xinlang 賀新郎” (Congratulating the Bridegroom) and inscribing it on a wall. Their poetic communication, reminiscent of the use of classical poetry in *Chance Meetings*, would later be extended to another character, who inscribes right next to their piece another *ci* that matches rhyme words with theirs (*heyun* 和韻). There is yet another hero named Chen Meng, whom Huang and Li hear chanting lines from Byron's poems (“Don Juan” and “The Giaour”) to piano accompaniment. The narrator quotes those lines in the original English, and then renders them into Chinese in the way that, as the author's commentary explains, “[t]he foreign

⁶⁴ The narrative format that begins the story from a future scene is inspired by Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward: 2000-1887* (1888), whose Chinese rendition by Timothy Richard first came out in 1891.

meaning is translated with the Chinese sound.” Liang Qichao also repeats his well-known arguments for “poetry revolution” (*shijie geming* 詩界革命) in a summarizing commentary, saying, “[t]he worlds and styles of the Western masters are to be melted and recast into our poetry.”⁶⁵ Not only does Byron’s lamentation over the fallen ancient Greek civilization touch the heartstrings of Huang Keqiang and Li Qubing, but also Chen Meng’s reciting voice, via the translation into the old sounds, echoes their lyricism, creating emotional solidarity among these protagonists. The heroes in *Xin Zhongguo weilai ji* are thus bound not only with Western knowledge and a passion for modernization, but also with a thick cultural habitus expressed in the lyrical voice. The “new China” that they are to build, therefore, by no means replicates modernity as it is. Quite the contrary, the story envisions the new China as the leading creator of a new world order. Liang Qichao’s utopianism is given a visual representation in the opening future scene, where the World Expo coincides with China’s hosting of the signing of a peace treaty, which, as suggested in the publication announcement, is the result of an averted war the country waged as “the leader” of the “yellow race,” including Japan and the Philippines, against the Western countries on account of their racial oppression in their colonies. The climax is intended as a modern incarnation of the old Confucian ideal of *datong* 大同, or, the Great Community, expressed in a Confucian Classic, *Liji* 禮記 (The Book of Rites).

Both in terms of the narratological structure and character design, the text of *Xin Zhongguo weilai ji* is woven with the warp of the epic of Chinese nation building and the weft of lyricism rooted in literary tradition. Allegorizing the modern Chinese subjectivity

⁶⁵ Liang Qichao, *Xin Zhongguo weilai ji*, in *Yinbingshi heji: zhuanji*, vol.89, p.56.

as Liang Qichao imagines it, the heroes of the story are, at the same time, both enlightened modern intellectuals and practitioners of traditional aesthetic and moral values. And the values they exemplify, rooted as they are in the Chinese cultural tradition, are considered universal, capable of becoming the foundation of a transnational solidarity against imperialism and of giving legitimacy to an imagined new world order. Their identity as nationalists exemplifies values represented as universal in the narrative, rather than defined by a certain particularity. In fact, we may fantasize, with their crisscrossing cultural backgrounds and mutually echoing imaginations of the future, the protagonists of *Xin Zhongguo weilai ji* might regard their counterparts in *Chance Meetings* as comrades who practice the same cultural values and have the analogous political ambitions as them. Still, Liang Qichao's political novel differs from the work he translated as to the construction of exemplary subjectivity for modern China: Huang Keqiang and Li Qubing, while educated in Europe, are disciples of an illustrious late-Qing Confucian, whereas *Chance Meetings*'s Chinese protagonist Hankei is a Ming loyalist; Huang and Li practice the tradition of *ci* poetry, while Hankei is a good *shi* poet. If Liang Qichao altered the identity of Hankei and left it ambiguous in his translation, he reinvents another "Hankei" — the exemplary subject of modern China — in *Xin Zhongguo weilai ji* by reimagining the identity of a modern Chinese hero in his own fictional endeavor.

Leaving aside the circumstantial speculations about why Liang Qichao did not write the subsequent chapters, I want to argue that *Xin Zhongguo weilai ji* is a complete piece of "fiction" (*xiaoshuo* 小說) precisely because it was abandoned in the beginning. Like the spine of a book, the existing fragment binds the future and the past, and draws an anachronistic picture of how the traditional moral and aesthetic values would have

become the roots of a political subjectivity that realizes a new global order. Without the middle pages that would have narrated the epic of how this ideal future is actually going to be realized, the picture is suspended, producing an anticipatory temporality similar to that of Shiba Shirō's narrative, which continues to defer the realization of the utopian future toward yet another "chance meeting." In both works, anticipation of the future is anachronistically interwoven with yearning for recovering old cultural values, and a radical future is imagined as if excavated from the old sounds and ideas, defying any progressive temporality.

As a result, what is narrated are the stories of aspiring, yet stateless, national heroes, driven by the utopian desire for the radical future. Just like Liang Qichao in 1902, who had been expelled from the country and was yet to see a modern Chinese nation established, and Shiba Shirō in 1885, who, haunted by memories of the brutal demise of his native Aizu domain, lived in a young nation still without a constitution or parliament and bound by the unequal treaties, the protagonists of both stories do not have sovereign states that would guarantee them political agency. But it is precisely because they are stateless that these heroes and heroines embody the "new people" that Liang Qichao hoped to create through the production of "new fiction." "To renovate the people of a nation, the fictional literature of that nation must first be renovated." By so arguing in the inaugural editorial of the journal *Xin xiaoshuo*, Liang Qichao tried to make good use of fiction's "incomprehensible power" as an affective medium that would effectively influence human feelings and eventually "controls the Way of humanity" in order to "renovate the people."⁶⁶ Called the "new people" (*xinmin* 新民), the reformed individuals

⁶⁶ Liang Qichao, "Lun xiaoshuo yu qunzhi zhi guanxi," in *Yinbingshi heji: wenji*, vol.10, p.6.

were thought to be fundamental political subjectivity which must precede any institutionalization; as Liang stated in *Xinmin shuo* 新民說 (Discourse on the New People, 1902-6), published concurrently with the journal *Xin xiaoshuo*, “If the new people exist, why would you worry that there is no new institution, government, or nation?”⁶⁷ Without institutional support, it is “fiction” that ties people together, becoming the medium for sociality. And by renovating this popular literary genre and producing “new fiction” (*xin xiaoshuo* 新小說), Liang hoped to transform Chinese society. The emotional solidarity that the protagonists in his fiction forge through communication in the literary language allegorizes just such an imagined new society built by the “new people,” who are to be bond together via this aesthetic medium, new fiction. Their subjectivity is an essentially pragmatic one, one that imagines a radical future and is driven by the desire to realize it. Just as Shiba Shirō in *Chance Meetings* imagined the ideal modern heroes as those subjects who exemplify the traditional cultural values, so did Liang Qichao in *Xin Zhongguo weilai ji* draw on the civilizational tradition to envisage a future society.

If, however, this civilizational tradition is not something *particular* to a nation, but something that, *de jure*, can be exemplified and practiced by anyone through education, and more importantly, *de facto*, had traditionally had such “universality” in East Asia, then what is the identity of the “new people” that Liang Qichao hoped to create through producing “new fiction”? The “new people,” to be sure, was imagined as a form of “national” subjectivity. But if the cultural values that gave identity to that nationhood had transnational relevance, then how should we consider the identity of that subjectivity vis-à-vis the modern subject imagined in Shiba Shirō’s novel? How should

⁶⁷ Liang Qichao, *Xin min shuo*, in *Yinbingshi heji: zhuanji*, vol.4, p.2.

we historicize the relationship of Liang Qichao's translation to Shiba Shirō's original, the one between different exemplarities within a larger context of world literature? In light of Liang's translation, how should we reconsider the identities of the turn-of-the-century East Asian literatures, and the reverberations of those identities in the later vernacular literary creations? Explored from a trans-East Asian comparative perspective, Liang Qichao's translation of *Chance Meetings* and his own political novel pose these essential questions, which, however, have little been addressed in contemporary literary studies.

Conclusion

Examining Liang Qichao's translation of *Chance Meetings* helps conceptualize the turn-of-the-century Sino-Japanese translational relationship beyond the orthodox scheme that compares one national literature to another. Precisely because the Japanese author and the Chinese translator shared a trans-regional literary tradition, I consider that relationship in terms of exemplarity, rather than national particularity. Both Shiba Shirō and Liang Qichao had ventured to create modern literature before the younger-generation writers started to found modern literature upon transculturation of Western aesthetic discourse. Considered from the perspective of vernacular national literature, their products might be simply quaint, transitional, and even "unreadable by modern standards"; their unique translational relationship would be overshadowed or even erased by the modern cultural politics based on the national particular. One objective of our method of *trans-Asian comparison* is to shed a different light on early modern East Asian literary texts, thereby exploring a translational relationship that is little represented in the predominant framework for understanding world literature in current scholarship.

In Chapter Two, I will examine a Korean translation of Liang Qichao's work and its lasting impact on the translator's literary and historiographical work, whereby considering how this translational relationship also involved Korean literature in the early twentieth century.

Chapter Two

Excavating the Future

Sin Ch'aeho's Imaginary Historiography and His Translation of Liang Qichao's *Three Italian Nation-Building Heroes*

Introduction

1. Translating “New Fiction”
 2. Staging Contingent History: Translating the Italian Nation Building
 3. The Impossible Past: *The Biography of Ŭlji mundŏk*, or, a Hermeneutic Battle
 4. The Real in the Dream: Analyzing Sin Ch'aeho's “Dream Heaven”
- Conclusion: Toward Anarchism

Introduction

Sin Ch'aeho 신채호 (1880-1936) is a writer, historian, and activist of the utmost importance to Korea's cultural and political modernity. While remembered as the founder of modern national historiography in Korea, he was also an unrelenting advocate of anti-Japanese nationalism.⁶⁸ His work on the ancient history of Korea, particularly of the state of Koguryŏ (37 BCE – 668 CE), whose vast territory at its height expanded from the northern half of the Korean Peninsula into what is now northeastern China anticipated the recent nationalism-driven debates as to whether Koguryŏ should be considered part of

⁶⁸ For a comprehensive retrospect of Sin Ch'aeho's scholarship, see: Ch'oe Honggyu, *Sin Ch'aeho ũi minjokchuŭi sasang: Saengae wa sasang*. For a biographical account of Sin, see: Kim Samung, *Tanjae Sin Ch'aeho p'yŏngjŏn*. Among the few English-language studies on Sin, I was benefitted from the following works: Michael Robinson, “National Identity and the Thought of Sin Ch'aeho”; Henry Hangsun Em, *Nationalist Discourse in Modern Korea: Minjok as a Democratic Imaginary*; Henry H. Em, “Minjok as a Modern and Democratic Construct: Sin Ch'aeho's Historiography”; Andre Schmid, “Rediscovering Manchuria: Sin Ch'aeho and the Politics of Territorial History in Korea.”

Korean or Chinese history, adding a latest chapter to his legacy as a Korean nationalist intellectual *par excellence*. Unquestionable as it is that his work played a groundbreaking and essential role in the formation of modern Korean nationalism, his nationalist discourse is hardly a product isolated in the Korean Peninsula. His *oeuvre*, in fact, transculturated various discourses via different and multilayered mediations, and among other resources, it is Liang Qichao's work that provided the Korean intellectual with a crucial access to the discourse of modern civilization.

Sin Ch'aeho was indeed one of the many Korean intellectuals who closely followed Liang Qichao's up-to-date works during the first decade of the twentieth century. A great number of Liang's critical and creative texts were translated into Korean during that decade, often only within a few years after original publication, either in what is known as the "mixed-style" (*kuk'an honyong ch'e* 국한혼용체) writing or in the Korean script.⁶⁹ Sin Ch'aeho's translation of Liang Qichao's *Yidali jianguo sanjie zhuan* 意大利建國三傑傳 (*Biographies of the Three Italian Nation-Building Heroes*, 1902; hereafter abbreviated as *Italian Heroes*) came out in 1907 against the backdrop of the great popularity of the expatriate Chinese literatus in Korean intellectual circles. Sin Ch'aeho's engagement with Liang Qichao's texts furthermore left a lasting impact on Sin's career as a writer and historian, not only influencing the latter's nationalist historiographies, but also inspiring the creation of literary biographies of Korean national heroes in the 1900s, as well as of a fantastic tale in his late career.

By examining reverberations of the encounter with Liang Qichao's text throughout Sin Ch'aeho's work, this chapter puts the Korean writer's heterogeneous

⁶⁹ For overviews of Liang Qichao's influence on turn-of-the-century Korea, see: Yöp Kōn'gon, *Yang Kyech'o wa kuhan mal munhak*; U Imkōl, *Han'guk kaehwagi munhak kwa Yang Kyech'o*.

work in a trans-East Asian comparative perspective, a perspective meant to shed a new light on the imaginary construct of Korean national subjectivity in Sin's historical literature. As Shiba Shirō and Liang Qichao, in their literary creation, imagined the modern nation as an *exemplary* subject, so did Sin Ch'aeho transpose this imaginary into Korean by translating Liang's *Italian Heroes*. He further explored the figure of the exemplary hero in his heroic biographies, which he put together through a radical reinterpretation of traditional Korean and Chinese histories. Sin's later fantastic tale, in which the figures of national heroes reappear, may then be considered as the writer's fresh creative attempt at pursuing imagination of national subjectivity within the space of the dream. But just as the serialization of Liang Qichao's translation of *Kajin no kigū* was interrupted and his *Xin Zhongguo weilai ji* was left unfinished, Sin Ch'aeho's dream writing, which he also worked on in exile in China, fails to conclude: it instead betrays the essential distance between the imaginary and the real, the aesthetic and the political. Writing years prior to the vernacularization of literary language in Korea, Sin Ch'aeho utilized prose styles with varied degrees of retention of classical Chinese writing. In most of the texts that I discuss in this chapter, except for the late fantastic short story, Sin employed the syncretic "Hangul-Chinese mixed style" (*kuk'an honyong ch'e* 국한혼용체; Lit. "style mingling national and Chinese writing"). A counterpart to the Japanese *kanbun kundoku* style, which we discussed in Chapter One, the "mixed style" preserves extensively features of classical Chinese prose, including syntax, rhetoric, and vocabulary.⁷⁰ Sin's literature, thus, shares structural aesthetic and moral problematics with his East Asian counterparts.

⁷⁰ For the history of the "Hangul-Chinese mixed style," see: Im Sangsök, *20-segi Kuk-Hanmunch'e üi hyöngsöng kwajöng*.

My textual and intertextual analyses begin with an examination of Sin Ch'aeho's translation of *Italian Heroes*. I will then move on to a close reading of his heroic biographies, with a particular focus on *Taedong Sach'ŏn chae cheil dae wiin Ŭlji mundŏk chŏn* 大東四千載第一大偉人乙支文德傳 (The Biography of Ŭlji mundŏk, the Greatest Hero in Korea in Four Thousand Years, 1908; hereafter referred to as *The Biography of Ŭlji mundŏk*). My reading will be primarily concerned with Sin's gesture of *reinterpreting* traditional historiographies, through which he deconstructed their authority and reclaimed the agency for writing a new, national history. This will bring me to exploring a sequel to *The Biography of Ŭlji mundŏk*, a fantastic tale called "Kkum hanŭl kŏm haneul" (Dream Heaven), written around 1916 and only posthumously published. I will then conclude my discussion by reading Sin's last creative work "Yong kwa yong ũi daegyŏkchŏn 龍과 龍의 大激戰" (The Grand Battle between the Dragons, 1928), as a way to consider his late engagement with anarchism not as a secession from, but as a radicalized yet logical development of his creative historiographical work.

1. Translating "New Fiction"

Sin Ch'aeho was born in 1880 into a family with scholar-official backgrounds in Ch'ungch'ŏng Province. Just like the cases of Liang Qichao and Shiba Shirō, Sin Ch'aeho's *yangban* clan was already in significant decline at the time of his birth, as the domestic politics slipped into chaos. Losing his father at the age of nine, the young Sin received an orthodox education based on the Confucian Classics from his grandfather as

well as tutors. A gifted child, Sin was admitted in 1898 to the Sŏnggyungwan 성균관, the top state-run Confucian academy based in Seoul, where he pursued classical learning and obtained the highest *paksa* 박사 degree in 1905. It was only a year before Sin Ch'aeho was admitted to this academy that the Chosŏn Dynasty (1392-1897) had abandoned its tributary status vis-à-vis the Qing and established itself as an independent state that called itself Korean Empire (*Taehan cheguk* 대한제국, 1897-1910). Its sovereignty, however, was far from stable as it was faced with competing interventions from Japan and Russia; domestic politics was divided by enduring power struggles between factions, both within and beyond the court, fighting over the extent and speed of modernization measures. Meanwhile, the modest Gwangmu Reform under the initiative of Emperor Gojong's (r. 1863-1907) court was taking effect, when the government was finally forced to sign the Protectorate Treaty with Japan in the aftermath of the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5). Korea as a result ceded diplomatic sovereignty to Japan, effectively becoming its protectorate state. Though he obtained a position at the Sŏnggyungwan upon graduation, Sin Ch'aeho was greatly concerned with these ominous political developments and eventually gave up his career at this bastion of traditional scholarship, shifting the stage for his intellectual activity to the modern publishing world. He served on the editorial boards of two of the leading Korean-language daily newspapers: *Hwangsŏng sinmun* 황성신문 (Capital Gazette) and *Taehan maeil sinbo* 대한매일신보 (Korea Daily News). These newspapers, as well as other modern journals and magazines, provided crucial venues for Sin's prolific publication, through which he became a young leader of the nationalist, anti-Japanese, and reformist movement in the first decade of the twentieth century, a movement that would later become known as the "Patriotism and

Enlightenment Movement” (*Aeguk kyemong undong* 애국계몽운동). It was during this period that Liang Qichao’s work exerted great influence on reformist Korean intellectuals, including Sin himself.

Sin Ch’aeho’s numerous writings in this period ranged from political manifestos to historical treatises, from translations to literary creation. The single most important thread that informed his work was the idea of *minjok* 민족, or, the nation. Sin Ch’aeho passionately advocated nationalism as a critical ideology in order to *at a time* counter Japanese imperialism *and* dismantle the ideology of “*sadae chuïi* 사대주의,” a traditional Korean diplomatic strategy against Chinese Empire based on the idea of the small (i.e., Korea) “serving the great [i.e., China].” Urgency for creating national subjectivity in Korea compelled Sin to translate Liang Qichao’s *Italian Heroes*. Inspired by this work, he wrote literary biographies of three national historical heroes. The national heroes Sin worked on are Ŭlji mundök 을지문덕 (f. late 6th-early 7th C.), a military general of Koguryō (37 BCE-668 CE) whose shrewd tactics helped Koguryō achieve the legendary victory against the Sui (581-618) military campaigns; Yi Sunsin 이순신 (1545-98), a naval commander famed for his epic fight in the Imjin War (1592-98) waged by the Japanese general Toyotomi Hideyoshi 豊臣秀吉 (1537-98); and Ch’oe Yōng 최영 (1316-88), a talented general of Koryō (918-1392) who led campaigns against the Yuan (1271-1369) and successfully reclaimed northern territories.⁷¹ Sin Ch’aeho’s

⁷¹ *Taedong Sach’ōn chae cheil dae wiin Ŭlji mundök chōn* 大東四千載第一大偉人乙支文德傳 (The Biography of Ŭlji mundök, the Greatest Hero in Korea in Four-Thousand Years) was published from Taehan Hwangsōng Kwanghak Sōp’o in 1908; *Sugun cheil wiin Yi Sunsin* 水軍第一偉人李舜臣 (Yi Sunsin, the Greatest Man of Navy) was first serialized in *Taehan maeil sinbo* from May to August 1908; *Tongguk kōgōl Ch’oe Tot’ong* 東國巨傑崔都統 (Ch’oe Tot’ong, the Great Hero of the East [i.e., Korea])

historiographical works were also infused with nationalist zeal, including the groundbreaking *Toksa sillon* 독사신론 (New Discourse on Reading History, 1908) and the magnum opus *Chosŏn sanggo sa* 조선상고사 (History of Korean Antiquity, 1931; 1948).⁷²

Roughly two and a half years after Liang Qichao stopped serializing the translation of Shiba Shirō's *Kajin no kigū* in *Qing yi bao*, Liang started to publish the creative biography *Italian Heroes* in the journal *Xinmin congbao* 新民叢報 (New Citizen Journal, 1902-7). This new journal was launched by Liang to succeed *Qing yi bao*, which had been terminated due to a fire in 1901. *Italian Heroes* fetures the three founding figures of the modern Italian nation-state — Giuseppe Mazzini (1805-72), Giuseppe Garibaldi (1807-82), and Count Camillo di Cavour (1810-61) — and creatively retells the history of the Risorgimento. Liang's work, in fact, is an adaptation of a few Japanese texts on modern Italian history, namely one by the writer Hirata Hisashi 平田久 (1872-1923) called *Itarī kenkoku sanketsu* 伊太利建国三傑 (The Three Italian Nation-Building Heroes, 1892).⁷³ Hirata's text is a Japanese translation of *The Makers of Modern Italy* (1889), a history of modern Italian nation building based on lectures given at Oxford by a English scholar/politician by the name of John Marriott (1859-1945).⁷⁴ Just within a few

was also first serialized in *Taehan maeil sinbo* from December 1909 to May 1910, just three months before Korea was annexed to Japan.

⁷² First published as *Chosŏn sa* 조선사 (History of Korea) in *Chosŏn ilbo* 조선일보 (Korea Daily) in 1931, then published in book format in 1948 as *Chosŏn sanggo sa*.

⁷³ For the Japanese sources of Liang Qichao's creative biographies, see: Yōji Matsuo, "Ryō Keichō to Shiden."

⁷⁴ John Marriott, *The Makers of Modern Italy*.

years after its publication, Liang Qichao's *Italian Heroes* was translated into Korean at least four times. The first, published in the newspaper *Taehan maeil sinbo* in 1905, was an abridged version focused on the figure of Mazzini; the second, also abridged, was serialized in the newspaper *Hwangsŏng sinmun* in the following year. Then, Sin Ch'aeho's translation, entitled *Yit'aeri kŏn'guk samgŏl chŏn* 意大利建國三傑傳 (Biographies of the Three Italian Nation-Building Heroes), executed in the "mixed style," was published in 1907, which was followed by a 1908 translation in the Korean script by the renowned linguist Chu Sigyŏng 주시경 (1876-1914).⁷⁵ Sin Ch'aeho's was the first to translate Liang Qichao's text in its entirety, and is recognized as "the most influential" among the four.⁷⁶ In the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, the Italian Risorgimento became a significant source of inspiration for intellectuals aspiring for nation building in many parts of the world, including India.⁷⁷ Into that global circulation of ideas, East Asia subscribed itself through the multilayered translations and adaptations — first from English into Japanese, then from Japanese into Chinese, and finally from Chinese into Korean. Within a larger East Asian context, Mazzini, Garibaldi, and Cavour were just three of the many modern political figures featured in numerous historical and creative writings on "the hero" (英雄; Chn. *yingxiong*, Jpn. *ei'yū*, Kor. *yŏng'ung*) at the turn of the century; other heroic figures included Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658), George Washington (1732-1799), and Otto von Bismarck (1815-1898). Apart from the three Italian figures, Liang himself also wrote heroic biographies of Lajos Kossuth (1802-

⁷⁵ See: U Imkŏl, *Han'guk kaehwagi munhak kwa Yang Kyech'o*, p.51-65.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.57. For Chu Sigyŏng's translation in particular, see: Chŏng Sŭngch'ŏl, "Sun kungmun 'It'aeri kŏn'guk samkyŏlchŏn e taehayŏ."

⁷⁷ See: Gita Srivastava, *Mazzini and His Impact on the Indian National Movement*; C.A. Bayly and Eugenio F. Biagini, eds., *Giuseppe Mazzini and the Globalisation of Democratic Nationalism 1830-1920*.

1894) and Madame Roland (1754-1793), based on Japanese materials. Liang Qichao and Sin Ch'aeho were among the most prolific advocates and creators of the discourse of “the hero” in early modern East Asia, whose archetype could be traced back to Thomas Carlyle’s (1795-1881) *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (1840).⁷⁸

Having undergone these multiple mediations, the introduction of the Risorgimento history into the intellectual discourse of early-twentieth-century Korea is an overdetermined process, far from being the simple transposition of certain standard concepts of modernity from the West into an East Asian nation. Just as Liang Qichao’s translation of Shiba Shirō’s political novel was facilitated by a transnational literary tradition shared by the author and the translator, so was Sin Ch’aeho’s translation catalyzed by Liang Qichao’s adaptation, which rewrote the Italian history by referring to numerous precedents in traditional Chinese literature.

An anonymous review that appeared in *Hwangsoŋ sinmun* just a few months after the publication of Sin Ch’aeho’s version of translation illuminates how the mediated translation operates:

The saying goes: ‘If you do not shed tears after reading the “Memorial on Sortie” [*Ch’ul sa p’yo* 出師表], you are surely not a loyal subject [*sinja* 臣子].’⁷⁹ So I would say if your blood does not get boiled or your crying does not become loud after reading the *Biographies of the Three Italian Heroes*, you are a wood- or

⁷⁸ Carlyle’s *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* was translated into Japanese in 1893. For the general discourse of the hero in the nineteenth century, see: Eric Bentley, *A Century of Hero-Worship: A Study of the Idea of Heroism in Carlyle and Nietzsche, with Notes on Wagner, Spengler, Stefan George, and D.H. Lawrence*.

⁷⁹ This is an allusion to An Zishun’s 安子順 (1158-1227) saying quoted in the popular *guwen* style writing manual *Wenzhang guifan* 文章軌範 (Collection of Exemplary Composition). “Memorial at Sortie” is a canonical piece by Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮 (181-234) sent to Emperor Liu Shan 劉禪 (r.223-263) of the Chu 楚 when Zhuge went to the battle front for a campaign against the Wei 魏.

stone-like man. If each of our ambitious people keeps a copy of the *Biography* at his side, and worships it in the morning and dreams about it in the night, there will be a day when he will undertake a patriotic endeavor.⁸⁰

This reviewer emphasizes affective responses to a Korean translation of Liang Qichao's work, most likely the one by Sin Ch'aeho, and articulates the emotions in terms of Confucian morality, particularly the virtue of "loyalty" (忠; Kor. *ch'ung*, Chn. *zhong*). The "Memorial on Sortie," attributed to the illustrious politician/general Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮 (181-234), is traditionally considered to be a best embodiment of this virtue.⁸¹ To the author of this brief review, the Korean version of *Italian Heroes* communicated not so much a certain modern idea, such as nation building, but the moral emotion associated with a traditional virtue, which, nevertheless, was believed to drive people to "undertake a patriotic endeavor." Thus gravitated toward traditional morality, the meaning of nationalism must receive a significant twist in this process. Such a peculiar mode of translation, in fact, is prepared by the way Liang Qichao creatively rewrote the Japanese sources and narrated the lives of the three Italian nationalists, and the way Sin Ch'aeho translated that Chinese narrative into Korean. Based on the Japanese materials, Liang Qichao fundamentally altered the narrator's point of view, and used traditional narrative devices to add emotionality and theatricality to the history. Sin Ch'aeho, while quite faithfully translating Liang Qichao's dramatized narrative, assumed the original narrator's voice himself.

⁸⁰ *Hwangsŏng sinmun*, November 16, 1907; quoted in U Imkŏl, *op. cit.*, p.62.

⁸¹ Sin Ch'aeho wrote an enthusiastic preface to a literary biography entitled *Mong kyŏn Chegal Ryang* 夢見諸葛亮 (1908) by Yu Wŏnp'yo 유원표.

The idea that the literary work functions as an affective medium capable of mobilizing people toward a political idea unmistakably reminds us of Liang Qichao's "new fiction" (*xin xiaosho*) discourse. Sin Ch'aeho in fact grounds his conception of fiction/the novel (소설 *sosŏl*) upon Liang Qichao's idea of "new fiction." A 1908 criticism entitled "Kŭn'gŭm kungmun sosŏl chŏja ũi chuŭi 近今國文小說著者の注意" (Warnings for the Authors of Recent Fiction in the National Letters), for example, bespeaks Sin Ch'aeho's understanding of this modern genre. The qualification "in the national letters" in the title is meant to foreground the fact that the modern novels in question are not to be written in the elite "Chinese letters," or *hanmun* 한문. Sin Ch'aeho argues,

Even though a worthy and upright man, talking from a rostrum with his naturally honest appearance, discusses profound principles of the mind and things and histories of the prosperity and decline in the past and the present, the audience surrounding him will be no more than a few learned men. Moreover, even though some knowledge could be developed in this way, it will be difficult for this man to make a bad folk good or a wicked one tamed by transplanting his own personality [into them]. But the books of fiction, which are based on street talk and colloquialisms, are not like that. All the women, children, and servants love them so much. Therefore even with a little eccentricity of ideas or a bit of virility of words, their hundred readers and thousand listeners will all end up admiring them. How much more so when the authors' spirits and souls are present on the pages? The readers then cannot help shedding tears on reading something terrible, and arousing their energies on reading something thrilling. By virtue of the lasting effects of edification and penetration [*ki hundo nŭng 'yŏm ũi kigu* 其熏陶凌染의 既久], their moral nature will naturally be affected and transformed [*kamhwa* 感化]. Thus I claim: the general propensity of society is to be rectified by fiction written in national letters.⁸²

⁸² Sin Ch'aeho, "Kŭn'gŭm kungmun sosŏl chŏja ũi chuŭi," in *Tanjae Sin Ch'aeho chŏnjip*, vol.6, p.639. Hereafter quotes from this *Complete Work* is indicated as *CJ*, followed by the volume and page numbers separated by a slash. Ex. *CJ*, VI/639.

Echoing Liang Qichao's critical essays, namely his "Lun xiaoshuo yu qunzhi zhi guanxi 論小說與群治之關係" (On the Relationship Between Fiction and the Organization of Society, 1902), which, one may safely assume, Sin Ch'aeho must have read, fiction is first and foremost conceived of as an affective medium. The medium is capable of "affecting and transforming" the reader's hearts and minds by virtue of its emotional effects. Sin Ch'aeho argues for taking advantage of this extraordinary function, which Liang Qichao called the "incomprehensible power" of fiction, and using it as a means for popular cultivation. While a prosaic scholarly talk may transmit some knowledge by words to a small circle of erudite people, the novel, particularly one written in the "national letters," is able to educate the whole population, including women, children, and lower-classes people, most effectively. A telepathic medium, the novel could work either for good or bad according to the author's moral dispositions; and if written by men of high morality, Sin Ch'aeho suggests, it can lead the ethos of the society to a good and right direction. As Sin formulates by alluding to "Yiyin zhengzhi xiaoshuo xu 譯印政治小說序" (Preface to the Translation of the Political Novel, 1898), Liang Qichao's preface to the translation of *Kajin no kigū*, "If there are many withered and licentious novels, the nation will be affected and transformed accordingly; if there are many chivalrous and indignant novels, the nation will be affected and transformed accordingly. That 'the novel is the soul of a nation,' as some Western scholar has said, is an impeccable truth."⁸³ Just

⁸³ Sin Ch'aeho, *CJ*, VI/639. The expression, "the novel is the soul of a nation," appears in Liang Qichao's "Yiyin zhengzhi xiaoshuo xu." See Chapter One. A similar view was also put forth by Pak Ŭnsik's 박은식 (1859-1925) preface to his own historical novel *Sōsa kōn'guk chi* 瑞士建國誌 (The Nation Building of Switzerland, 1907) a Korean translation of the Chinese writer Zheng Guangong's 鄭貫公 (1880-1906) work of the same title, published in 1902. The work by Zheng Guangong, who lived in Japan in exile and worked with Liang Qichao, is itself an adaptation of Schiller's play *Wilhelm Tell* (1804), probably via the latter's Japanese translations: Yūshūkai 有終会 ed., *Shirureru Wiruherumu Teru chūshaku* 志留礼留維廉

like Liang Qichao, Sin Ch'aeho believes traditional novels in Korea were morally corrupt and exerting bad influence on the nation;⁸⁴ hence the claim, which, again, transculturates Liang Qichao's "new fiction" discourse: "I argue that it is an urgent task to wipe them [i.e., traditional novels] away by producing many works of new fiction [*sin sosŏl* 新小説]."⁸⁵

In Shiba Shirō's *Kajin no kigū*, the novel's affective function depended upon traditional literary language, namely classical Chinese poetry (*shi* 詩). In *Italian Heroes*, Liang Qichao likewise employs traditional narrative devices, which, then, are faithfully reproduced by Sin Ch'aeho in the Korean translation. The creativity of Liang Qichao's adaptation can be best illuminated by comparing it with the Japanese materials he worked on. What distinguishes Liang Qichao's work from its Japanese source is, first and foremost, the narrator's point of view, which, one may argue, allegorizes the different historical circumstances in which the two texts were produced.

得利註釈 (Schiller's Wilhelm Tell, Annotated, 1899); Tokuda Shūkō 徳田秋紅, *Shirureru monogatari* シルレル物語 (A Story by Schiller, 1903).

⁸⁴ Sin Ch'aeho states, "Most of the traditional novels in Korea are either licentious stories from the mulberry bushes by the Pu river [*sang kan pok sang* 桑間濮上] or strange tales of praying the Buddha for happiness. This is one thing that corrupts people's morale." ("Kūn'gūm kungmun sosŏl chŏja ūi chuūi," *CJ*, VI/639) Sin here refers to sources like the "Yueji" chapter of *Liji* 禮記 (Book of Rites), which reads, "The sounds of the mulberry bushes by the Pu river are the sounds of a fallen country" (*sang jian Pu shang zhi yin*, *wangguo zhi yin ye* 桑間濮上之音, 亡國之音也). Pak Ŭnsik also makes a sweeping argument in his preface to *Sŏsa kŏn'guk chi*: "Among the traditional novels [*yurae sosŏl* 由來小説] in our country Korea [*han* 我韓], you cannot find a single good book ... These works are widely circulated on the streets and provide common men and women with daily food. However, they are preposterous and lewd: they are more than able to waste human minds and corrupt morale, and they do profound harm to politics, education, and morality." Pak Ŭnsik, *Sŏsa kŏn'guk chi*, in Kim Yunsik, et al. eds., *Han'guk kaehwagi munhak ch'ongsŏ: Yŏksa chŏngi sosŏl*, vol.6, p.197.

⁸⁵ Sin Ch'aeho, "Kūn'gūm kungmun sosŏl chŏja ūi chuūi," *CJ*, VI/639.

2. Staging Contingent History: Translating the Italian Nation Building

Translating a Standardized History

Based upon lectures delivered at Oxford in 1889, John Marriott's *The Makers of Modern Italy* begins the account with a brief discussion of the historiographical "method." Hirata Hisashi's Japanese translation *Itarī kenkoku sanketsu* rather freely renders that passage.⁸⁶ Marriott's "method" is centered on having a well-defined "perspective" on a particular historical period by discerning what he calls the "dominant principle or institution" of that age. It aims to put "the scattered and apparently miscellaneous events" of the period into "a consistency and coherence which they may sometimes seem to lack." With distant Hegelian echoes, Marriott then characterizes himself as "the philosophic historian of the future," in whose perspective the age in question would present its "distinguishing characteristics." While writing in the mid-nineteenth century, Marriott argues that the century he lives in will be defined by two traces: parliamentary democracy and nationality.⁸⁷

Though slightly altering Marriott's expression to "the historian a hundred years from now," the Japanese translator Hirata Hisashi situates himself in a position similar to the British historian. In transposing Marriott's introduction, Hirata adds a peculiar rhetorical layer to further illustrate the method of historiography. He deploys a series of visual expressions,⁸⁸ and inserts a simile of the natural landscape, symbolically capturing

⁸⁶ Hirata Hisashi, *Itarī kenkoku sanketsu*, p.4.

⁸⁷ John Marriott, *The Makers of Modern Italy*, p.1-3.

⁸⁸ Such as: "the luster [*kōsai* 光彩] specific to an age," "visual field [*gankai* 眼界]," "lie in front of the eyes [*ganzen* 眼前]," and "appear in the eyes of the traveler of history [*rekishiteki ryokōsha no me* 歴史の旅行者の眼]." See: Hirata Hisashi, *Itarī kenkoku sanketsu*, p.1-3.

the working of the historical perspective, in which the core political ideas of an age serve as a vantage point from which to represent that historical period comprehensively even in smallest details just like in a well-composed landscape painting.⁸⁹ Just as *The Makers of Modern Italy* is to John Marriott a demonstration of such a beautiful historiography, so is the same text to Hirata Hisashi a picture-perfect illustration of Italian history, which, then, he attempts to reproduce in Japanese by translating it.

What enables the historians from England and Japan to position themselves in such a privileged vantage point — or the “future” of history — are a schematized, teleological understanding of modern history and the perception that their countries have already undergone that standard course of history. “In the attainment of national unity,” describes the English historian, “some states were, I need not say, very much ahead of others. England, for example, compassed the realization of her national identity as early as the thirteenth century; France and Spain not until the sixteenth; while other states, like Germany and Italy, have reached the same goal only within the last few years.”⁹⁰ He then states, “[i]t is the purpose of these lectures to examine in such detail as time may allow the most romantic, if not the most important and most striking, exemplification of the latter principle [i.e., Nationality].”⁹¹ Writing in late-nineteenth-century England, John Marriott thus effectively positions himself in “the future” of the history of other nations,

⁸⁹ “Once I learn this spirit, thought, ideology, and institutions [that are representative of an age], at a single stroke, I can get to the bottom of many scattered events and chaotic phenomena. It is just like hundreds of rivers flowing into an ocean, or thousands and tens of thousands of mountains and peaks converging at Jingmen. Not only broad and large events, but any events, large and small, will fall into my visual field in a neat order.” Hirata Hisashi, *Itarī kenkoku sanketsu*, p.1. Jingmen 荊門, a city in central China, is traditionally considered to be a strategic location.

⁹⁰ John Marriott, *The Makers of Modern Italy*, p.2.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p.3.

and considers the case of Italy as just another example of that generalized course of modernization. He is able to reconstruct the history of the Risorgimento starting from its predetermined telos, which England has already reached. Even though his account might contain some “most romantic” details, they are featured only as long as “time may allow” in Oxford lectures. The way John Marriott closes his work is symbolic: following King Victor Emmanuel II of Italy’s speech at the nation’s inauguration, the historian sounds content that his narrative has finally arrived at its preset goal: “My purpose is fulfilled,” he remarks, “the work of Italian unification is now complete.”⁹²

The Japanese rendition embeds Japan into John Marriott’s version of modern history; it does so by drawing an analogy between modern Japanese and Italian histories. In the introduction to the Japanese version, Hirata Hisashi most tellingly contends that Napoleon is to Italy what Commodore Perry, the commander of the Black Ships, is to Japan, thereby foregrounding a parallelism between the two countries’ courses of modernization.⁹³ More conspicuously, Hirata juxtaposes in the appendix a timeline of modern Italian history, which he translates from John Marriott’s book, with that of Japan along the same temporal axis.⁹⁴ Hirata thus renders by analogy Japan’s modernization since the Meiji Restoration (1868) as yet another *example* of the standardized course of modern history, and by doing so, he adopts the English historian’s historiographical framework that expects such a parallelism. Particularly emphasized in the Japanese version is a “lesson” that its final paragraph repeats five times. The translator argues that any revolution consists of three roles — the prophet, the militant, and the statesman.

⁹² Ibid., p.77.

⁹³ Hirata Hisashi, *Itarī kenkoku sanketsu*, p.8.

⁹⁴ See: Ibid., p.153-62.

“This is true for the history of nation building in Italy and that of the Meiji Restoration in Japan. All revolution and progress are completed by these three roles.”⁹⁵ While in Italian history these three phases are represented by Mazzini, Garibaldi, and Cavour, respectively, the history of Japanese modernization, Hirata suggests, has reached the third and final “statesman” stage as of 1892, the year the translation is put together. The five-fold repetition of this “lesson” might reveal the intention of the young nation’s translator to *legitimize* the path of its modernization, which had by that time just reached the promulgation of the Constitution (1889) and the first assembly of the Parliament (1890).

History without a Model

To be sure, Liang Qichao’s adaptation, published in 1902, also foregrounds the “resembl[ances]” between the histories of modernization in Italy and China, and claims that the Italian case would provide a best “model” for Chinese patriotism.⁹⁶ But such rhetoric is completely overshadowed by the narrator’s worries and anxiety over the precarious situations of contemporary China. In the conclusion of *Italian Heroes*, in which the author identifies himself as the narrator by his own name (“*Liang Qichao yue* 梁啟超曰”) as well as by his nickname “Mr. New Historian” (“*Xinshi shi yue* 新史氏曰”), the Chinese case is compared to other “model” nation-states:

⁹⁵ Ibid., p.151.

⁹⁶ Liang Qichao states, “[Among other cases in Europe,] Italy’s situations prior to the establishment of the nation best resemble those in China. If you look for patriots whose aspirations and deeds can become the model for today’s Chinese people, there is no better case than Italy.” *Yidali jianguo sanjie zhuan*, in *Yinbingshi heji: zhuanji*, vol. 11, p.1.

As I argued before, China's current situations are, whether they are compared to late-seventeenth-century England, eighteenth-century America or France, or late-nineteenth-century Japan, several times as difficult as those cases. This, then, makes me think that the great heroic work to be done in China is almost impossible without heavenly time matching human endeavor [*tianshi renshi zhi xiangshi* 天時人事之相適], and it is not what I could dare to do.⁹⁷

Vis-à-vis the embattled Chinese circumstances, therefore, Liang Qichao presents the Italian case not as a model, but precisely as *an exception* that made the impossible possible;⁹⁸ it is not a template that anyone can implement, but a miracle that only the “heroes” can bring about. What is needed to save China, implies Liang, is not a standard historical path that it could follow, but an extraordinary turn of history that is almost as rare as the cosmological moment of “heavenly time matching human endeavor.”⁹⁹ The Risorgimento is thus represented as a singular event that could encourage the Chinese under such adverse conditions to smash pessimism and initiate action.¹⁰⁰ The perspective of the “future” historian in John Marriott’s account, which Hirata Hisashi transposed into Japanese, therefore, is not available to the Chinese author; the “future” for Liang is instead an open-ended event that may or may not happen. Fundamental contingency and miraculous luck, rather than teleological progress, underpin the Chinese narrative. As a

⁹⁷ Liang Qichao, *Yinbingshi heji: zhuanji*, vol.11, p.57.

⁹⁸ Xiaobing Tang has found “unmistakable and striking” Liang Qichao’s “constant effort to generalize ... about the implications and consequences of revolution and reform” in *Italian Heroes*. While the “generalization” is certainly sought for, Liang Qichao is quite sure that such generalization will fail to transpose the Italian case into the native context. See: Xiaobing Tang, *Global Space and the Nationalist Discourse of Modernity: The Historical Thinking of Liang Qichao*, p.88.

⁹⁹ “*Tianshi*” (heavenly time) and “*renshi*” (human endeavor) are often idiomatically associated.

¹⁰⁰ Liang Qichao says, “When I read the history of Italy’s nation building and observe its twisting and turning, heartbreaking and painful, bitter and precarious process, I place myself in face of those situations and find nothing other than what discourages me, drains my energy and voice, makes me stumble time and again, and makes me lose myself... Ah! When I consider the achievements of Italy’s nation building, I begin to know there is no easy thing in the world, nor is there an impossible thing in the world. I break with my hasty misconceptions and pessimistic delusions.” Liang Qichao, *Yinbingshi heji: zhuanji*, vol.11, p.57.

result, the narration is done in a highly emotional and engaged voice that is always reacting to the situations that he is retelling. Liang, as the narrator, says, “[The history of modern Italy] brings together the dramas of grandeur, vitality, misery, tragedy, danger, and ingenuity from all over the world, past and present, and plays them one after another in a single theater. Alas! How extreme its incomprehensible blowing of the mind and moving of the soul are! [*he qi jingxin dongpo bukesiyi zhiyu ci shen ye* 何其驚心動魄不可思議至于此甚也]”¹⁰¹

For the exiled Liang Qichao composing this piece in the year 1902, therefore, at stake was far less a constative account on what nation building should look like, than a performative efficacy of the work — i.e., its affective power to propel the population toward the goal of nation building. While the illustrious Chinese writer Guo Moruo 郭沫若 (1892-1978), for instance, recalled how much he had been moved by Liang Qichao’s piece, its influence also spread across the national borders.¹⁰² The Korean literatus Sin Ch’aeho, who translated this *oeuvre* in 1907 amidst the national crises caused by the Japanese imperialist intervention, tried to reproduce among the Korean audience exactly the same effect as Liang Qichao had sought by composing *Italian Heroes*. The translator concludes the piece:

Those who have just finished my *Three Italian Heroes*! If you do not worry about luck or care about fame, and stand up under heaven only with your burning sincerity [*yu yi hyölsöng ũro chöngch’ön iip hamyön* 惟以血誠으로頂天而立하면], then this country will one day be saved by you. This is what I expect from my readers.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Liang Qichao, *Yinbingshi heji: zhuanji*, vol.11, p.57.

¹⁰² See: Guo Moruo, *Moruo zizhuan*, vol.2, p.90.

¹⁰³ Sin Ch’aeho, *CJ*, IV/455.

Sin Ch'aeho replaces the original's introduction and conclusion with his own; he thereby speaks in the original author's voice, although the preface written by Chang Chiyŏn 장지연 (1864-1921) mentions the work had been originally written by Liang Qichao (“*Ŭm bing sil Yang Gyech'o* 飲氷室梁啓超”). Also notable is that “this country” in the above-quoted passage, of course, means Korea. With these translational gestures, Sin Ch'aeho, as the “author” of the translated text, hopes to produce the same emotional effect among Korean audiences as Liang Qichao wanted to bring about among Chinese readers. Sin Ch'aeho anticipates the intended reader's response: “The Scholar of No Boundary [i.e., Sin Ch'aeho] says: ‘When I read *Three Italian Heroes*, it is as if my body tenses up and my brain is pierced. I cannot help singing, crying, dancing, or jumping because of that. Ah! Who are those three heroes? Who on earth are they? ...’”¹⁰⁴

In order to produce such affective effects, the historiography needs aesthetic qualities. Liang Qichao's creative reworking, in fact, uses several storytelling techniques to dramatize the history, which Sin's translation faithfully transposes. One distinctive feature is the interpolation of the narrator's emotional voice into the narrative. A passage regarding the Second War of Italian Independence in 1859 illustrates this. With the French military support that Cavour had secured from Napoleon III, the Kingdom of Sardinia managed to wage a war against Austria to reclaim the territories in Lombardy and Venetia. Following the Sardinian-French army's sweeping victory in the month of June that year, the history took a surprising turn:

¹⁰⁴ Sin Ch'aeho, *CJ*, IV/453-4.

It was at this [victorious] moment that Cavour's brave mind in an instant mounted to the highest of heaven: how could a hero become happier than when a project he has undertaken for several decades with tenacity, hardship, and imagination is finally being realized in front of his eyes?

Why is the moonlight bothered by the floating clouds;
Which often choose to appear when the moon is full?

Good moments are easy to miss; fine dreams are hard to realize. Alas! Even a private person's life is turbulent, with stumbles and advances, ups and downs, as if the Child of Creation¹⁰⁵ plays with it and tests it, and does not let it achieve its goals until it savors sweet and bitter tastes. How much more so for the one who tries to build a nation? At the very moment when Cavour's brave mind reached the highest did another storm erupt unexpectedly without any signs: at the height of the battle, Napoleon was suddenly missing from the troops. Damn! Where the heck did he go? [Chn. *Duo. Ci gong he wang hu.* 咄。此公何往乎。; Kor. *toljaera ch'a gong i hawangho a* 咄哉라此公이何往乎아]¹⁰⁶

That was the moment of the Armistice of Villafranca, which was negotiated between Napoleon III and Emperor Franz Joseph I of Austria and signed in July behind closed doors, blasting Sardinia's hopes for a unified Italy. The narrator's emotional response, expressed by the sequence of a rhetorical question, an ad hoc seven-syllable-line couplet, exclamations, and hyperbole, dramatizes the inexplicability of this unexpected historical moment and conveys indignation over imperialist injustice. Compare this passage to John Marriott's account, where the same event is related very flatly, introduced with a simple conjunction and a brief dash of suspension: "And then —."¹⁰⁷ The Japanese rendition, fairly faithfully translating this part, employs the usual *Kanbun kundoku*-style

¹⁰⁵ "The Child of Creation" (Chn. *zaohua xiaoer* 造化小兒; Kor. *chohwa soa* 造化小兒). This quaint designation of the cosmological agency, which is used here to highlight the capriciousness of human life, is, for instance, seen in the "Liezhuàn 列傳" chapter of *Xin Tangshu* 新唐書 (The New History of the Tang).

¹⁰⁶ Chn. Liang Qichao, *Yinbingshi heji: zhuanji*, vol.11, p.37; Kor. Sin Ch'aeho, *CJ*, IV/422-3.

¹⁰⁷ Marriott's sequence reads: "... and on the 24th they won the double battle of Solferino and San Martino — the crowning glory of a brilliant campaign. And then — the "magnanimous ally" stopped short. He met the Emperor Francis Joseph at Villafranca ..." John Marriott, *The Makers of Modern Italy*, p.47.

conjunction: “*shikashite koko ni itarite* 而して此に至りて” (lit. “however, at this point”), adding just a little more of unexpectedness.¹⁰⁸ The Chinese narrator’s prolonged dwelling upon this moment, with a concerned voice tightly woven into the storytelling, makes it possible to relate a history that is, to this narrator, so profoundly contingent that any stable narrative would fail to relate it without suppressing its full drama. The Korean translation faithfully reproduces this narratological movement. The narrator’s anxious and emotional voice is so deeply implicated in the storytelling that the narrator fails to have an objective, well-focused perspective; his direct witness of the events is as though the only ground for reconstructing the precarious history. The strong presence of the narrator thus adds theatricality to the story. The narrator, if you will, lives in the story as much as he tells it.¹⁰⁹

The emotional narrator often becomes poetic. The narrator begins the story by drawing an analogy between Italy and China. The two countries are compared not only historically, in terms of their similar fates in modern times — once the hearts of powerful empires yet now weak territories encroached upon by modern powers¹¹⁰ —; but they are also juxtaposed aesthetically, by way of paring poets from these two civilizations, and comparing emotions articulated in their imagined poetic voices:

That Italy is but a name on the map, not a name in politics¹¹¹ has been the case for more than a thousand years. Gazing at the fire of the fallen city of *Jiaxishi* 加西士

¹⁰⁸ Hirata Hisashi, *Itarī kenkoku sanketsu*, p.92-3.

¹⁰⁹ Liang Qichao, in 1902, rendered the Italian nation-building history into a play entitled “Xin Luoma chuanqi 新羅馬傳奇” (Mysterious Tale of New Rome).

¹¹⁰ Liang Qichao, *Yinbingshi heji: zhuanji*, vo.11, p.1-2.

¹¹¹ This expression is quoted in John Marriott’s text as a saying by Prince Matternich. See: John Marriott, *The Makers of Modern Italy*, p.6.

[?], they [the Italians] recited an elegy [悼歌; C. *daoge*; K. *toga*] by Homer. The elegy [薤露; C. *xielu*; K. *haero*] sounded desolate; the ashes showed decline. A poem by a person in the past says:

In the scroll, the mountains of my hometown are certainly there;
But a piece of my broken heart doesn't make a picture.

[Chn. *juanzhong zhengyou jiashan zai, yipian shangxin hua bucheng* 卷中
正有家山在，一片傷心畫不成; Kor. *kwonjung chǒng'u kasan che ōman,*
ilp'yŏn sangsim hwa pulsŏng iroda 卷中正有家山在어만一片傷心畫不
成이로다]

Ah! No one feels deeper sorrow than those who have lost their countries.¹¹²

In introducing the history of modern Italy, the narrator mentions the dreary decline of the Roman Empire, which is here emotionalized by the conjuration of poetic voices. Homer's "elegy" — one does not know what this actually refers to — is then quickly echoed by an allusion to classical Chinese poetry. The mentioning of *xielu*, an elegy genre from the Han, leads to the quotation of a couplet from the thirteenth-century literatus Yuan Haowen's 元好問 (1190-1257) poetry series called "*Jiashan guimeng tu* 家山歸夢圖" (Picture of My Home Country Becoming a Dream, c.1221). Yuan Haowen is said to have composed this poetry series in response to a scroll painting of the landscape of his hometown, which he had left several years before. The poems combine Yuan Haowen's nostalgia for the home and worries about the fate of his dynasty (Jin 金, 1115-1234), which was then under increasing attack from the Mongols.¹¹³ Empathy with the situation of modern Italy, articulated in Homer's absent voice, inspires the narrator to invoke the thirteenth-century Chinese poet, for whom the homeland was about to exist only in the painting, just like the Italy merely found on the map. Unlike the Japanese translator, Liang does not regard the two cases — Italy and China — as different manifestations of

¹¹² Chn. Liang Qichao, *Yinbingshi heji: zhuanji*, vol.11, p.2-3; Kor. Sin Ch'aeho, *CJ*, IV/365-6.

¹¹³ For Yuan Haowen's life and work, see: Zhong Pinglan, *Yuan Haowen ping zhuan*.

the same historical principle; rather, he introduces a narrator whose aesthetic sensitivity creates an analogy between the two fallen civilizations through the poetic sensations of the sorrow of losing the homeland.

While telling the history according to chronology, Liang Qichao's narrator, through his lyrical voice, thus creates an anachronistic temporality that articulates modern Italian history in terms of civilizational restoration, a narratological movement reminiscent of *Kajin no kigū*, which we discussed in Chapter One. "What is now called Italy was Rome in the past,"¹¹⁴ the narrator states. The establishment of the modern Italian state is imagined as a resurrection of the great Roman civilization, and this historical event is put in analogy with the case of China. The change of polity from a dynasty to a nation-state is certainly recognized, but in this literary representation, that transformation appears as though it was the restoration of a civilization.

Liang Qichao represents the reimagined historical world by interweaving chronology with cosmology. The births of the three Italian heroes are described as a product of a meta-working of history, as the story begins:

Heaven [*tian* 天] could not stand holy Rome buried idly and feebly under the bloody rains and winds for a long time, and neither could it bear seeing the Italian nation, which had cherished a millennium-long, sturdy civilization, groaning repeatedly under [the rules of] other nations. Hence in June 22, 1805, a hero was born in the Italian city of Genoa, named Mazzini. It was indeed the year when the marvel Napoleon moved the Italian throne to Milan, and it was thirteen years after the Great French Revolution and was almost ten years after Napoleon occupied Italy. As if heaven thought it was not enough yet, two years later, in July 22, 1807, another hero was born in the Italian city of Nice, named Garibaldi. But three years later in 1810, as if heaven did not see it was sufficient, yet another hero was born in Sardinia, Italy, named Cavour. From then on, Italy, after a millennium-long decline, started to revive.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Chn. Liang Qichao, *Yinbingshi heji: zhuanji*, vol.11, p.2; Kor. Sin Ch'aeho, *CJ*, IV/365.

¹¹⁵ Chn. Liang Qichao, *Yinbingshi heji: zhuanji*, vol.11, p.4-5; Kor. Sin Ch'aeho, *CJ*, IV/367.

While the dates and places in this passage are entirely based on biographical facts, the births of the heroes are not represented as mere incidents: rather, Liang creates a narrative that puts these events in a fictional meta-historical mechanism spanning across civilizational time, indicated by a cosmological agency called “*tian*,” or, “heaven.” The Korean translator here appends a stock phrase: “*mulgŭkp’ilban hago injŏngsŭngch’ŏn ira* 物極必反하고人定勝天이라,” or, “things turn their course at their extremity; the human can surely surpass nature.”¹¹⁶ While Sin Ch’aeho emphasizes human agency (“the human can surely surpass nature”), the process itself is still in the domain of natural dynamism (“things turn their course at their extremity”). The narrative, both in the Chinese and Korean versions, therefore gestures toward a meta-historical pattern that remains latent in reality, and yet is governing the historical world from a meta-physical height. It thus weaves the warp of history with the weft of cosmological imagination, giving the story a singular textuality.

“Heaven,” as the transcendental agency of history, appears a number of times in Liang Qichao’s narrative to account for the moments of radical and unexpected historical changes. For one, Mazzini’s retirement from the Italian political scene following the failed Revolutions in 1848, which marks the crucial shift of political ideology from republicanism to constitutional monarchy, is explained as heaven’s will. (“Since heaven did not want [Chn. *tian ji bu yu* 天既不欲] Italy to be governed by republicanism...”¹¹⁷) For another, the outbreak of the Crimean War (1853-6), which gave the Kingdom of

¹¹⁶ Sin Ch’aeho, *CJ*, IV/367.

¹¹⁷ Chn. Liang Qichao, *Yinbingshi heji: zhuanji*, vol.11, p.26; Kor. paragraph omitted.

Sardinia a precious chance to elevate its international status, is attributed to the working of heaven. (“Sure enough! Heaven embraces Italy. [Chn. *tian zan yidali* 天贊意大利; Kor. *sangch’ŏn i yit’aeri rŭl ch’ansŏng haminji* 上天이意大利를贊成함인지] Two years after Cavour was appointed Prime Minister, the Crimean War erupted.”¹¹⁸) But that meta-historical agency is far from reliable for its working is unintelligible, as though the unconsciousness of history. The narrator, for instance, interrupts the episode of Garibaldi’s campaign in South America right at the moment of the hero’s critical injury: “Heaven had Italy bear a great man [Chn. *tian wei yidali sheng weiren* 天為意大利生偉人; Kor. *sangch’ŏn i yit’aeri rŭl ūi haya hasong hasin wiin ira* 上天이意大利를為하야下送하신偉人이라]. It cannot possibly snatch him out of Italy when it has not built a nation yet!”¹¹⁹ This mode of narration is adopted to relate this singular and surprising chain of events that brought about the Risorgimento, which squarely defies temporality based on teleological progress. Besides the meta-historical agency, Liang also uses flashbacks and flashforwards to foreground an imagined anachronistic pattern of history;¹²⁰ he also dramatizes the narration by describing omens of the working of such a hidden mechanism.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Chn. Liang Qichao, *Yinbingshi heji: zhuanji*, vol.11, p.29; Kor. Sin Ch’aeho, *CJ*, IV/410.

¹¹⁹ Chn. Liang Qichao, *Yinbingshi heji: zhuanji*, vol.11, p.15; Kor. Sin Ch’aeho, *CJ*, IV/386.

¹²⁰ One instance is a flashback that happens at the moment where the short-lived Roman Republic is established by the efforts of Mazzini and Garibaldi. See: Liang Qichao, *Yinbingshi heji: zhuanji*, vol.11, p.21; Kor. Sin Ch’aeho, *CJ*, IV/397. Theatrical metaphor is employed to set the stage for Mazzini’s retreat from the historical scene with the flashforward technique. See: Liang Qichao, *Yinbingshi heji: zhuanji*, vol.11, p.24; Kor. Sin Ch’aeho, *CJ*, IV/403. The flashback and flashforward imprint in the narrative a dormant temporality that is not visible in the represented historical time, but is alive in the background, waiting to be actualized.

¹²¹ The narrative embeds signs of a meta-historical agency in the description of a radical turn of history. See, for instance, the whimsical anticipation of the Revolution of 1848. (Liang Qichao, *Yinbingshi heji: zhuanji*, vol.11, p.19; Kor. Sin Ch’aeho, *CJ*, IV/394.) The narrator stages the outbreak of the 1848

To Liang Qichao, the history of the Risorgimento is too unpredictable, contingent, and chancy to be told in a stable, teleological temporality; its realization even appears as though a kind of miracle. In creating *Italian Heroes*, Liang thus reimagines the historical world by inscribing in it an anachronistic temporality. The rearticulated world is pregnant with radical change that is inexplicable in terms of causality, and yet open to an ideal future that is unforeseeable as a telos. Liang thus narrates Italy's modernization not as a linear process but as a blind leap forward from the past toward an unidentified future. Liang, unlike the English historian and the Japanese translator, does not possess the perspective of the "historian of the future"; he does not, if you will, tell the history in the language of the future. Rather, Liang creates a narrator who is firmly embedded in the present, at a precarious intersection of unpredictable historical forces, at a time crippled by the decline of an old civilization, and suffering from the unpredictability of what will come next. Without preempting the language of the future, therefore, Liang employs the language at his disposition. The traditional narrative devices, including the meta-historical agency, the emotionally engaged narrator present in storytelling, the insertion of classical poems, and the frequent usage of stock phrases, are employed to represent such a radical future. This singular narrative mode is symptomatic of the precarious situations of the exiled and stateless Chinese author in 1902, just as it bespeaks the embattled circumstances of the Korean translator, who transposed these narrative characteristics into the classicist "mixed" style Korean in 1907, a year leading to the country's 1910 annexation.

Revolutions not only as a mere historical incident; it is also represented as an event foreshadowed by natural omens, which are signs of the working of the cosmological mechanism.

History with a Pen of Emotion

To both Liang Qichao and Sin Ch'aeho, therefore, the objective of writing and translating modern Italian history is not to present their audiences a model path for the countries' modernization, but to bring them up to the very stage of the imagined working of history that is contingent and yet pregnant with fundamental transformation. The literary works are intended to urge the readers to devote themselves to nation building, where risks and gains are the two sides of the same coin. Far from being an example of the predetermined modernization process that China or Korea would be able to follow, the success story of the Risorgimento is the sign that history *has* a potential of “change” (*hua* 化), whose actualization requires human agency.¹²²

The New Historian [i.e., Liang Qichao] says: Why do we read history? It is in order to know the future by examining the past; and to admonish ourselves in light of others. When I read modern histories of European countries and observe their enterprises and their people, there is nothing in them that does not make my spirit vigorous and ecstatic. But especially in the history of Italian nation building, there is something worrisome that scratches my mind and something vibrant that stimulates my brain; that history makes me laugh, cry, get tipsy, and dance. I wonder why, but I'm not sure. [*yu qiu qi gu er bude* 余求其故爾不得] As I was writing *The Three Heroes*, I felt as if I was beginning to transform myself [*hua wu shen* 化吾身] and enter the stage where the three heroes had stood: I was a clerk in Cavour's camp, a soldier in Garibaldi's tent, and an activist in Mazzini's party.

¹²² The following passage indicates a dialectics of the cosmological and human agencies: “Now that I wish China would become a new China, I cannot but sincerely pray to that Creator [*qian dao bi zaowuzhe* 虔禱彼造物者] that those who resemble the three heroes will come to my China. However, it is not, I think at the same time, that that heaven [*bi cang* 彼蒼] gives birth to those heroes and keeps them isolated so as to save them from coming to my China. If everyone thinks it impossible to emulate the three heroes, then the three heroes won't come about. Or, in a better case, if you want or expect the three heroes' nature, deed, endeavor, will, or moderation from other people, then there will be no three heroes, either. Thus I believe: in order to create a new China, we need to start from the point where each and every person has a mind to become one of those three heroes.” (Liang Qichao, *Yinbingshi heji: zhuanji*, vol.11, p.58.)

When they were angry, so was I; when they were happy, so was I; when they were worried, so was I; when they were sick, so was I. As I lay down my pen here and look to the west at my home country, however, I become depressed and feel bitter. Ah! How come Italy a few decades ago resembles my home country so much?¹²³

Italian Heroes is a beautiful practice of Liang Qichao's theory of "new fiction," advanced in his criticism "Lun xiaoshuo yu qunzhi zhi guanxi" (On the Relationship between Fiction and the Organization of Society), written roughly at the same time. *Italian Heroes* is intended to work as an affective medium that can drive, through its emotional power, the reader to practice toward change. Speaking in the voice of the "author," rather than as a translator, Sin Ch'aeho tries to bring exactly the same function of fiction to a Korean audience, and he vows to write more of such works.

Ah! The light of Civilization is illuminating the six continents and the bell of freedom is pealing in the four directions. But for what wrongdoing do we alone need to live in this hell, where we cast our sad gaze over the mountains and rivers and emit sorrowful cries toward the blue sky? I shall write the history of the three patriotic Italian heroes with my plume of emotion [*ujǒng ũi ilp'il* 有情的一筆]. Because their national crisis is similar to ours and the period is not very far from now, their experiences of plight seem to come into my bosom and their voices and smiles suddenly appear in front of me. If inspired and encouraged by this book, people will further produce biographies of three, thirty, or three hundred heroes of Korean revivification, and that is my ardent hope. I therefore make the *Three Italian Nation-Building Heroes*.¹²⁴

In the following few years after he published the translation of *Italian Heroes*, Sin Ch'aeho indeed completed three such heroic biographies. Also written in the mixed style, these works attempt to revive heroic figures in Korean history.

¹²³ Liang Qichao, *Yinbingshi heji: zhuanji*, vo;.11, p.56-7.

¹²⁴ Sin Ch'aeho, *CJ*, IV/364-5.

3. The Impossible Past: *The Biography of Ŭlji mundŏk*, or, a Hermeneutic Battle

Narrating the Nation

Among the three historical heroes whose biographies Sin Ch'aeho wrote, Ŭlji mundŏk seems to have occupied his creative spirit most, as this character also appears in his later works, which I will discuss in the last section. Clearly inspired by Liang Qichao's *Italian Heroes*, Sin Ch'aeho first published *The Biography of Ŭlji mundŏk* in 1908. This work, written in the mixed style, was translated in the same year into the Korean script, suggesting its popularity.¹²⁵

There is very little known about this general of the army of Koguryŏ, Ŭlji mundŏk, who lived in the late-sixth to early-seventh centuries. Ŭlji mundŏk served as an army general when Koguryŏ was attacked by the Sui (581-618), which had just unified China. Emperor Yang (r. 604-618) of Sui waged a series of military campaigns against Koguryŏ, first in 598, second in 612, third in 613, and then fourth and last in 614, but failed to conquer Koguryŏ. Ŭlji mundŏk is known for his strategic astuteness, critical in driving away the Sui forces. The brief yet most substantial extant record about this Koguryŏ general is found in the biography (*yŏlchŏn* 列傳) section of the official history *Samguk sagi* 삼국사기 (History of the Three Kingdoms, 1145), in addition to *Tongsa kangmok* 동사강목 (History of the East, 1778), the Korean history compiled during the Chosŏn period on the model of the twelfth-century Chinese historiography *Zizhi tongjian gangmu* 資治通鑒綱目 (Outline of the Comprehensive Mirror for Aiding in

¹²⁵ My discussion uses the original mixed-style version.

Government). The description in *Samguk sagi* relies extensively on a Chinese source: *Sui shu* 隋書 (History of the Sui, 636), the official history of the Sui Dynasty, the very enemy of Koguryō's.¹²⁶

The extant history reads as follows. During the second Sui campaign against Koguryō in 612, the general Ŭlji mundōk went to the camp of the Sui army to announce his surrender. But his true objective was to spy on the enemy's situation on the pretext of a feigned negotiation. Upon learning that the adversary was fatigued and lost spirit, Ŭlji decided to further exhaust them by waging consecutive battles. As the Sui troops won one battle after another, they set up camp and, despite exhaustion, prepared for the final attacks on Koguryō's stronghold, Pyōngyang fortress. At that moment, Ŭlji had a poem delivered to the Chinese general Yu Zhongwen 于仲文 (545-613). It read:

神策究天文	Your marvelous strategies master heaven's design;
妙算窮地理	Your clever calculations exhaust the earth's pattern.
戰勝功既高	Your achievements in the winning battles are already great;
知足願云止	I understand that it is enough, so please stop fighting.

Upon reception, Yu Zhongwen “instructed” (*yu* 諭) Ŭlji mundōk in his reply. This term suggests that the Chinese general took the poem as Koguryō's willingness to surrender. Ŭlji then sent a messenger to communicate fake submission to the Sui army. The Sui troops then retreated instead of inflicting a fatal blow on the fortress, for their soldiers had been too exhausted to continue fighting. Taking advantage of this move, the Koguryō army chased the retreating enemy and attacked it from behind, destroying most of it.

¹²⁶ For the sources and interpretation of *The Biography of Ŭlji mundōk*, I was helped by: Sin Ch'aeho, *Ŭlchi Mundōk chōn: tongnip chōngsin kwa minjok chajon ũi p'yosang*, translation and commentary by Pak Kibong.

Samguk sagi's historian adds a commentary and attributes to Ŭlji mundŏk Koguryŏ's eventual victory over the Sui campaigns, which would continue for two more years.

“What is fortunate about Ŭlji mundŏk is that there is still these few lines transmitted by history; but what is unfortunate about him is that there are only a few lines of transmitted history,”¹²⁷ Sin Ch'aeho writes. He blames the existing history for its “narrow-mindedness,” which “hastily buried a true hero unmatched in the past or the present,” and observes that the reason for that is because the traditional histories are “contaminated” by the old ideology of “the small [i.e., Korea] serving the great [i.e., China].”¹²⁸ (*yi so sa dae* 以小事大) The task he assigns himself is to invent a radically new history that can recover an “original picture of the true hero” (*chŏnjŏng yŏng'ung ŭi pollae myŏnmok* 真正英雄의本來面目), whose “luster has been blocked by tens of generations of inferior politicians” and whose “value has been buried by the brushes of dull Confucians for hundreds of years.”¹²⁹ Such a work was so idiosyncratic that Byŏn Yŏngman 변영만 (1889-1954), who contributes a preface to *The Biography of Ŭlji mundŏk*, even claims that Sin Ch'aeho's book is “the spearhead of the publishing world

¹²⁷ Sin Ch'aeho, *CJ*, IV/26.

¹²⁸ “Alas! What a pity! Dull Confucians have confusedly written for centuries that civilian rule is superior to military achievement. Banal officers in tens of dynasties have recklessly argued that moral person should adhere to the idea of ‘the small serving the great.’ [*yi so sa dae* 以小事大] The result is the shrunken and regressed policies and the crushed and suppressed morale among the people. The relentlessness and tenacity in the past have been shunned, while the rotten Confucians and the shrimp-like folks among the ancients have been revered. The sacred four-thousand-year history of our Korea has been contaminated with shameful and laughable affairs and confused and irrelevant contents. Thus the great heroes have been left buried...” (Sin Ch'aeho, *CJ*, IV/24-5.)

¹²⁹ Sin Ch'aeho, *CJ*, IV/94-5.

of this country,” in which “there has been nothing that deserves the name of ‘book’” due to the excessive influence of Chinese civilization.¹³⁰

The picture Sin Ch’aeho tries to paint is centered upon a single idea: *the national hero*. More than anything else, Ŭlji mundŏk is “the single greatest man in the four-thousand-year history of Korea.” The idea is unambiguous: “I believe that Ŭlji was a great man who created our state, the progenitor who bore and raised our nation, and the sacred god who gave us, his posterity, the spirit of independence.”¹³¹ To illustrate his point, Sin compares Ŭlji mundŏk with Kim Ch’unch’u 김춘추 (c.602-661), the twenty-ninth King of Silla (r. 654-661). King Kim collaborated with the Tang empire to attack Koguryŏ, and laid the groundwork for Koguryŏ’s fall in 668 and the subsequent unification of the Korean Peninsula under Silla’s rule. For his contribution to the unification, Kim Ch’unch’u has traditionally obtained much higher esteem than the rather obscure Ŭlji mundŏk, but Sin argues that such a view is nonsense. Sin instead claims that while “Kim Ch’unch’u was a bright subject of a dynasty, whose achievements only began and ended with Silla and whose spirit perished with the demise of the loyal lineage of Hyŏkkŏse,”¹³² “Ŭlji mundŏk in fact is not the Ŭlji mundŏk of the Kingdom of Yŏngyang¹³³ but of the posterity of Tangun,¹³⁴ not merely of Koguryŏ but of the Korean nation; and not of a particular period but of Korea’s hundreds of millions of generations.

¹³⁰ Sin Ch’aeho, *CJ*, IV/7-8.

¹³¹ Sin Ch’aeho, *CJ*, IV/94.

¹³² Hyŏkkŏse 혁거세, the founding King of Silla.

¹³³ Yŏngyang 영양, the twenty-sixth King of Koguryŏ, of whom Ŭlji mundŏk was a subject.

¹³⁴ Tangun 단군, mythological ancestor of Korean people; for the Tangun mythology, see: Hyung Il Pai, *Constructing “Korean” Origins: A Critical Review of Archaeology, Historiography, and Racial Myth in Korean State-Formation Theories*; Yi Kibaek, ed. *Tangun sinhwa nonjip*.

He did not debase even though the loyal lineage of Chumong¹³⁵ ended or Kim Ch'unch'u died. He is immortal; his grand spirit exists forever."¹³⁶ Though Silla is credited for bringing a unified rule to the peninsula, its achievement is only meaningful to that particular kingdom since it was realized with the help of the Tang and thus was embedded in the traditional Sinocentric tributary order. In sharp contrast, Koguryŏ's existence is significant to the whole Korean nation precisely because it acted independently, daring to confront the Chinese Empire even at the cost of its subsequent demise. By shifting the focus from dynastic to national history, Sin conceives the image of Ŭlji mundŏk as an embodiment of the "spirit" (*chŏngsin* 정신) of the independent Korean nation.

Just as Liang Qichao's literary reworking of the modern Italian history is meant to emotionally motivate the audience, so is Sin Ch'aeho's imaginary recreation of the history of Koguryŏ. Sin writes in the introduction:

When I read the history of the Koguryŏ official Ŭlji mundŏk, my spirit is invigorated and my courage leaps. So I look up at heaven and exclaim: 'Really! Really! The nature of our nation is really like that! Such a great person and achievement can't be matched in the past or present; our nation's strength and courageousness were really like that! Oh the vigorous youth to the north [i.e., Korea], so strong and courageous in the past! Why were you so courageous and keen then, and yet are so stupid now? ...'¹³⁷

Sin Ch'aeho's self-referential response to his own historical account, awash with emotions, echoes Liang Qichao's voice in the conclusion of *Italian Heroes*, as well as

¹³⁵ Chumong 苴蒙, the founding King of Koguryŏ.

¹³⁶ Sin Ch'aeho, *CJ*, IV/92-3.

¹³⁷ Sin Ch'aeho, *CJ*, IV/24.

Sin's own voice in the translation thereof. For Sin Ch'aeho, "history," first and foremost, "is something that makes me sing, cry, get angry, and dance."¹³⁸ And "the biographies of our nation's great men" is integral to "the cultivation of emotion" (*chöngyuk* 情育), which he believes should be the key to forging "patriotism" (*aeguksim* 愛國心) among the people.¹³⁹

Reclaiming National Subjectivity in History

Essentially an anachronistic attempt that reads modern concepts such as nationalism and patriotism in the military/political figure centuries ago, Sin Ch'aeho's heroic biography intends to "invite the hero of the future by portraying the hero of the past."¹⁴⁰ His creative reconstruction of the past, therefore, is the exact counterpoint of his imagination of the future. Examining his creative historiography, therefore, is instrumental in understanding how Sin imagined and foreshadowed the Korean "nation" to be created. What is the construct of its identity? What is its subjectivity? It is exactly these questions that Sin grappled with in pioneering "new history" (*sin yöksa* 新歷史). Written in the same year as *The Biography of Ŭlji mundök, Toksa sillon* (New Discourse on Reading History, 1908) illustrates his concern. Sin, while declaring, "The history of a state examines and describes the rise and fall of a nation [*minjok* 民族]," lambasts the existing histories, which regard "our nation" (*a minjok* 我民族) as either "a part of the

¹³⁸ Sin Ch'aeho, "Yöksa wa aeguksim ũi kwan'gye 歷史와愛國心の關係" (1908), *CJ*, VI/502.

¹³⁹ Sin Ch'aeho, "Chöngyuk kwa aeguk 情育과愛國," *CJ*, VII/626.

¹⁴⁰ Sin Ch'aeho, *CJ*, IV/29

Chinese,” of “the Xianbei,” of “the Mohe,” of “the Mongols,” of “the Jurchens,” or of “the Japanese.” Instead, Sin argues that new history “must first present the people who are the masters of that state.” History, then, is essential in “breaking the inveterate dream of the whole country by means of nationalism [*minjok chuŭi* 民族主義] and forging the new brains of the youth by virtue of the idea of statehood [*kukka kwannyŏm* 國家觀念].”¹⁴¹ Later in the seminal *Chosŏn sanggo sa* (History of Korean Antiquity), Sin defines “history” as the record of “the struggle between the ‘I’ and the ‘non-I,’” and characterizes the “I” as “those who stand in the subjective position.”¹⁴² (*chukwanchŏk wich’i e sŭn cha* 主觀的位置에 是者) In his creative biographies, then, it is the re-created figures of the national heroes that embody the subjectivity of the imagined nation; and in *The Biography of Ŭlji mundŏk* in particular, the nation’s subjectivity is symbolized by what “subjective position” the re-imagined Ŭlji mundŏk occupies vis-à-vis the “non-I,” i.e., China.

The biographer, then, needs to be faced by a paradox. For the only source he can rely on is the scant descriptions found in *Samguk sagi* and elsewhere, which derive from the passage in *Sui shu*, the Chinese dynastic history. He thus has to use the language of the “non-I” to reconstruct the “I.” If, as Sin Ch’aeho observes, those traditional historiographies are distorted by the idea of “the small serving the great,” he must look through that old blurry lens to see the “true” picture of the nation. Sin’s effort to write a national history, therefore, boils down to a hermeneutic battle, the battle of establishing his own *subjective position* by reinterpreting and deconstructing the other’s language that

¹⁴¹ Sin Ch’aeho, *CJ*, III/309-10.

¹⁴² Sin Ch’aeho, *CJ*, I/601.

subjugates the nation's historiographical imagination. In such a rereading, the historian does not affirm or invent a certain *particular* characteristic of the Korean nation as opposed to its other; instead, he reclaims the right to interpret the "universal" moral values represented in the existing history, and recreates the Korean hero as a subject that best exemplifies those values, while denying his enemy that position. Thus the "subjective position" Sin reconstructs for the Korean nation is not a *particular* position, but an *exemplary* one.

Against the backdrop of the worsening Japanese imperialist encroachment in the years leading to the country's colonization in 1910, Koguryō's position vis-à-vis the Sui Empire described in *The Biography of Ŭlji mundōk* allegorizes Korea's national subjectivity in the modern world. And that position is embodied by none other than the general Ŭlji mudōk, the champion of "the spirit of independence."¹⁴³ (*tongnip ũi chōngsin* 獨立의精神) Sin Ch'aeho's key observation that Korea's current national crisis stems from the "nature of our nation" cultivated through the centuries-long submissive policy toward China brings about this anachronistic analogy. Sin particularly focuses on Ŭlji mundōk precisely because Koguryō's "enemy was the powerful and grand China," while the other two of the Three Kingdoms, Silla (57 BCE – 935 CE) and Paekche (18 BCE – 660 CE), merely competed with Japan and the Mohe, which were but "small enemies."¹⁴⁴ Such a grand epic needed to be told in order to articulate Korea's subjectivity amidst the grave Japanese aggression that the country was wrestling with.

¹⁴³ Sin Ch'aeho, *CJ*, IV/42.

¹⁴⁴ Sin Ch'aeho, *CJ*, IV/31-2.

In order to weave the narrative that draws such an anachronistic analogy between early-seventh-century East Asia and the early-twentieth-century world, Sin Ch'aeho's narrative introduces a meta-historical agency, which in most cases is named "ch'ŏn 天," or "heaven." Sin thus uses the same narrative device as Liang's *Italian Heroes*. For instance, "Not only is Ŭlji mundŏk a great man, but he is also a heavenly marvel [ch'ŏnsin 天神],"¹⁴⁵ declares the historian. He describes the unification of China under the Sui rule as being "as if heaven [hwangch'ŏn 皇天] was testing the capacity of our nation,"¹⁴⁶ and the general of Koguryŏ led his small country to compete with this vast empire because "the profound heaven [myŏngmyŏng sangch'ŏn 冥冥上天] did not allow us to stand neutral."¹⁴⁷ In the biography of Yi Sunsin, *Sugun ch'eil wiin Yi Sunsin*, the navy hero is also characterized as "a godlike man sent from heaven."¹⁴⁸ (ch'ŏnsong han sinin 天送한神人) Then the historian has to wonder about the "intention of heaven"¹⁴⁹ (ch'ŏnyi 天意) when the history reaches a tipping point at which Yi Sunsin was imprisoned by the Chosŏn court. The released Yi achieved a great victory; but the narrator then foreshadows a sudden turn of history that caused the hero's death by questioning, "Is it heaven's intention [p'ich'ang ũi kouï 彼蒼의故意] that the history of Yi Ch'ungmu's [i.e., Yi Sunsin] life starts and ends with suffering?"¹⁵⁰ Most importantly,

¹⁴⁵ Sin Ch'aeho, *CJ*, IV/67.

¹⁴⁶ Sin Ch'aeho, *CJ*, IV/33.

¹⁴⁷ Sin Ch'aeho, *CJ*, IV/51.

¹⁴⁸ Sin Ch'aeho, *CJ*, IV/176.

¹⁴⁹ Sin Ch'aeho, *CJ*, IV/175.

¹⁵⁰ Sin Ch'aeho, *CJ*, IV/186.

the same meta-historical agency also exists in the present world. Hence Sin ends the biography of Yi Sunsin as follows:

I shall present this biography of Yi Sunsin to the nation trapped in suffering. I believe if our ordinary men and women find their model in this and follow this, they will traverse the thorny heaven and earth and conquer the difficult waters and passes. Heaven [*ch'ŏn* 天] has prepared the majestic Pacific of the twentieth century and awaits the advent of a second Yi Sunsin!¹⁵¹

In a world thus reconstructed, Ŭlji mundŏk is a world-historical hero precisely by virtue of being a heroic general in early-seventh-century East Asia. Sin Ch'aeho insists, “Ŭlji mundŏk is not simply the one and only great man in the four thousand years of Korean history, but his counterparts are hard to find in the nations of the entire world.”¹⁵² The creative historian remarkably projects the Koguryŏ-Sui power relations onto the political landscape of modern Europe. As he argues,

The general situation of the time was such that not only did the Sui enjoy so much power, but every single country neighboring it also aided its ferocity and became brutal. Our great Ŭlji mundŏk stood aloof among them and did not abandon the country's dignity. Alas! In the age of Napoleon when the entire Europe surrendered out of fear, only England could resist singlehandedly; in the age of Emperor Yang of Sui when the Eastern sphere was shaken, only Koguryŏ could resist singlehandedly. Thus Koguryŏ two thousand years ago equals England in the eighteenth century.¹⁵³

The Biography of Ŭlji mundŏk intends to offer an exemplary precedent of the nation's strength that is in dire need to resist the Japanese aggression. Sin Ch'aeho makes it clear that writing this work in “the time like now when precariousness increasingly deepens,

¹⁵¹ Sin Ch'aeho, *CJ*, IV/200.

¹⁵² Sin Ch'aeho, *CJ*, IV/75.

¹⁵³ Sin Ch'aeho, *CJ*, IV/40-1.

suffering increases daily, and a critical life-or-death moment is just a hair away” is to “conjure up from the tomb after a few thousand years the ever-bright heroic soul of Ŭlji, and have it mount the saddle of the olden time and brandish the sword of the strong man, ride on the six continents together with Peter the Great and [George] Washington and vie for eternal prominence with [Horatio] Nelson and [Otto von] Bismarck, in order to lay the groundwork for independence.”¹⁵⁴ The historian mentions the political figures of modern Europe as examples of national heroes. The world-historical task that Korea should pursue through its independence is intertwined with the utopian desire of recovering the nation’s original strength in its imagined past. What Ŭlji mundök represents is thus given immediate relevance to the modern world, by right of Koguryō’s power in the late-sixth- to early-seventh-century East Asian political landscape.

A Hermeneutic Battle for Morality

The imagined construct of Korean national subjectivity in Sin Ch’aeho’s creative historiography, therefore, is best understood by examining how the historian articulates Koguryō’s position vis-à-vis the Sui Empire. Sin Ch’aeho considers Koguryō’s symbolic relationship to the Sui particularly in terms of morality. In order to do so, he draws a contrast between the Korean state and the Chen (557-589), the last of the Southern Dynasties, which had been conquered by the Sui before the latter directed its attack to the north:

¹⁵⁴ Sin Ch’aeho, *CJ*, IV/95. The Chosŏn navy general Yi Sunsin is also compared to Horatio Nelson. Sin Ch’aeho, *CJ*, IV/198-9.

Ah! If Koguryŏ had not had keen eyes or agile limbs, foolishly stuck to minding its business and ignoring the other, and sung the songs of great peace, then it must have undoubtedly repeated the grudge which the Chen in the Jiangnan had to harbor due to the [corrupt poem of] ‘Flowers of the Rear Garden.’ Fortunately, Ŭlji mundŏk had a great insight and took ever greater caution after the Sui unified China, and incessantly prepared the army, which amounted to one million strong soldiers.¹⁵⁵

Sin Ch’aeho’s observation on the contrast between Koguryŏ and the Chen, one survived and the other destroyed, is informed by the traditional Chinese historiography, in which the Chen’s last emperor Chen Shubao 陳叔寶 (553-604) is portrayed as a typical morally corrupt ruler. Sin mentions Chen Shubao’s infamous verse “Yushu houtinghua 玉樹後庭花” (Flowers of the Rear Garden on the Jade Tree), which, for its flowery and unrestrained description of the imperial harem and palace ladies, is condemned as an example of the sound of a fallen country (*wangguo zhi yin* 亡國之音).¹⁵⁶ The moralistic explanation of the fall of the Chen underpins Sin’s historical perspective, where Ŭlji mundŏk is praised as morally superior to his competitor: Emperor Yang of Sui. In explaining the context of the Sui-Koguryŏ War, the writer, on one hand, describes Emperor Yang’s rule as “self-glorifying,” (*chwadae* 坐大) “arrogant and disrespectful,” (*kyoo murye* 驕傲無禮), “ferocious,” (*kŏl* 桀) and “insulting.” (*momyŏl* 侮蔑)¹⁵⁷ On the other, he draws a conclusion in the penultimate section by describing “Ŭlji mundŏk’s personal character [*inkyŏk* 人格]” as being “sincere,” (*chinsŏng* 真誠) “relentless,”

¹⁵⁵ Sin Ch’aeho, *CJ*, IV/58-9.

¹⁵⁶ See, for instance, the “Yinyue shang 音樂上” and “Yanjiu 言咎” chapters of the *zhi* 志 section of the *Suishu* 隋書 (History of the Sui). Also in the “Yuedian 樂典” chapter of the *Tongdian* 通典 (Comprehensive Institutions, 8th C.), where this song is specifically characterized as “*wangguo zhi yin* 亡國之音.”

¹⁵⁷ Sin Ch’aeho, *CJ*, IV/34-5, 40, 48.

(*kang'ui* 強毅) “determined,” (*t'ŭngnip* 特立) and “adventurous.” (*mohöm* 冒險)¹⁵⁸ He also argues that had Ŭlji not died early after the successful repulsion of the Sui campaigns, Koguryŏ would have “made China into Korea” (*yi han ũi han* 以漢為韓) and “expanded the territories and built a great Eastern empire [*dongbang dae cheguk* 東方大帝國].”¹⁵⁹ To make his point, Sin quotes from *Tongsa kangmok* (History of the East), in which the historian An Chŏngbok 안정복 (1712-91) contends that Koguryŏ must have “made peace with Silla and, by using the people of the Mohe, pursued [the Sui] from behind and occupied the Lü mountain region in the Northeast in order to condemn the wrongdoing [*choe* 罪] [of the Sui].”¹⁶⁰ The moralist historiography therefore legitimizes Koguryŏ’s conquest of the Sui, just as it understands the demise of the Chen as a historical necessity. Hence the statement: “What ‘ism’ does Ŭlji mundŏk represent? It is imperialism [*cheguk chuŭi* 帝國主義].”¹⁶¹ By being morally superior, Korea *de jure* can legitimately impose an imperialist rule just as any other Chinese dynasties have claimed to do so in the name of the mandate of heaven (*tianming* 天命).

Sin Ch’aeho’s discourse thus determines the legitimacy of the state in terms of the moral integrity of the ruler. But it can only do so on a particular premise: the existence of a system of moral value that is “universal” and applicable not only to the Korean state but also to the Chinese dynasties. This moral universalism is adopted from the premodern historical sources in China and Korea. Rather than representing a particular value vis-à-

¹⁵⁸ Sin Ch’aeho, *CJ*, IV/89.

¹⁵⁹ Sin Ch’aeho, *CJ*, IV/80; 83.

¹⁶⁰ Sin Ch’aeho, *CJ*, IV/82.

¹⁶¹ Sin Ch’aeho, *CJ*, IV/53.

vis China, the Korean state exemplifies those “universal” values better than the Chinese Empire, where the “universality” is taken for granted by virtue of a shared value system underlying the traditional historiographies in both countries. From this vantage point, Korea occupies an *exemplary* position in a given “universal” value system, rather than affirming a particular value that it wants to be recognized as its own. This configuration is then applied, by means of the anachronistic analogy, to articulating the modern world and Korea’s subjectivity in it.

The competition for moral superiority is played out between Sin Ch’aeho and the historian of *Samguk sagi*, Kim Busik 김부식 (1075-1151). In rereading the existing history, Sin, while supplementing it with imagined details, tries to shift the legitimacy of his historiographical perspective from the Confucian historian to himself. One best example is the conclusion of *The Biography of Ŭlji mundök*, in which Sin discusses the hero’s “personal character” by critiquing *Samguk sagi*’s description. The biographical record of Ŭlji mundök in *Samguk sagi* begins with a brief general observation: “Ŭlji mundök. Genealogy unknown. His nature was composed and intrepid [*ch’imji* 沈鷺], and he had strategic talent [*chisu* 智數]. He also appreciated literature.”¹⁶² Sin questions if “the four characters” (*saja* 四字): “*ch’im* 沈,” “*ji* 鷺,” “*kwon* 權” (*sic*), and “*su* 數” are based on “an intelligent observation on the totality of Ŭlji mundök.” The modern historian, while acknowledging that the description is not necessarily entirely wrong, nevertheless stresses it is merely based on “the observation of one aspect.” He then proposes alternative, yet not radically different, four notions that allegedly grasp the hero’s personal character better: “*chinsöng* 真誠” (sincere), “*kang’üi* 強毅” (relentless),

¹⁶² *Samguk sagi* 三國史記, vol.44, sec. Yölichön chesa 列傳第四, “Ŭlji mundök chön 乙支文德傳.”

“*t’üngnip* 特立” (determined), and “*mohöm* 冒險” (adventurous). In this hermeneutic gesture, Sin interestingly makes the false observation that “the four characters [in *Samguk sagi*] originate from the appreciation offered [to Ŭlji mundök] by the historian of the *Sui shu* and were succeeded [*sangjun* 相遵] by our history for generations.”¹⁶³ Those four characters are in fact not used in the *Sui shu* to describe the Koguryö general.¹⁶⁴ Sin’s misunderstanding, we may argue, is symptomatic of his deep-seated antagonism toward the existing Korean history, which he believes uncritically draws on Chinese sources and adopts their point of view. Rather than “succeed[ing],” or, indeed, *transcribing* without critiquing, the Chinese characters in the Chinese dynastic history, Sin proposes a better set of words to articulate the history. While premised on a “universal” value system that is exemplified by Ŭlji mundök, therefore, Sin’s reinterpretation establishes its own historical perspective; it thereby reclaims the authority and legitimacy of writing history from *Samguk sagi* as well as from *Sui shu*. Sin’s hermeneutic strategy does not so much constatively challenge the original’s content — there is no extant counterevidence to begin with — or much less deny its meta-historical premise; rather, his (mis)reading performatively transfers historiographical legitimacy from the past to the present, and from China to Korea.

The structurally same hermeneutic game is in fact at play at the crucial moment of Ŭlji mundök’s confrontation with the Sui army. Actual military strength aside, the war is also a struggle for symbolic power. The tipping point comes when the hero dispatches a classical Chinese-style poem to the enemy. Abundant with praise, the poem was

¹⁶³ Sin Ch’aeho, *CJ*, IV/88.

¹⁶⁴ *Sui shu* 隋書, vol.60, sec. Liezhuan diershiwu 列傳第二十五, “Yu Zhongwen zhuan 于仲文傳.”

interpreted by the Sui army general Yu Zhongwen as Ŭlji's outright declaration of concession. Thus in reply, Yu "instructed" the hero, as the history in *Samguk sagi* and *Sui shu* goes. However, the addressee's interpretation of the poem in fact fails to capture a reverse message concealed in its highly ambivalent last line. Let me quote the poem again with a translation from the point of view of the Sui general:

神策究天文	Your marvelous strategies master heaven's design;
妙算窮地理	Your clever calculations exhaust the earth's pattern.
戰勝功既高	Your achievements in the winning battles are already great;
知足願云止	I understand that it is enough, so please stop fighting.

Sin instead interprets the last line as "*mal nae chi chok ch'a chi* 末乃知足且止," or, "[you should] in the end understand it's enough and stop."¹⁶⁵ The last line, in fact, can also be translated as "I hope you stop fighting if you understand it's enough." When taken this way, the poem becomes a warning against the adversary's continued fighting despite their fatigue, which Ŭlji knew from his earlier spying. Their self-destructive fighting in spite of exhaustion, then, becomes indicative of their unreservedness and greed. In this reading, it is Ŭlji mundŏk who is "instruct[ing]," not the Chinese general. The praise turns into a sarcastic caution; Yu Zhongwen's "instruction" in turn becomes a sign of the arrogant general's moral inferiority. Ŭlji mundŏk, not Yu Zhongwen, exemplifies morality; and, by extension, Koguryŏ, instead of the Sui, is the legitimate ruler. The subsequent defeat of the Sui, then, is a necessary result of its inferior morality. By reinterpreting the existing history, Sin thus tries to excavate the "original" voice of Ŭlji mundŏk that has been transmitted and yet buried by that history. Moreover, the

¹⁶⁵ Sin Ch'aeho, *CJ*, IV/70.

reinterpretation enables the modern historian to question the legitimacy of the traditional historiography itself. For as long as it features Ŭlji's poem as a (feigned) declaration of submission, it interprets the poem and tells the history around it from the adversary's vantage point, which is proven to be wrong by its subsequent defeat, thereby missing the "true" voice of Ŭlji. Sin thus tries to reclaim agency for telling "real" history. In this hermeneutic competition, the dispatched poem by Ŭlji is, as it were, a piece of litmus paper that tests the addressee's moral integrity. Sin's reinterpretation attempts to demonstrate that not only the Chinese general, but also the Korean historian Kim Busik, who uncritically adopted the descriptions of the Chinese dynastic history, would not pass that test. Waging a hermeneutic battle against Chinese Empire by means of a classical Chinese-style poem, Ŭlji mundŏk is a hero of singular importance for Sin's creative historiography, which is in itself a hermeneutic struggle that attempts to establish a subjective position by reinterpreting the existing sinocentric histories.

Excavating the Future

Insomuch as Sin Ch'aeho establishes the moral exemplarity of Ŭlji mundŏk through the rereading of the existing history, its "truthfulness" depends on the legitimacy of the modern historian's reinterpretation. But of course, there is no way to prove it due to the lack of historical evidence. Imagination therefore has to leave ineffaceable traces in Sin's historiography, at which center exists the image of the "true" Ŭlji mundŏk, making it, at least to some extent, essentially a *literary* project. His desire for bringing to light the lost past of the Korean nation is the exact flipside of his yearning for the nation's future.

In his anachronistic imagination, the future has nothing to do with the telos of a progressive time, nor can the desired “nation” be modeled upon an existing identity. In search for Korean national subjectivity, as we have seen, Sin imagines it as moral exemplarity, which distinguishes his nationalist discourse from the standard one based on the dialectics of universality and particularity. Just as Liang Qichao had transformed the narrative perspective when he translated and adapted the Italian history from the Japanese source, so do we have to avoid identifying ourselves with the “historian of the future” in examining Sin Ch’aeho’s historical work. The passage in the conclusion of *The Biography of Ŭlji mundŏk* about the remains of the state of Koguryŏ in northeastern China is particularly pertinent to the significance of Sin’s literary-historiographical project:

The author [Sin Ch’aeho] has earlier heard from a friend who traveled west to China and came back: ‘When traveling to places like Fengtian [i.e., Shenyang], Jilin, and Lüshun in Manchuria, many people imagine the legacy of our ancestors from such scarce traces as discovered stone coffins and remaining royal institutions. There is a village called Koryŏ, which is a barren frontier the people of Koguryŏ once settled in; and a fortress called Koryŏ, which was once defended by the walls they built. A thousand and a hundred years have already passed since then; things have changed, the stars have moved, and the hills have each become high and deep. A distant descendant, I now travel as a foreigner on horseback and with a silk bag through the old land which my ancestors captured with long spears and large swords, and defended with tough forts and effective armor. My thought is frequently touched by the feeling of change in time.’ [*gogŭm byŏnch’ŏn ũi kam* 古今變遷斗感] Scholar of No Boundary says, ‘Alas! This is the remains of Ŭlji mundŏk’s rule! The unworthy posterity has ceded to the hands of others the entirety of the inheritance, which was obtained and defended by those who had shed blood and sweat, exhausted properties, and not cared about their lives.’¹⁶⁶

The evocation of the ruined landscape of northeastern China, once Koguryŏ’s territory, has little to do with the historian’s wish to find archeological evidence that would tell a

¹⁶⁶ Sin Ch’aeho, *CJ*, IV/96-7.

real history of Koguryŏ. On the contrary, the sense of distance from the past is instead doubled, as the image of the old land is conjured up by a friend's words. At the end of the day, all that the historian has is the existing histories; it is his imagination that must look into the stone coffins and recover the royal institutions. It is his call to exclaim: "This is the remains of Ŭlji mundŏk's rule!" The ruin then is the very site where the future is to be excavated through imagination. By means of rereading the history anew, Sin fights for the right for that aspirational imagination, just as Liang Qichao, through re-using the traditional literary language in a new way, foreshadows the future. One desiring for the nation's irrecoverable past and the other yearning for its unforeseeable future, they both imagine what their "nations" would have been. Writing in the future perfect tense, each of them de-constructively uses and re-interprets the existing language to imagine what that language by nature cannot represent. It is precisely this task that their writings — Sin's "mixed style" and Liang's "new style" — undertake in common, the task of imagining an (alternative) modern in the language of the modern's other, before the literary vernaculars are invented to serve that very role.

4. The Real in the Dream: Analyzing Sin Ch'aeho's "Dream Heaven"

Only a few months after the Korean-script version of the last of Sin Ch'aeho's national heroic biographies, *Tongguk kŏkŏl Ch'oe Tot'ong* (1910), was published in *Taehan maeil sinbo*, Korea became a Japanese colony. Faced with the fall of the country, Sin Ch'aeho went into exile in China. Except for one brief trip home for remarriage in

1916, he remained in China for the rest of his life. Sin first resided in Beijing and sojourned in cities in Manchuria to visit the remains of the old Korean states including Koguryō that occupied the northern lands. Making use of the materials in the archives in Beijing, he continued working on Korean history, which later culminated in *Chsŏn sanggo sa* (History of Ancient Korea) and a few unpublished manuscripts. Though in exile, Sin was well connected with independence activists at home and in China, and also collaborated with Chinese intellectuals. He participated in the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea (*Taehan minguk imsi chŏngbu* 대한민국임시정부) inaugurated in Shanghai in 1919 in the aftermath of the failed anti-Japanese March First Movement. But he soon broke away from the group due to serious disagreements with the political line promoted by the interim President Yi Sŭngman 이승만 (a.k.a. Syngman Rhee, 1875-1965). He then ran the newspaper *Sin Taehan* 신대한 (New Korea, 1919-20) and the journal *Ch'ōngo* 천고 (Heaven's Drumbeat, 1921) in Shanghai, trying to advance his alternative agenda against the Shanghai government and publish harsh accusation of Japanese imperialism. Leaving the editorship of these short-lived publications, Sin then returned to Beijing and increasingly came close to anarchist activists including the Chinese Li Shizeng 李石曾 (1881-1973), who had studied in France for several years and grew increasingly sympathetic with the thought of Peter Kropotkin (1842-1921).

Sin Ch'aeho's radicalization prompted him to collaborate with the Ŭiyŏldan 의열단 (Righteous Fighters Corps), an underground anti-Japanese society formed in 1919 in the Manchurian city of Jilin that advocated the use of illegal and violent measures to resist imperialism. Sin drafted in 1923 the famed manifesto for this organization “Chosŏn hyŏngmyŏng sŏnŏn 조선혁명선언” (The Manifesto of Korean

Revolution), in which he blamed the more moderate lines of Korean independence activism both at home and abroad. He then participated in the Eastern Anarchist Association (*Tongbang mujöngbujuiija yömmaeng* 동방무정부주의자연맹), an organization initiated by Korean expatriate activists to promote solidarity among anarchists in Asia. Sin was trying to raise funds for this organization by smuggling counterfeit foreign exchange certificates when the Japanese police arrested him in 1928. He was then tried and sentenced to ten years in prison. While in prison, he agreed to publish in the newspaper *Chsön ilbo* his manuscripts of Korean history which he had worked on in exile, but firmly refused help from his friends who had connections with the colonial government and promised to initiate negotiations for his early release. While in prison, Sin died of a cerebral hemorrhage in 1936.

Around 1916 when he was staying in Beijing, Sin Ch'aeho completed the manuscript of a fantastic tale called “Kkum hanül 꿈하늘” (Dream Heaven).¹⁶⁷ This mid-length story is of much importance to our investigation into Sin's heroic biography. For not only does it feature the figure of Ŭlji mundök, but it also illuminates an essential problem inherent in Sin's historiographical program by putting the whole scene of the search of the lost national history in an imaginary space of the dream.

“Dream Heaven” is a fantasy in which the protagonist, called “Hannom” (한놈; literally means “a man”) visits the afterlife, where he meets the spirit of Ŭlji mundök. Hannom witnesses the sublime reenactment of Koguryö's fight with the Chinese empire,

¹⁶⁷ For “Dream Heaven,” I used the reproduced text in Sin Ch'aeho, *CJ*, VII/513-60. I also consulted Sin Ch'aeho, Kim Pyöngmin ed., *Sin Ch'aeho munhak yugo sönjip*. For interpretations of this story, see: Han Kümyun, “Sin Ch'aeho sosöl ũi michök t'üksöng yöngu: ‘Kkum hanül’ kwa ‘Yong kwa yong ũi taekyökchön’ ũl chungsimüro”; Chön Pyöngchun, “Sin Ch'aeho ũi ‘Kkum hanül’ e nat'anan minjok chuüi yöngu.”

and tries to ask the general questions about Korean history in the hope that he can explain what is left out of the existing histories, which Hannom already knows. After engaging in extended conversations with Ŭlji mundök about the nation's history, Hannom himself is lead to fighting a battle between “god [*nim* 님]” and “devil [*kabi* 가비]” just like Ŭlji. The story then takes an allegorical turn. Hannom finds his body multiplied into six men, each of whom is defeated in a battle for a particular weakness that is said to have done harm to the nation historically. Hannom himself is also killed when confronting Toyotomi Hideyoshi, the Japanese *shōgun* who waged two wars against Chosŏn, devastating the latter. Hannom is then sent to hell, where he learns about the “five commandments” that Tangun established for the Korean people, and about the crimes against the nation for which people are damned. He then finds himself in heaven (*nimnara* 님나라), where he encounters a pantheon of national heroes,¹⁶⁸ and he is ordered to complete the sisyphian work of blooming the sky, which has been polluted, it is said, since around 700 years ago, when Korea started to adopt the policy of “the small serves the great.” The narrative also includes a number of pieces of Korean lyrical verse in the voices of Hannom, Ŭlji mundök, and other figures in the story.

The story “is not written after I had a dream, but is written by the dream itself,” says the author.¹⁶⁹ However, just like Sin Ch'aeho's heroic biographies, the text places itself right on the boundary between history and fiction: “there are [in the story] poetic myths that cannot be based on facts, but historical contents that I weave into them refer to [actual history books such as] *Kogi* 古記 [Old Records], *Samguk sagi* 三國史記, *Samguk*

¹⁶⁸ Mostly historical figures, but includes a few contemporary people such as Chu Sigyōng and An Chunggūn.

¹⁶⁹ Sin Ch'aeho, *CJ*, VII/513.

yusa 三國遺事 [Legends and Histories of the Three Kingdoms], *Koguryō sa* 高句麗史 [History of Koguryō], *Kwangsa* 廣史 [Broad History], and *Yōksa* 釋史 [i.e., *Tonghae yōksa* 東海釋史 (*History of Korea*)].¹⁷⁰

Sin Ch'aeho's heroic biographies also employ many images to visualize the national heroes. *The Biography of Ŭlji mundōk*, indeed, is replete with imaginary visualizations of the hero, at whose crux stands the envisioned "original picture of the true hero." Sin especially highlights the permeable figure of this multivalent general who, as he puts it, can "become a dragon and transform into a tiger."¹⁷¹ He also emphasizes that through intense visualization of the hero, the scarcity of historical records about him may be overcome; hence he exclaims, "Ah! The single body of Ŭlji mundōk manifests thousands and hundreds of millions of Ŭlji mundōk! ... History readers, stop blaming the incompleteness of the history of Ŭlji mundōk!"¹⁷² The book's translation into the Korean script even includes in the front matter the hero's visual portrait. Sin Ch'aeho also makes it explicit in his biography of Ch'oe Yōng (*Tongguk kōkōl Ch'oe Tot'ong*) that the hero must be imagined visually as well as acoustically through his biographical work:

It has already been more than five hundred years since Ch'oe Tot'ong [i.e., Ch'oe Yōng] died, but I see his visage appear everywhere and hear his coughing and spitting. Not only in my eyes, he should always appear in the eyes of our twenty million people; not only in my ears, he should prevalently be heard by the ears of our twenty million people. For hundreds of years, the people of my nation have only seen the visage of mean bastards and not Ch'oe Tot'ong's; they have only heard the voices of mean folks and not Ch'oe Tot'ong's. Therefore this great nation has idly become a mean nation.¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰ Sin Ch'aeho, *CJ*, VII/513-4.

¹⁷¹ Sin Ch'aeho, *CJ*, IV/25.

¹⁷² Sin Ch'aeho, *CJ*, IV/70-1.

¹⁷³ Sin Ch'aeho, *CJ*, IV-286.

Sin even represents the scene, which is likely fictional, of watching a portrait of Ch'oe Yŏng at a shrine “shining blue” (*tanch'ōng hwanyōn han* 丹青煥然한) built next to a cave: “When I reverently bowed to the portrait of the dead, its glowing eyes seemed still staring at Liaodong. I lamented with sigh and said, ‘What a pity! Why are you here? Why are you here?’”¹⁷⁴ The biography is meant to propagate that visualized image toward the whole nation. Entirely written as a dream narrative, “Dream Heaven” then pursues to the fullest extent the visual and acoustic imagination integral to Sin’s fictional historiography.

The fictionality of the dream produces an ideal space where the protagonist Hannom comes to converse with the hero Ŭlji mundŏk, whom his imagination has created. In the beginning of the story, Ŭlji mundŏk sings a song to a huge hibiscus on whose petal Hannom has witnessed the battle between Koguryŏ and the Sui. The song laments the smallness of the flower, which grows with the blood shed in battles against the country’s enemy, and in reply, the flower sings a song demanding more tears and blood. Having “great feelings” on hearing the exchanged songs, Hannom peeks at Ŭlji’s face with tearful eyes: “Hannom carefully examined the face, and thought the person looked like an elder whom he had met before. After hesitating for a while, he said, ‘Ah! Now I remember. This expression of the eyes, these muscles of the forehead, this light beard, and these clothes are identical to the statue carved on the stone monument outside the south gate of the city of Anju in P’yŏng’an prefecture! This is Ŭlji mundŏk, whom

¹⁷⁴ Sin Ch’aeho, *CJ*, IV/287.

I've wished to see even in a dream!"¹⁷⁵ The physical traces of the figure conjure up Hannom's memory, bringing his imagination to reality. In the voice of the author, Hannom furthermore confesses his reverence for the Koguryŏ general and identifies himself with the author of the hero's biography: *The Biography of Ŭlji mundŏk*.¹⁷⁶ If Sin's biography attempted a visualization of the historical hero, "Dream Heaven," within its fictional space, stages an unlikely encounter with the very figure he had visualized. Upon the meeting, Hannom finds it "bizarre" (*yisang t'a* 異常타) because a person from "two thousand years ago" seems to be his "friend or family."¹⁷⁷ At this uncanny moment, Sin Ch'aeho-turned-Hannom encounters the very creature of his own anachronistic imagination.

Responding to Hannom, who wonders with which pronoun he should address this towering man from two thousand years ago, Ŭlji mundŏk reveals what appears to be the ultimate knowledge of history. Beyond the written records that are accessible to Hannom, the hero's language sounds as though he has witnessed the historical truth itself. Ŭlji attributes to Tangun the origin of the "religious militant spirit," which is said to be the essence of Korean national heroism, and explains how it flourished during the period of the Three Kingdoms. Ŭlji in so doing discusses some vocabularies that appear in *Samguk sagi*, the history Sin Ch'aeho drew on and reread to write his *Biography of Ŭlji mundŏk*:

In Silla, they loved young soldiers and named them 'toryŏng 도령'; 'sŏnrang 山郎' which appears in *Samguk sagi* is a translation of its meaning. In Paekche, they loved mature soldiers and named them 'sudu 수두'; 'sodo 蘇塗' which appears in

¹⁷⁵ Sin Ch'aeho, *CJ*, VII/517-8.

¹⁷⁶ Sin Ch'aeho, *CJ*, VII/519-20.

¹⁷⁷ Sin Ch'aeho, *CJ*, VII/518.

Samguk sagi is a translation of its sound. In Koguryŏ, they loved soldiers who were also gentlemen and named them ‘*sŏnbae* 선배’; ‘*sŏnin* 先人’ which appears in *Samguk sagi* is a translation of its sound and meaning. Since I’m from Koguryŏ, you may call me ‘*sŏnbae*.’¹⁷⁸

What is at stake in this statement is not so much historical factuality as the nature of the knowledge that the Koguryŏ general appears to possess. Ŭlji mundŏk explains the words from *Samguk sagi*, which is entirely written in classical Chinese, by perceiving those words as translations of the sounds and/or meanings of certain native words here indicated by the Korean script. Rather than reading the Chinese-character words in their literal meanings, Ŭlji mundŏk takes them as mere signifiers that designate some original signifieds that are native Korean words. Under such an allegorical gaze, the historical resource becomes a sea of codes that await deciphering to reveal the “true” history that they “translate.”¹⁷⁹ If, by means of the de-constructive rereading of the existing history, *The Biography of Ŭlji mundŏk* attempts to visualize through a literary imagination the “facts” behind the “contaminated” historiographies, the imagined Ŭlji mundŏk here seems to know exactly how to do so — how to decipher the “original” meaning of the extant, distorted sources. While for the modern historian, such an attempt at backward translation must remain imaginary due to the paucity of historical records, Ŭlji mundŏk himself, within the dream, has that exact impossible knowledge. Ŭlji mundŏk knows the ur-history of the Korean nation which has been lost forever, and, as such, is the utmost object of the modern historian’s desire.

¹⁷⁸ Sin Ch’aeho, *CJ*, VII/518.

¹⁷⁹ Sin Ch’aeho in fact employs this critical reading method in the beginning of *Chosŏn sanggosa* (Ancient History of Korea).

Hannom is a typical melancholic; he presents himself as always being in the state of mourning.

Hannom ... published a booklet called *Ŭlji mundŏk, the Greatest Man in Four Thousand Years*. When he first came to this world, Hannom already had a lump of emotion [*chŏng* 情] and regret [*han* 恨]. When he goes out, there is nowhere to go; when he comes back, there is nowhere to sleep. When he cries, there is nobody he can trust; when he strolls around, there are no friends he can love. He just comes and goes as a man [*hannom* 韓侖]. They say that when a person undergoes hardships, he thinks about what is essential. This may hold in Hannom's case: he really does not have anything to rely on to the point that the only thing he thinks about is his ancestors [*chosang* 追喪].¹⁸⁰

As though he could not work through his “lump of emotion and regret” in writing *The Biography of Ŭlji mundŏk*, Hannom now slips into melancholy. In a never-ending search for his lost object, he makes an image: “Hannom by nature has a lot of dreams, but he has even more dreams recently. During a long night, he has a dream as long as the night itself; the night and the dream begin and end together. But that's not all: even in broad daylight when he sits idly with both eyes wide open, he often finds himself in a dreamlike state.”¹⁸¹ A text “written by the dream itself,” the fantasy “Dream Heaven” presents itself as a trace of Hannom's dreamy image-making. The figure of Ŭlji mundŏk is a “supplement,” as Derrida would call it, of the always already lost object of Hannom's desire: real history.

So Hannom is naturally compelled to ask the hero questions about Korean history, with the hope that the hero can finally recover his lost object. Ŭlji mundŏk's intelligence, indeed, is expected to provide an ultimate perspective on history, capable of visualizing

¹⁸⁰ Sin Ch'aeho, *CJ*, VII/520.

¹⁸¹ Sin Ch'aeho, *CJ*, VII/513.

such frivolous and even fetishistic details as “how long Dongmyōng sōngjo’s ears were” and “how large Chinhūng daech’e’s eyes were.”¹⁸² However, for some “bizarre” reasons, Hannom hesitates to raise his questions:

With his ordinary brain, [Hannom] had been going back and forth within the lengthy time of five thousand years, and had desired to meet once, even in a dream, a great person among our ancestors. With such an idea in mind, he ended up meeting the towering Ŭlji mundōk; there were many things that he wanted to ask and talk about. But how bizarre! Since listening to Ŭlji’s words on the afterlife, his brain had become dizzy and his heart pounded; there was no room for him to ask anything. Suspicion and fear seemed to gather like the clouds in the sky of May: a strange working of mind and body.¹⁸³

What makes Hannom think twice is Ŭlji mundōk’s remark on the reenactment of the Koguryō-Sui battle. To Hannom who wonders why the historical battle needs to be repeated in the afterlife, Ŭlji indicates that the afterlife is merely a projection (*sayōng* 射影) of the historical world and that there is no redemption there: Koguryō remains the winner and the Sui the loser forever. The idea that wrongdoing can somehow be pardoned after death is the source of a nation’s weakness: the powerful goes to heaven and the rest to hell. Ŭlji’s claim that the afterlife is governed by the same principle as the human world, the survival of the fittest, makes Hannom doubt whether there is such a person who would have an ultimate knowledge of history after all. At the end of the day, if Ŭlji mundōk cannot escape this archi-law of history, even in his afterlife, he is a historical existence just like Hannom himself. At the unlikely meeting with the very object of his desire, Hannom has to encounter its materiality — or, mortality.

¹⁸² Sin Ch’aeho, *CJ*, VII/520. Dongmyōng sōngjo 東明聖祖 is the founder of Koguryō (r. 37-19 BCE); Chinhūng daeche 真興大帝 is the twenty-fourth King of Silla (r. 540-576).

¹⁸³ Sin Ch’aeho, *CJ*, VII/520.

Ŭlji mundŏk, indeed, is far from being an immaculate persona in the story; he namely carries traits of the regret that he had in his life. With the general who now appears as a historical subject, Hannom starts to engage in a conversation. After a few exchanges of observations, their talk reaches a crucial point where Hannom raises the question of why Koguryŏ, instead of seeking to conquer the Chinese Empire, negotiated peace with it after the victorious battle. At that moment, Ŭlji expresses his immediate response in a lyrical song:

太白山아 네 얼굴이 넘어도 희다
구름이 모여야 비가 되고 바람이 불어야 꽃이 피나리라
나의 갈 길 짝 갈우막여선 太白山아 한 거름만 물너다고

Mount T'aebaek, your face is so white.
Rain does not fall until the clouds gather; flowers do not bloom until the wind blows.
Firmly blocking the way I'm going, Mount T'aebaek, can you give just one step back to me?

Allegorized in this poetic landscape is the hero's deep-seated regret; the second line suggests that the time was not ripe. The unfulfilled ambition of conquering the Chinese Empire is addressed to Mount T'aebaek, the legendary birthplace of Tangun, which remains irresponsive to the impossible request to give him another chance. After reciting this verse, Ŭlji discusses political situations that hindered such an attempt, only to be left with lingering resentment (*pungae* 憤慨) that makes him cry and hit the earth with the blade. He then reveals that as his policy recommendations fell on the state ruler's deaf ears, he determined to assassinate Emperor Yang of Sui by himself; he claims the assassination is recorded in *Samguk yusa*, although such a record does not exist in the actual text of this thirteenth-century historiography. Hannom then wonders how a great

man like Ŭlji could become an assassin even though it might be beneficial to the country. As he tries to instruct Hannom, Ŭlji however is suddenly visited by the spirit of the obscure Paekche general Sabŏpmyŏng 沙法名 (f. late 5th C) who invites him to gamble that evening — This series of events transforms the figure of Ŭlji mundŏk from being the mirror of history into an individual subject of historical experience. As the conversation goes, his existence turns out to be not so much determined by the invincibility of the “greatest hero” and omniscient knowledge of *the* history, as it is marked by emotions (*chŏng* 情) — regret, resentment, indignation — toward the historical events he actually went through, as well as by the lyrical voice that expresses such emotions.

Telling Sabŏpmyŏng that he is not available for gambling that particular evening, Ŭlji mundŏk further continues conversation with Hannom, in whose mind “every question about history gushes out all at once.”¹⁸⁴ Hannom then finally raises a number of questions that are concerned with important events in Korean antiquity as well as the traditional historiographies. The hero, however, refuses to respond to the questions; instead, he takes out a small golden box marked “Korea’s 4240 Years [*chindan sach’ŏn yibaek sasip nyŏn* 震檀四千二百四十年],” in which there are a set of hundreds of mirrors, on each of whose backs the names of a dynasty and a place are written. Ŭlji then picks up a mirror marked “Koyrŏ, Songgyŏng 高麗松京” and has Hannom look into it. The mirror shows a landscape of Koryŏ’s capital Kaesŏng 開城, which was called “Songgyŏng” during the Chosŏn, but he cannot see what Ŭlji mundŏk expects him to see, namely the loyal palace Manwŏldaek 滿月臺 and the people. Ŭlji wonders how Hannom

¹⁸⁴ Sin Ch’aeho, *CJ*, VII/527.

could compile a history without being able to see the loyal palace of Koryŏ, but Hannom reminds Ŭlji that the remains of Manwŏdae were wiped out due to the lack of preservation during the Chosŏn dynasty. Hannom then looks at other mirrors, too:

Hannom then tried to look at all of those several mirrors. He took out the mirror of Koguryŏ's capital P'yŏngyang, and he heard in it the banging sound of washing clothes; in the mirror of Paekch'e's capital Puyŏ, he saw a Western-style house in a pointed shape; and in the mirror of Palhae's capital Yŏnggot'ap, he only saw the people of the Qing dynasty passing by. Hannom could not bear his feeling, and came forward, saying, 'Because our people are so incapable of preservation, I would like to ask you questions about the history of Silla and its capital.'¹⁸⁵

What Hannom sees in the mirrors turn out to be no more than the ordinary landscapes of those places in present Korea, instead of their historical scenes. When Ŭlji finally visualizes the entire history of the nation with the magical mirrors, and tries to provide Hannom with the vision that he has desperately desired for, a paradox occurs: Hannom sees the real within the dream. If the dream of "Dream Heaven" is the product of Sin Ch'aeho / Hannom's desire for the lost history, Ŭlji mudŏk's mirrors should literally be the ideal dream he can possibly have — i.e., the perfect history he can envision. But in this dream within the dream, the real comes back. In this nightmare, the very deserted reality he wanted to leave returns to Hannom: the reality in which the ancient territories to the north have long been in the hands of the Chinese ("the people of the Qing dynasty passing by") and the country has already been under heavy influence of powerful Western civilization ("a Western-style house in a pointed shape"), while the everyday life routinely continues ("the banging sound of washing clothes").

¹⁸⁵ Sin Ch'aeho, *CJ*, VII/530.

Turning away from the nightmare, Hannom wants to ask Ŭlji mundök more questions. (“Because our people are so incapable of preservation, I would like to ask questions about the history of Silla and its capital.”) Upon realizing Hannom’s blindness to the images that the mirrors are supposed to show, Ŭlji sheds tears and tells him the truth:

I cannot do that. What different books of history do you think the world of gods has? The books we read in the world of gods are all brought from the world of humans. So why do you want to come to the world of gods and try to find books that are lost in the world of humans? You’d better go back and ask people for them.¹⁸⁶

Just as Sin Ch’aeho only had insufficient sources in writing the biography of Ŭlji mundök, Hannom cannot find more materials than he can get in actuality, even in the “world of gods.” The history projected by Ŭlji’s intelligence in “Dream Heaven,” indeed, is no less imaginary than Sin’s version of history in his heroic biography. Without the real historical record, the dream has to remain a dream, just as the traces of imagination cannot be erased from Sin’s historiography. Ŭlji then tells the episode that the history of the Koguryö-Sui War has been left to misinterpretation in favor of the Chinese due to the lack of extant native records, which he tried to look for throughout the nation’s eight prefectures to no avail. “As [Ŭlji’s] story reaches this point,” says the narrator, “the world of gods which Hannom wanted to know fled away, and he had to come back to where the old history had vanished for several hundred years.” “With sorrow,”¹⁸⁷ Hannom then responds by summarizing how the sinocentric ideology (*sadae chuïi*) has become

¹⁸⁶ Sin Ch’aeho, *CJ*, VII/530.

¹⁸⁷ Sin Ch’aeho, *CJ*, VII/531.

predominant since mid-Koryŏ. But Ŭlji's response to that is, to the disappointment of Hannom, the repeated lesson that one needs to cultivate patriotism through emotion evoked by heroic national history, which, as we have seen, Sin Ch'aeho had earnestly advocated in the 1900s. Uneasy and impatient, Hannom wants to interrupt Ŭlji's "talk about the humans" and hear more about "the world of gods."

Thus "as soon as [Ŭlji] finishes speaking," Hannom asks about what happened after Ŭlji's search for the historical materials throughout the country. Ŭlji then tells him that he went to Holy Ancestor Tangun (*Tangun sinjo* 檀君神祖) himself and conducted thorough research without any results, but on the way back, he met with Mr. Holy Historian of Tangun (*Tangun sagwansin sŭsŭng nim* 檀君史官神스승님), who showed him a book on whose cover read "Diagram of the Nine Transition Phases of Korea" (*Chindan ku pyŏnguk to* 震檀九變局圖). Ŭlji instructs Hannom that since the history of Korea from its beginning is trapped in a predetermined process with nine phases of change, human agency is of little use. Hannom protests that such an idea is no different from buying into fatalism determined by heaven (*ch'ŏnjŏng han unsu* 天定한運數), which exactly is a psychological source of the nation's weakness. But as Ŭlji explains macrocosmic patterns of the rise and fall of Korean history, Hannom finds them beyond superstition and starts to be "interested" in them. Responding to his question, Ŭlji begins to reveal what kind of "phase" the nation is in right now, but in the middle of that discourse, suddenly the sky to the east splits, into which Ŭlji flies on a rainbow, disappearing from the scene — This eerie ending of the first half of the story leaves Hannom with an obscure sense of the existence of a meta-historical truth, and of its ultimate inaccessibility. Ŭlji will never come back to tell him more about history. The

ambivalent state brings Hannom back to where he originally was, dashing his hope to complete the historical picture with Ŭlji's brush.

“Where should I go?”¹⁸⁸ Hannom thus returns to his existential question, which he hoped better historical knowledge would resolve. He could not learn the answer even from the great Ŭlji mundök, who has already left forever. Hannom is then told by the flower petal on which he was sitting in the beginning of the story to fight the battle himself. The fighting allegorizes the historical struggles between Korea and its neighboring states. Hannom is defeated and, now dead, visits hell and heaven. In heaven, he is ordered to clean up the sky with a bloom, which has accumulated dust since around 700 years ago when Korea adopted the *sadae chuïi* policy. The sense of responsibility for losing the battle drives him to accomplish the colossal work, but since the pollution is so severe, he has to give it up. At that point, Hannom hears god's words inviting him to visit “*toryönggun* 도령군,” which Hannom relates to the tradition of “military spirit” in Korea originating from the Hwarang 花郎, the military cult organization in Silla.

Delighted with the thought that he might be able to meet generations of the national heroes, whose historical records are mostly lost now, Hannom is led to their place by the god; but on its stone gate, the gold letters read “The *Toryönggun* Gambling Place.” As the condition for entry and to determine his rank as a guest, they ask how many tears he has shed in “righteous indignation” (*üibun* 의분) for the country. Among his friends, who come and gather around the gate at the end of the story, he suspects that he should have shed the least amount of tears, since he is “by nature heartless [*mujöng* 無情].” This anticlimactic ending forges an exclusive space of compassion and affective

¹⁸⁸ Sin Ch'aeho, *CJ*, VII/537.

communication, which is part and parcel of Sin Ch'aeho's nationalist historiography. Failing to see the historical truth and exhausting language, Hannom can only be bound with other national heroes with tears. But here, that affective space remains purely figurative, for there is desperately no actualization of that community, which is secluded by the stone gate and, ultimately, is merely for meaningless gambling. If the politics of Sin's literary project is to effect real changes, this is precisely the scene of the profound discrepancy between the imagined and the real, the aesthetic and the political.

Conclusion: Toward Anarchism

The split from the Shanghai Provisional Government radicalized Sin Ch'aeho, and in the 1920s, he was increasingly drawn to anarchism and radical political actions against Japanese colonialism. Staunchly refusing more moderate political lines taken by his peers, domestic and abroad, Sin subscribed to revolution (*hyŏngmyŏng* 혁명) and promoting terrorism (*t'ero* 테로) against the imperialists and their collaborators. Rather than revisiting or evaluating the late Sin Ch'aeho's political profile, I would like to consider, to conclude this chapter, his late radicalization as a desperate expression of what his earlier literary and historical work had prescribed, with its anachronistic imagination, for the future of the Korean nation.

In upholding the use of “violence” — “assassination, destruction, rioting” — as the “only” means to resist and overcome imperialism, Sin's 1923 manifesto “Chosŏn hyŏngmyŏng sŏnŏn 조선혁명선언” (The Manifesto of Korean Revolution) rejects

moderate political options — internal reform, culturalism, diplomacy, and preparation — on the grounds that each of them requires to some extent collaboration with the colonizer or other international powers.¹⁸⁹ The ultimate alternative is revolution led by the people, which is distinguished from those rejected possibilities in that it includes the phase of the absolute eradication of the existing power structure by violence. Revolution is then to be followed by the construction of the “free people,” “economy,” “society,” and “culture” that are “properly Korean.” (*koyu chŏk chosŏn* 固有的朝鮮)¹⁹⁰

Shortly before he was arrested by the Japanese police in 1928, Sin Ch’aeho wrote an allegorical tale entitled “Yong kwa yong ūi daegyŏkchŏn 龍과 龍의 大激戰” (The Grand Battle between the Dragons, 1928). In this piece, Sin pushed the thematic of the hero, which he had explored in his creative biographies, particularly with the figure of Ŭlji mundŏk, to an extreme. The hero in this short story is embodied in the figure of “dragon” (*dŭraegon* 드래곤). It is a meta-figure that represents the ultimate capacity of the desired hero to bring about the radical future, whatever it is and however it is to be realized.

Dragon is said to be one of the twin “monsters” who were born in the fifth year after god had been deified as the object of superstitious worship among ancient people. His other twin is Miri 미리 (literally meaning “dragon” in Korean) and they are both “translations of ‘yong 龍’ in the Chinese script.” Miri is a loyal subject of god in charge of controlling the East, and is able to produce from his mouth “servants of the ruling class,” such as emperors, generalissimos, the rich, powerful landlords, and police to

¹⁸⁹ Sin Ch’aeho, *CJ*, VIII/901.

¹⁹⁰ Sin Ch’aeho, *CJ*, VIII/900.

exploit the people and bring wealth to heaven.¹⁹¹ Dragon, in contrast, is “the dragon of the West,” who represents dissidents and rebels in tradition and is now inspired by nihilism and participates in violent revolutionary activities. The revolution in this tale starts when the people, led by Dragon, kills “Jesus,” god’s only son. This makes scandal and the newspaper features the story, in which the image of Dragon is represented by a page-full of “0s” and “the history of Dragon” is explained as follows:

Before heaven is completely destroyed, the real figure of Dragon is only portrayed with ‘0s.’ But the ‘0’ of Dragon is different from the mathematical ‘0.’ The mathematical ‘0’ is a placeholder without substance; but Dragon’s ‘0’ can become any number like one, two, three, four, a thousand, or ten million. The mathematical ‘0’ is a placeholder without substance; but Dragon’s ‘0’ can be a gun, blade, fire, thunderbolt, or all forms of ‘terrorism.’ Today Dragon is represented with ‘0s,’ but tomorrow his enemy will vanish into a ‘0.’ Empire, heaven, and other ruling powers will become ‘0s.’ When all the ruling powers become ‘0s,’ then the true construction of Dragon will appear.¹⁹²

Represented by the number 0 permeable into any numbers, Dragon is the pure figure of a total revolution of the society, which Sin Ch’aeho considers is dreadfully exploited by the ruling class (*chibae kyegŭp* 支配階級); but it also allegorizes the lack of the language that may represent it. In the language of the newspaper, Dragon can only appear as “0s,” just as the imagined Ŭlji mundŏk in Sin’s biography can “[manifest] thousands and hundreds of millions of Ŭlji mundŏk,” failing to take a concrete shape. A negative theological figure, Dragon indicates the author’s idealistic desire for overturning the status quo and bringing about the future, but it also suggests that the radical future has to remain alien to the creative language in the hands of the author. This *aporia*, which Sin

¹⁹¹ Sin Ch’aeho, *Sin Ch’aeho munhak yugo sŏnjip*, ed. by Kim Pyŏngmin, p.120.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, p.127.

adopted from Liang Qichao when he translated and adapted the latter's project of fictional biography and politics of imagination, is what links Sin's creation to his political radicalization.

But unlike his 1923 political manifesto, the short story "Yong kwa yong ūi daegyŏkchŏn" has a brief yet concrete and curious portrayal of the post-revolutionary world. Inspired by the scandal of the murder of "Jesus," people ruin everything that has served the ruling class (religion, politics, government, education, and business) and "denied all the social institutions of the past and declared that everything on earth was the people's public property." Completing the revolutionary task, they shut down communication with heaven and establish the independent "*chiguk* 地國," or "the state of the earth."¹⁹³ As one can perceive from the fact that Dragon, as opposed to Miri, is associated with the Western tradition, Sin's anarchism takes its inspiration from the West, including Russian anarchist thought and socialism. But the picture he paints of the world after the revolution completely defies what would be expected from these Western ideologies. After the revolution, the "angel" surveys the earth; he first visits Western cities (London, Paris, Rome, Berlin, and New York) and confirms that those who belonged to the ruling class have all vanished, and then he goes to Beijing. The scene constitutes the story's sole description of the post-revolutionary society:

[The angel] came to Beijing in China and passed by the Alter of Heaven [*ch'ŏndan* 天壇] in the coppice about ten miles out of the Zhengyang gate, and saw spectators gathering to witness the great emperor of the great Qing wearing the Mianliu crown and the Gunlong robe celebrating the Festival of Heaven. The angel said, 'Aha! China is still such a noble country! It has reinstalled the emperor and revived the ritual of worshipping heaven.' He then looked around for god, but

¹⁹³ Ibid., p.128.

a person conspicuously opened the hand and said, ‘Give up your dream, man! This is the people’s theater for the holidays. God? What the heck are you talking about?’ And he slapped the angel’s cheek. The angel wanted to act as the loyal subject of god, but the swelling of his cheek would not subside.¹⁹⁴

What the people of the post-revolutionary world perform, at first sight, appears indistinguishable from traditional ritual performed by the Qing emperor; the place for the ritual (“the Alter of Heaven [*ch’ōndan* 天壇]”) and the costumes (“the Mianliu crown” [*myōllyugwan* 冕旒冠]; “the Gunlong robe” [*kollyongp’o* 袞龍袍]) are actual attributes of the Qing emperor’s ritual. But the people have deconstructed that traditional ritual into a secular performance called “the people’s theater for the holidays [*minjung kyōngjōl ūi yōn’guk* 民眾慶節斗演劇]” by eliminating the object of worship, the Emperor. That Sin illustrates the new society in terms of a secularized revival, without “god,” of an imperial Chinese culture, to be sure, seems incompatible with what anarchism or socialism would promise for society to come, still less with what any usual imagining of the nation based on national particularity would articulate as “properly Korean.” Needless to say, the Qing had already ceased to exist when Sin wrote this piece. However, the description in fact corresponds to how Sin Ch’aeho imaginatively prescribed the nation’s future in his fictional biographies. Whereas the historian articulated national subjectivity in terms of exemplarity in the existing universal system of value, the system sedimented through the tradition of regional cultural communication, the anarchist Sin conjures up the Chinese imperial tradition, which had been at the heart of that trans-regional value system, in order to project nationhood in a radical future. Though the source of value (“god”) disappears, this pivotal ritual preserves an old form, which, anachronistically, allows Sin

¹⁹⁴ Sin Ch’aeho, *Sin Ch’aeho munhak yugo sōnjip*, p.134; Sin Ch’aeho, *CJ*, VII/616.

to imagine the entirely new. At its last and most radical moment, Sin's discourse once again summons the nation's history, which is trans-regional.

Sin Ch'aeho, just like Liang Qichao and Shiba Shirō, imagined modern national subjectivity by appropriating the transnational cultural tradition of East Asia. Faced with modern sociopolitical exigencies, they reinterpreted the content of the aesthetic and moral values that they derived from this tradition, just as they transformed the meaning of modern concepts, such as "nationhood," in this process; but in their discourses, that tradition survived as form, as its trans-regional "universality" constituted the essential ideology allowing them to conceive of national subjectivity in a global context in terms of exemplarity, rather than national particularity. In Chapters Three and Four, I will examine writers for whom literary modernity had to mean, first and foremost, the abandonment of this precise ideology.

Chapter Three

Transculturation in Transition

Modernism as Self-Criticism in Lu Xun, Yi Kwangsu, and Natsume Sōseki

(I)

Introduction

1. Transculturation as Self-Cannibalism in Lu Xun
 2. Theory and Practice of “Literature” in Early Yi Kwangsu
 3. From Heartless Cacophony to the Creation of a New Culture: A Close Reading of Yi Kwangsu’s *Mujōng*
- Conclusion

Introduction

Yi Kwangsu 이광수 (1892-1950), a founding father of modern Korean literature, asserted in his seminal criticism “Munhak iran ha o? 문학이란 하오?” (What is Literature?): “In sum, Korean literature only has a future; it does not have a past.”¹⁹⁵ To the extent that Korean literature *does* have long and rich tradition, this statement at first sounds absurd. To understand the implication of Yi’s hyperbolic statement, one needs to put it back into the context of the inception of modern literature in Korea. In this same essay, published in 1916, Yi makes it clear that by the term “*munhak* 문학,” he no longer means “what people have [thus far] commonly understood”; instead, he argues that it now designates “translation of the words ‘*Literature*’ or ‘*literature*,’ which are used in the West,” where Yi employs the original terms in Latin alphabets (“*Literature*”;

¹⁹⁵ Yi Kwangsu, *Yi Kwangsu chōnjip*, vol.1, p.555.

“*literature*”). Thus, for Yi, discourse and the practice of “literature” in modern Korea must, by definition, involve a “translation” of the West.

As I will discuss later in this chapter, Yi Kwangsu, by way of transculturating the Western concept of “literature” into Korea, first and foremost intended to criticize a particular aspect of the nation’s premodern literature: the excessive influence of China. For Yi, translation of the West and the transformation of the meaning of “*munhak*” in modernity were meant to be the exact flip side of exorcising the deplorable memories of influence from Chinese civilization that had been so central in the shaping of literary culture in Korea for centuries. Yi’s criticism, therefore, implies a cultural-political statement: he desired to free “literature” in Korea from the tradition of East Asian letters created through centuries-long regional communication mediated by classical Chinese and its cultural capital, and freshly register it into a new, modern civilization — one whose cultural center resides in the West.

The writers we discussed in Part I — Liang Qichao, Shiba Shirō, and Sin Ch’aeho — explored modern literature by capitalizing upon this rich *transnational* cultural tradition, though with a clear *national* consciousness; and they tried to make critical interventions in their countries’ embattled political situations by anachronistically conjuring up and reinterpreting the moral-political values that East Asian letters had traditionally carried. From these writers, Yi Kwangsu’s literature categorically differs. “Literature” for Yi was to be so new and idiosyncratic that he denied Korean literature the past, and only granted it the future. As such, the early Yi Kwangsu’s literary endeavor epitomizes the theory and practice of “modern literature” (Chn. *xiandai wenxue* 現代文學; Jpn. *kindai bungaku* 近代文学; Kor. *kūndae munhak* 근대문학) in East Asia. In Yi,

as well as in the Chinese and Japanese writers whom I examine in Part II, Lu Xun 魯迅 (1881-1936) and Natsume Sōseki 夏目漱石 (1867-1916), “literature” became an autonomous *aesthetic* endeavor independent from the domains of knowledge, morality, and politics, on one hand, and was also re-conceptualized as a *national* undertaking appropriated by the respective nations, on the other. In what follows, I call their literature “modernist,” so as to foreground the radical departure of their aesthetics from writers of the previous generations.

Primarily thanks to the nationalization of literature, and their shared status as founding figures of modern literature in their respective nations, Lu Xun, Yi Kwangsu, and Natsume Sōseki have chiefly been studied within the classic framework, where an independent East Asian nation introduces modern discourse from the West. On the other hand, several scholars have begun to examine these writers in a trans-East Asian comparative framework; their focus has primarily been put on how Japanese authors, including Sōseki, was read and, in some cases, intertextualized in the works of Chinese and Korean writers, regarding modern Japan either as an occasion to introduce Western aesthetics, or as literary authority in its own right.¹⁹⁶ Absent in both approaches, however, is a more comprehensive perspective for studying these, as well as other modern East Asian writers comparatively — a perspective that can not only account for their new involvement in the universal practice of “modern literature” originating in the West, but also for its literary historical contexts, or, their inherited literary pasts, which were

¹⁹⁶ Comparative studies of Lu Xun, Yi Kwangsu, and Natsume Sōseki include: No Chongsang, *Tong Asia minjokchuui wa kundae sosol: Yi Kwangsu, Nassume Sosek'i, Rushwin sosol pigyo yon'gu*; Li Guodong, *Ro Jin to Natsume Sōseki: Higeisei to bunka dentō*; Pan Shisheng, *Ro Jin, Meiji Nihon, Sōseki: eikyō to kōzō eno sōgōteki hikaku kenkyū*; Ran Denbu, *Sōseki to Ro Jin ni okeru dentō to kindai*.

historically deeply interrelated through the cultural capital of classical Chinese writing, relevant transnationally throughout the region.

Just as Yi Kwangsu's hyperbole beautifully suggests, "modern literature" in East Asia is always already, as it were, in an existential crisis: it was so new and eccentric that it needed *legitimization* as a cultural practice within particular social-historical contexts. The concept of "translingual practice," which Lydia Liu has coined in her seminal study of the discursive genesis of "the Chinese modern," is meant precisely to explore this dynamics of cultural legitimization in the Chinese case. "The true objective of my theoretical interest is the *legitimization of the 'modern' and the 'West'* in Chinese literary discourse as well as the *ambivalence of Chinese agency* in these mediated processes of legitimization."¹⁹⁷ Drawing upon the "East-West binary," Liu however explores this crucial discursive practice still within the same classic configuration in which "China" engages with "the West," where "the West," as Liu claims, "often represent[s]" "the rest of the world."¹⁹⁸ Instead, to put it in general terms, my theoretical intervention is to argue that in the discursive construction of cultural modernity in Asia, a national agency not only transculturates the West, but also other Asian traditions and modernities. The representation of "the rest of the world" in reference to which a national modern is produced, I argue, consists of other Asian societies as well as of "the West." I claim that only by examining not simply the "East-West binary," but also multipolar trans-Asian relationship, or, the structure of what I call "rhizomatic transculturation" as locations for

¹⁹⁷ Lydia Liu, *Translingual Practice*, p.xviii.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.xviii.

translingual practice can one truly articulate the overdetermined identities of Asian literary modernities.

In Chapters Three and Four, my examination is particularly concerned with trans-East Asian relationship. My reading of Lu Xun, Yi Kwangsu, and Natsume Sōseki especially seeks to illuminate how in their theories and practices of “modern literature” they particularly engaged with, apart from Western discourse, the tradition of classical Chinese, which still exerted authority, if negatively. In their creation of modern literature, they transculturated literary modernity through reinterpreting that transnational literary culture as well as national tradition, yet in a radically different way than the authors examined in Part I: self-criticism. Translingual practice, as Lydia Liu has shown, constitutes a privileged moment for examining modernity in East Asia beyond the so-called adaptation of certain ideas and institutions of Western civilization. And if the “ambivalence” of the agencies for that transcultural practice, at least in part, derives from the negotiated line between “the traditional” and “the modern,”¹⁹⁹ then these writers, in legitimizing modern national literature, self-critically positioned themselves against “the traditional” — the traditional that were not simply national, but *trans-regional*.

In this chapter, I first discuss Lu Xun’s imagination of modern Chinese cultural subjectivity by examining his conception and practice of transculturation. First, I consider his early essay called “Moluo shili shuo 摩羅詩力說” (On the Power of Mara Poetry, 1908), with special focus on how he discusses Byron’s poetry in ways distinct from Liang Qichao’s allusion to the same poet in *Xin Zhongguo weilai ji* 新中國未來記 (Future of New China, 1902-3), which we examined in Chapter One. Next, I explore Lu

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., p.xix.

Xun's seminal essay on translation "'Yingyi' yu 'Wenxue de jiejixing' '硬譯'與'文學的階級性'" ("Hard Translation" and the "Class Nature of Literature," 1930) to further examine his self-critical agency in transculturating Western discourse. I will then move on to consider Yi Kwangsu's theory and practice of modern literature, by close reading his early criticism and what is by consensus the first full-length modern novel written in Korean: Yi's *Mujǒng* 무정 (Heartless, 1917).

1. Transculturation as Self-Cannibalism in Lu Xun

Transculturating Byronic Poetry

In 1908, Lu Xun published what many would later consider an essential piece of modern Chinese literary criticism, "Moluo shili shuo." Just two years earlier, in 1906, Lu Xun had dropped out of Sendai Medical School and moved to Tokyo, and began to live with his younger brother Zhou Zuoren 周作人 (1885-1967) and other peers. While frequenting gatherings organized around the revolutionary literatus Zhang Taiyan 章太炎 (1868-1936), who was exiled in Japan, Lu Xun began to devote himself in literature in the rapidly modernizing city. He undertook to inaugurate a literary journal called *Xinsheng* 新生 (Renaissance) in 1906; he also collaborated with Zhou Zuoren to publish an ambitious two-volume translation of short stories from Russia and Eastern Europe, entitled *Yuwai xiaoshuo ji* 域外小說集 (Collection of Foreign Fiction, 1909). The planned journal, however, failed to materialize and the translations sold poorly. Lu Xun meanwhile began contributing several essays to, among others, the journal *Henan* 河南,

the bulletin published by the Henan branch of the *Tongmenghui* 同盟會 (The United League), the Tokyo-based revolutionary organization led by Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925). A lengthy treatise “Moluo shili shuo,” which uses a rather convoluted classical style, influenced by that of his mentor Zhang Taiyan, was published in *Henan* in two installments.

Zhou Shuren 周樹人, better known as one of his numerous pennames, Lu Xun, was born into a scholar-official family in Shaoxing in 1881.²⁰⁰ In the changing social conditions, Lu Xun’s family quickly lost its fortune and he was temporarily raised by a maternal relative’s family. From the age of six, Lu Xun went to a private academy and received orthodox education based on the Confucian classics, but in 1898, at the age of eighteen, he decided to go to the Jiangnan Naval Academy in Nanjing to receive the “new education” (*xinxue* 新學). He studied English and German, and was exposed to the latest works of, among others, Liang Qichao, Yan Fu 嚴復 (1854-1921), and Lin Shu 林紓 (1852-1924). After spending four years in Nanjing, Lu Xun was sent on a government scholarship to Japan, where he first spent two years in Tokyo studying Japanese, and then moved to Sendai to study medicine. But after a short two years, Lu Xun quit medical school and moved back to Tokyo, where he started to undertake literary projects, and published several important essays, including “Moluo shili shuo.”

Upon his return to China in 1909, he began teaching physiology and chemistry in the Secondary Normal School in Zhejiang, and later took on several other teaching

²⁰⁰ My study of Lu Xun, in general, has been particularly benefitted from the following works: Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Voices from the Iron House*; Leo Ou-fan Lee (ed.), *Lu Xun and His Legacy*; Takeuchi Yoshimi, *Ro Jin nyūmon*; Maruo Tsuneki, *Ro Jin “jin” to “ki” no kattō*; Xudong Zhang, “Zhongguo xiandai zhuyi qiuyan de ‘ming’ ‘yan’ zhi bian: Chongdu ‘A Q zhengzhuan.’”

positions as well as administrative responsibilities in his hometown of Shaoxing. After the Republican Revolution (1911), Lu Xun was invited by Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培 (1868-1940), a prominent critic and the first Minister of Education of the new Republic, to work for the Ministry of Education in Nanjing, and subsequently followed the government to Beijing in 1912. Though Lu Xun first welcomed the fall of the Qing, he was quickly disappointed by the aftermath of the Revolution, which was plagued with reactionary warlordism and a weak revolutionary party. Depressed, Lu Xun confined himself for several years in a secluded collection and study of old prints and antique materials (metal and steel inscriptions). In 1918, as the manifesto of Literary Revolution was gaining widespread momentum, Lu Xun contributed the seminal short story “Kuangren riji 狂人日記” (Diary of a Madman) to the journal *Xin Qingnian* 新青年 (La Jeunesse). Though at first rather reluctant, Lu Xun, as a result of this publication, became a pivotal leader of the May Fourth and New Culture Movements in the first decades of the Republican Era. From 1918 to 1926, he published a number of short stories and a collection of prose poems, as well as numerous essays, critical works, and translations; he also edited literary journals, while lecturing on Chinese literary history at Beijing University as well as at other schools.

Lu Xun’s deep despair regarding the crippled political situation in Republican China was aggravated with the March Eighteenth Massacre in 1926, the brutal suppression, by the Beiyang Government, of an anti-warlord and anti-imperialist demonstration. As Lu Xun had been blacklisted, he fled south: first to Xiamen, then to Guangzhou, and finally, in 1927, to Shanghai, where he would stay until his death in 1936. The anti-Communist massacre in 1927 shocked Lu Xun, definitively distancing

him from the Nationalist Party. In 1930, he became committed to the establishment of the League of Leftist Writers (*Zuoyi zuojia lianmeng* 左翼作家聯盟). After his departure from Beijing, Lu Xun invested most of his creative spirit in the form of “miscellaneous writing” (*zawen* 雜文) written mostly in polemical contexts, while also publishing a number of translations and initiating a movement to promote woodblock printing as a popular art form.

The early Lu Xun’s “conversion” from medicine to literature a few years before he published “Moluo shili shuo” has often drawn critics’ attention, primarily thanks to the 1922 preface to the writer’s first collection of short stories, *Nahan* 吶喊 (Call to Arms, 1923), where he explains the motive for this transformation. Lu Xun’s dramatic narration of the “lantern slide” incident has been quoted numerous times: the young medical student from China joined his Japanese classmates in watching slides of scenes from the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5), which the instructor presented in the extra time of the microbiology class, and was shocked to see an image that showed his compatriots apathetically watching an alleged Chinese spy for Russia being decapitated by the Japanese military. “This slide,” Lu Xun says, in one of the most often quoted paragraphs of his work, “convinced me that medical science was not so important after all. . . . The most important thing, therefore, was to change their [Chinese people’s] spirit; and since at that time I felt that literature was the best means to this end, I decided to promote a literary movement.”²⁰¹ With implicit echoes of the Hegelian phenomenology of the spirit, scholars have pointed to this experience of negativity as marking the origin of a

²⁰¹ Lu Xun, *Lu Xun quanji*, vol.1, p.438-9.

subjectivity underpinning Chinese cultural modernity.²⁰² Less often explored, however, is the question of how this very subjectivity is articulated, not so much vis-à-vis a single lantern slide, as within the expanding and diverse sea of literary texts that Lu Xun was exposed to in cosmopolitan Tokyo, often through English, German, and Japanese translations.²⁰³

Like many of his other contemporary essays, “Moluo shili shuo,” indeed, is a product of extensive transculturation. As Kitaoka Masako has meticulously demonstrated, this essay is a patchwork of references to numerous sources — in Japanese, English, and German — on the biographies of modern European and Russian writers as well as literary history.²⁰⁴ Lu Xun chose to discuss “the Satanic School,” originally the pejorative characterization by Robert Southey (1774-1843) of Keats, Shelley, Hunt, and Byron; he translated this term as “Moluo shipai 摩羅詩派,” using a Chinese rendering of the Sanskrit word *mara*, the name of the demon that tempted Buddha in Buddhist mythology. He lays out the objective of the essay: “Among all the poets, I shall select all those who devoted themselves to resistance (*fankang* 反抗) and action, and thus were not welcomed in society. I shall thereby record their words, deeds, and thoughts, as well as their schools and influences, starting from their progenitor Byron all the way down to a Magyar (Hungarian) writer.”²⁰⁵ Lu Xun thus structures his essay around Byron, and discusses, in

²⁰² Among others, Rey Chow’s *Primitive Passions* reads this “lantern slide” incident as an origin of Chinese cultural modernity. See: Rey Chow, *Primitive Passions*, “Introduction.”

²⁰³ Masako Kitaoka, *Ro Jin Kyūbō no yume no yukue: Akumaha shijinron kara “Kyōjin nikki” made*. See also: Zhou Zuoren, *Zhitang huixianglu*, p.145-7.

²⁰⁴ See: Masako Kitaoka, *Ro Jin Kyūbō no yume no yukue: Akumaha shijinron kara “Kyōjin nikki” made*, p.33-88.

²⁰⁵ Lu Xun, *Lu Xun quanji*, vol.1, p.68.

constellation with the latter, figures such as Ernst Moritz Arndt (1769-1960), Shelley, Pushkin, Lermontov, as well as the Polish poets Adam Mickiewicz (1798-1855), Juliusz Słowacki (1809-49), and Zygmunt Krasiński (1812-59) and the Hungarian poet Sándor Petőfi (1823-49).

In order to characterize the image of Byron that Lu Xun reconstructs as an essential inspiration for Chinese literary modernity, I want to compare it with how the same English poet was featured in Liang Qichao's political fiction, *Xin Zhongguo weilai ji*, which we discussed in Chapter One. Liang Qichao's well-received *Xin Zhongguo weilai ji*, written in 1902, may well have been one of the sources that called the young Lu Xun's attention to Byron.

Lu Xun, in fact, opens his essay with the very motif that led Liang Qichao to quote Byron's "The Giaour" and "Don Juan" in the political novel: the demise of old civilization. In Liang's narrative, the fall of Greece to the hands of the Ottoman Empire, from whose shackles the poet calls for Greece's independence, is *analogically* paralleled to China's crippled national situation at the turn of the century. In the novel, the protagonists Huang Keqiang and Li Qubing are traveling the Liaodong peninsula and the surrounding regions when they happen to hear someone chanting lines from a poem by Byron. On hearing the disembodied voice, Huang Keqiang remarks, "Byron made this poem precisely in order to encourage the Greek people. But as we listen to it today, [I come to think that] it had been, to some extent, as though (*xiang* 像) made for the sake of China."²⁰⁶ The content of the poem, to be sure, is concerned with the particular historical circumstances of Greece, but the "pathetic" (*chentong* 沈痛) voice of the chanting carries

²⁰⁶ Liang Qichao, *Xin Zhongguo weilai ji*, in *Yinbingshi heji: zhuanji*, vol.89, p.44.

feelings and emotion that echo in the hearts of the Chinese protagonists, who worry about their nation's fate. Huang Keqiang wonders who is reciting this poem: "Who is this person? He doesn't recite other poems, but only makes this sound of a fallen country [*wangguo zhi yin* 亡國之音]. He must be someone with a human heart [*you xin ren* 有心人]." ²⁰⁷ Building upon the traditional poetics of *zhiyin* 知音, or, knowing each other's hearts through sounds, the narrative stages a drama of serendipitous encounter, where the person reciting the poem turns out to be another hero, named Chen Meng, who is also an enlightened, educated youth — "a handsome youth of the young China" ("*shaonian Zhongguo de meishaonian* 少年中國的美少年") — concerned about the country. Just as the traditional-style song lyrics (*ci* 詞) that the protagonists create to the stock tune of "He xinlang 賀新郎" earlier in the story functions as a medium for conveying their emotion to each other, so do the English poems by Byron, which reverberate as "the sound of a fallen country."

This poetic communication, however, is not an intuitive one. Rather, it depends on cultural knowledge: recognizing the emotional meaning of the poems requires literary cultivation. The mere disembodied voice, indeed, suffices for the protagonist to identify the chanted poem. "Is this not 'The Giaour' by Byron?" Li Qubing asks upon hearing it. He even does the trick of pinpointing the stanza number of the recited lines: "This must be the first stanza of the eighty-sixth section of the third canto of that [poem] 'Don Juan.'" ²⁰⁸ The protagonists' poetic sensitivity is a proof of their erudite knowledge of English poetry, and that knowledge, within the world of the novel, is interwoven into the

²⁰⁷ Liang Qichao, *Yinbingshi heji: zhuanji*, vol.89, p.45.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, vol.89, p.44-45.

matrix of classical literary cultivation, projecting the author's image of ideal modern intelligence, embodied by the "heroes."

The narrative thus incorporates and even appropriates Western discourse into traditional cultural capital, and to this end, Liang Qichao's peculiar idea and practice of translation also contributes. In the story, Byron's lines are heard chanted "in English," "to piano accompaniment," and, accordingly, they are first cited in the narrative in the English original. The quote is then followed by a Chinese translation in which Liang Qichao adapts "the style of the drama script." For example, he appends comments equivalent to stage directions in the traditional play-script to the translated stanzas, such as "Feeling tipsy in the eastern winds [*chenzui dongfeng* 沈醉東風]" to the part expressing lamentation over Greece's fall, and "As though remembering the Peach Blossom Spring in a dream [*ru mengyi taoyuan* 如夢憶桃源]" to the poet's desperate wish for Greece's independence: "I dream'd that Greece might still be free."²⁰⁹

Reiterating his advocacy of "poetry revolution" (*shijie geming* 詩界革命), Liang comments on his translation.

Though I am not known for poetry, I used to like to advocate a poetic revolution, arguing that the worlds and the styles of Western masters were to be melted and recast into our poetry [*rongzhu zhi yi ru woshi* 鎔鑄之以入我詩], and that only then could a new [poetic] territory be opened. I also argued that it should not be difficult to selectively translate masterpieces of Shakespeare, Milton, and Byron into the style of the drama script [*quben ti* 曲本體]. Alas! I wish I were so mighty! This time, I originally tried to translate all the lines of the sixteen stanzas [of "The Isles of Greece"] in "Don Juan," but because it was too difficult to continue, time was pressing, and tediousness was to be avoided, I only ended up translating the [first] three stanzas. When [the work] appeared in print, I further excised the second stanza, leaving only two. My bitter struggles must be visible. After the translation was done, I was totally unsatisfied, wondering whether I could have

²⁰⁹ Ibid., vol.89, p.42-45.

possibly expressed the original meaning. I believe, however, the translator's language must not be vainly created between [the original's] words; rather, it must put priority on the spirit those words convey. Otherwise, the translation will suffer from convolutedness, and cannot be read again as a writing. I heard that during the Six Dynasties and the Tang, the old sages had translated Buddhist sutras by often juxtaposing sections with chapters and changing their orders, chopping and mixing the originals. Good translators must perform like that.²¹⁰

What Liang Qichao tries to accomplish in this translation, he explains, is to strike a balance between readability and faithfulness. To “melt and recast” “the worlds and the styles of Western masters . . . into our poetry,” and, more precisely, to use “the style of the play-script” to translate Western masterpieces, are the methods Liang experiments with to resolve this difficult, if universal, dilemma for the translator. But in the context of *Xin Zhongguo weilai ji*, the form alters the content: Liang's nonliteral translation, by bringing new content to old form, articulates Byron's poems in terms of a newness *within* traditional poetics. The fall of the Greek nation, thus, is translated so that it adds a new motif to the classical poetics of “the sound of a fallen country.” If translation of Western literature “revolutionizes” Chinese poetry and opens “a new [poetic] field” for it, it constitutes another moment in the long history of Chinese culture that has always been in transformation, just as in the medieval age, the extensive translation of Buddhist sutras brought about fundamental changes in Chinese culture. The erudite appreciation and skillful chanting of those English poems therefore indicate the protagonist's *exemplary* embodiment of this new, “modern” Chinese culture, just as cultivation in traditional poetry had signified exemplary cultural subjectivity in premodern times.

While sharing the theme of the demise and rebirth of an old civilization, Liang Qichao and Lu Xun engage with the English poet in strikingly contrasting ways. If Liang

²¹⁰ Ibid., vol.89, p.56-57.

Qichao's literature interprets Byronic poetry in terms of exemplarity in the imagined totality of "modern culture," Lu Xun's treatise "Moluo shili shuo" interprets it as a *singular* event with universal significance.

Whereas Liang Qichao's political novel features Byron's poems as a voice exemplifying the intelligence, sensibility, and morality that the modern subject needs to have in order to save the nation from civilizational decline, Lu Xun's treatise gives a crucial characterization to Byron's poetry as "the voice of the heart" (*xinsheng* 心聲). Only "the voice of the heart," as Lu Xun conceptualizes it, survives the fall of an old civilization, smashing the sense of "desolation" (*xiaotiao* 蕭條) present "on the last pages" of "the cultural history of an old country."²¹¹ Poets with this "new voice" (*xinsheng* 新聲), as Lu Xun argues:

... will not produce harmonious sounds that cater to the society. When they move their mouth and emit their voice, those who listen to them will rise up to fight with the heavens and refuse vulgarity; their spirit will continue to move the hearts of the future generations, persisting forever.²¹²

The poet's "voice of the heart" embodies a modern agency capable of turning the course of history, just like Byron's "sound of a fallen country" in Liang Qichao's fiction; but the aesthetic conceptions of those reconstructed poetic voices are fundamentally different.

Lu Xun conceptualizes the essence of Byronic poetry against what he calls "the sociological understanding of poetry." This idea, according to Lu Xun, "foregrounds the correspondence between writing and morality," "[suggesting] that the essence of poetry is

²¹¹ Lu Xun, *Lu Xun quanji*, vol.1, p.65.

²¹² *Ibid.*, vol.1, p.68.

idealistic sincerity (*cheng* 誠). What is that ‘sincerity’? It means that the poet’s thought and emotion correspond to the universal idea of humanity.” As such, true poetry would then “naturally” correspond to morality, which “gives poetry life and makes it eternal.”²¹³ While using the concept of “sincerity” (*cheng*) with Confucian connotations, Lu Xun specifically relates this idea to the moralistic criticism practiced in the British literary establishment represented by the poet laureate Robert Southey. This idea founds poetry upon a “universal idea of humanity” and morality, and assumes that there is a “natural” way for poetry to be also moral. Without such an ethical basis, poetry “would perish.” As Lu Xun strikingly claims, it was the French Revolution that put an end, overnight, to “this dreamy consciousness of the past,” particularly in countries like “Germany, Spain, Italy, and Greece.” As he continues:

Only England remained relatively stable. But there was some antagonism between the upper and lower strata of the society, sometimes producing dissatisfaction; thus, at that very moment, the poet Byron was born. Before then, people like Walter Scott [1771-1832] had produced moderate and realistic works that well conformed to traditional religious morality. But Byron overcame traditional norms and directly expressed what he believed; his writing always included strength, resistance, destruction, or challenge. How could this not make the moderates anxious? Thus they called him “Satan.”²¹⁴

Lu Xun characterizes Byron in general terms as an anti-moralistic poet who defies cultural norms; but he does so by underlining the particular historical significance of Byron’s defiance, by situating his poetic engagement within the context of the contemporary social and cultural norms in England. As Lu Xun implies, those norms had already lost their relevance in the post-French Revolution world. Byronic Romanticism

²¹³ Ibid., vol.1, p.74-75.

²¹⁴ Ibid., vol.1, p.75.

violated moral standards that were considered the “universal” grounds of poetic creation; as such, it constituted the poet’s singular intervention in the specific social-political situations of his nation of the time.

Largely drawing upon the Japanese critic Kimura Takatarō’s 木村鷹太郎 *Bunkai no daimaō Bairon* 文界之大魔王バイロン (Byron: The Great Satan of the Literary World, 1902), Lu Xun devotes two whole chapters to describing Byron’s biography, whereas Liang Qichao, in contrast, introduces the poet only briefly, with little biographical or historical background.²¹⁵ Lu Xun positions Byron as the “progenitor” (*zongzhu* 宗主) of the “Mara Poetry” school, and goes on to discuss other writers whom he believes belong to this group of poets: Shelley, Pushkin, Lermontov, Mickiewicz, Słowacki, Krasiński, and Petőfi. In his description, Lu Xun explains the antagonistic socio-political circumstances of the nations of these writers in which they were active, and he thereby reconstructs their idiosyncratic engagement with society, underlining the historical significance of their literary endeavors. For one, he says, “Shelley wrote poems by resisting [society’s] deception and corruption; but it was that deception and corruption that killed his poems prematurely. This shows how the spiritual warriors of the early nineteenth century who cherished justice perished one after another.”²¹⁶ As for Pushkin, he contends, “When Russia suffered from extreme internal turmoil, Pushkin wrote strongly satirical poems. People used his satire as a pretext to suppress him, trying to

²¹⁵ “Byron loved liberalism and had literary spirit; it seemed as though his destiny made him engage with Greece. He later helped Greece’s independence and died on the battlefield: truly a hero of the literary world.” Liang Qichao, *Yinbingshi heji: zhuanji*, vol.89, p.44.

²¹⁶ Lu Xun, *Lu Xun quanji*, vol.1, p.87.

condemn him into exile in Siberia.”²¹⁷ With regard to the Eastern European writers, he similarly claims, “These two poets [Mickiewicz and Słowacki] were so desperate that they featured [in their works] all those who may become harmful enemies. . . . Every single poem by Krasiński recollects the past glory, worrying about the fatherland.”²¹⁸ “When Hungary was silenced and suppressed, there was a poet who stood up: Petőfi.”²¹⁹ Then, in the concluding part of the essay, Lu Xun comments:

The characters, words, and deeds of these people whom I have discussed so far may appear different from each other because they belong to different nations and live in different environments; however, they are in fact all unified in a single lineage [*tong yu yi zong* 統於一宗]. They were all strong and unflagging, cherished sincerity and guarded the truth. They did not pander to the public or follow old customs. They raised powerful voices to initiate the rebirth of their compatriots, and to empower their countries on the world stage. Who in China could be comparable to them?²²⁰

If the constative motif of this essay is to reconstruct this “single lineage” — the lineage of “Mara Poetry” —, then its performative objective is to call on China to produce a “comparable” poet. Just like the writers Lu Xun discusses, such a Chinese poet would rise up against social injustice and political corruption, and “sacrifice” himself for the sake of the nation’s future; he would do so through his singular “character, words, and deeds,” which would involve him in such struggles. The singularity of his poetic subjectivity would reflect the particularity of social-political situations of the nation in which he creates. When Lu Xun called for “the true voice of the heart” (*zhen zhi xinsheng*

²¹⁷ Ibid., vol.1, p.89.

²¹⁸ Ibid., vol.1, p.98.

²¹⁹ Ibid., vol.1, p.99.

²²⁰ Ibid., vol.1, p.101.

真之心聲) to appear in China, thus, that voice was to be one that was *unique* to the specific national circumstances that Lu Xun was wrestling with.

Whereas Lu Xun claims that “the lives [of the Mara poets] much resemble [*shenxiao* 神肖] each other,” therefore, that resemblance is to be structurally distinguished from the historical analogy Liang Qichao draws in *Xin Zhongguo weilaiji*. Liang Qichao’s fictional imagination reconstructs an exemplary voice that is able to universally inspire modern political subjectivity, whether it resounds in early-nineteenth-century Greece or early-twentieth-century China; Byron’s poetry is featured as just such an exemplary voice, like the *ci* poems that the protagonists sing. In contrast, in Lu Xun’s essay, the poet’s “voice of the heart” is a *singular* voice, one that is uniquely effective in the national political consciousness in a particular historical situation. But precisely by virtue of being such a singular voice, it bears a universal significance — i.e., it becomes the voice of a modern “nation” that is to be a subject of History in the post-French Revolution world. The pantheon of the “Mara poets” that Lu Xun erects in this essay does not indicate a simple collection of modern national poets, so much as it bespeaks a kind of solidarity of singular literary practices that Byronic poetry inspired in different moments of modernity, in different socio-political circumstances. The “progenitor” of Mara Poetry, Byron is the “origin” in the Nietzschean sense, which, as an ideal, repeats itself in diverse socio-historical conditions so that it produces singular national poems.²²¹

Lu Xun’s conception of the political and moral significance of literature also differs fundamentally from that of Liang Qichao’s. For it is precisely that premodern

²²¹ The epigraph of the essay, taken from Nietzsche’s *Zarathustra*, reads: “Whoever has become wise about ancient origins will surely, in the end, seek new wells of the future and new origins — Yes my brothers, it will not be overly long and *new peoples* will originate and new wells will roar down into new depths.” See: Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Pt.3, Ch.12, §25.

cultural capital that Lu Xun struggled to deconstruct through transculturating Western discourse. That decisive departure from traditional conceptions of literature is encapsulated in the Mara poetry essay, as Lu Xun argues in a crucial passage:

From the perspective of pure literature [*chun wenxue* 純文學], the essence of all the fine arts [*meishu* 美術] is to move and please the audience. Since refined writing constitutes one of the fine arts, its nature is precisely that. Refined writing is not related to the survival of an individual or a country; it neither pursues utility nor truth. Even if it has use, its promotion of knowledge is inferior to history, its admonition of people to mottos, making fortune to business, and making fame to a graduation degree. But because there is refined writing in society, people may come closer to satisfaction. ... Winter lingers while spring does not come; the body survives while the spirit has died; one lives, while the path of life has been lost. The use of uselessness of refined writing [*wenzhang buyong zhi yong* 文章不用之用] does reside in those.²²²

Lu Xun uses a number of modern Japanese neologisms, such as “*chun wenxue* 純文學” for “pure literature” and “*meishu* 美術” for “fine arts.” The conception of literature as one of the “fine arts” was most famously put forth in the Japanese context by the critic Tsubouchi Shōyō 坪内逍遙 (1859-1935) in the mid-1880s, based upon modern Western aesthetic thought. (We will return to Shōyō’s criticism in Chapter Four.) Probably inspired by contemporary Japanese criticism and/or translation, including Shōyō’s, Lu Xun transculturates the modern Western concept of the aesthetic as an autonomous realm of human endeavor, whose most significant source is Kant’s *Third Critique*. Distantly alluding to Kant’s concept of “purposiveness without purpose,” Lu Xun posits “the use of uselessness” of literature and argues that literature “is not related to the survival of an individual or a country”; he thereby squarely opposes Liang Qichao’s advocacy of the immediate moral-political efficacy of fiction. If for Liang, exemplary literature was

²²² Lu Xun, *Lu Xun quanji*, vol.1, p.73.

precisely to have “natural” consequences of good politics and morality, for Lu Xun, singular literary practice had only contingent ramifications. Whereas Lu Xun explored the universal political and moral significance of the Mara poets in the modern world, in each particular socio-historical context, a poet is to strive for, through his/her singular poetic engagement, such universal significance only as the “use of uselessness” — as though seeking the “spring” that never comes, “the spirit” in a dead body, or the lost “path of life.”

“Hard” Transculturation

In the “Mara Poetry” essay, Lu Xun does not quote or translate even a single line from Byron’s work — another contrast to Liang Qichao’s fiction. But Lu Xun’s distanced reference to Byronic poetry in fact points to his unique conception of “translation,” which he, more than two decades later, against an altered socio-political background, developed in a polemical essay called “‘Yingyi’ yu ‘Wenxue de jiejixing’ ‘硬譯’與‘文學的階級性’” (“Hard Translation” and “the Class Nature of Literature,” 1930).²²³

Lu Xun wrote this essay to counterattack a criticism directed to his translation of a collection of essays by the Soviet revolutionary and critic Anatoly Lunacharsky (1875-1933), *Wenyi yu piping* 文藝與批評 (Arts and Criticism), published in 1930. The criticism had been penned by the Crescent School (*Xinyue pai* 新月派) critic and essayist Liang Shiqiu 梁實秋 (1903-87), who blamed Lu Xun’s literal translation as “dead

²²³ My reading of this essay has been helped particularly by Shuang Shen, *Cosmopolitan Publics: Anglophone Print Culture in Semi-Colonial Shanghai*; Pu Wang, “The Promethean Translator and Cannibalistic Pains: Lu Xun’s ‘Hard Translation’ as a Political Allegory.”

translation [*siyi* 死譯]” that was incomprehensible and fruitless. Liang Shiqiu demands readability and pleasure from a translated work, and argues that though the translator “is allowed to change the phrasing a little bit, he must put first priority on whether the reader can understand it.” Lu Xun squarely opposes this position and upholds a challenging reading experience where you may be lead to “grope for ‘connections and positions of phrases’ as though looking at a map.”²²⁴

We are now introducing foreign writings again, so we have to create many new phrasings — or, to put it baldly, to forcibly forge them [*yingzao* 硬造]. In my experience, compared to rendering [one phrase] into a few, such [forcible] translation is able to better preserve the original’s refined, virile power. That new phrasings need to be created means that the existing Chinese writing has shortcomings. ... If you need to “grope for” and “endure,” then, for some, [reading] may “not be a pleasurable thing,” to be sure. But I do not intend to offer “refreshment” or “pleasure” to those worthies [of the Crescent School]; instead, I only hope to give some benefits to a few readers.²²⁵

This polemic between Lu Xun and Liang Shiqiu, at least to a certain extent, represents an antagonism between the two opposing positions with regard to translation practice: literalism and readability. But more importantly, Lu Xun’s censure reveals how he conceptualized transculturation of modern civilization into China through his “hard translation.”

In this essay, in fact, Lu Xun responds not only to Liang Shiqiu’s denunciation, but also to the belittling by younger-generation leftist writers belonging to the Creation Society (*Chuangzaoshe* 創造社) and the Sun Society (*Taiyangshe* 太陽社). Citing the

²²⁴ Lu Xun, *Lu Xun quanji*, vol.6, p.202.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, vol.6, p.204.

young leftists' "personal attacks" that denounced him in some times as "petit bourgeois" or "bourgeois," and in others as "residue of feudalism," Lu Xun claims:

Therefore I think there are too few such theories [of Marxism] that they [i.e., the young leftist critics in China] can consult, so they get a little confused. Now is the time when we cannot avoid dissecting and chewing the enemy, but if we have a book of anatomy and a book of cuisine, and can use them as a guide, then we can understand the structure [of the enemy] a little clearer and make the taste [of the enemy] a little better. People often compare Prometheus in the [Greek] mythology to the revolutionary, contending that the magnanimity and perseverance [of Prometheus], who did not regret stealing the fire and giving it to the humans even though he was punished by Zeus for that, are similar to those of the revolutionary. However, my original intention for stealing the fire from abroad was to stew my own flesh — I thought the tastier I could make it, the more advantages those who chew on me would get in this regard, too. Then, I would not end up wasting my body.²²⁶

Sarcastically denouncing the inaccurate and, if you will, "private" — in the sense of the Wittgensteinian "private language" — usage of the newly introduced Marxist critical concepts among the young Chinese leftists, Lu Xun strikingly invokes a self-cannibalistic metaphor. Lu Xun refuses to play a Promethean role as the so-called "revolutionary," who would claim to be able to translate a precise and effective "fire" of Marxism "from abroad" into the Chinese audience, and arm them with potent weapons against the class enemy. Whereas Prometheus thus represents a transcendental translator, Lu Xun internalizes the Promethean self-sacrifice. Lu Xun embeds himself within the audience to be enlightened, as a speaker of Chinese with many "shortcomings," a language to be fundamentally transformed by "forcibly forg[ing]" new expressions in it through translation. The translator himself, therefore, must be subject to the power of the "fire" and have "[his] own flesh" "stew[ed]" on it. This somatic metaphor signifies the critic's

²²⁶ Ibid., vol.6, p.213-4.

conception of the task of the translator as a self-critical practice: Lu Xun's "hard translation" is precisely symbolic of this practice where the translator transforms his language with the original's "fire," producing an "unreadable" Chinese. Lu Xun thus performs "hard translation" as an *anticipation* from within Chinese, in the hope that his self-critique would produce a revolutionary language of its own, as he claims, "I thought the tastier I could make it [i.e., my flesh], the more advantages those who chew on me would get..." Rather than through the heroic translator's potent transportation, it is the anti-heroic translator's cannibalistic self-critique that can *transculturates* revolutionary agency into China.

Politically, Lu Xun's position changed dramatically between 1908 and 1930; but aesthetically, his radical conception of transculturation in terms of "hard translation" indeed is built upon the young Lu Xun's engagement with Byronic poetry. The reconstruction of the "lineage" of the Mara poets is performatively meant to provide a condition of possibility for the birth of new Chinese poetry, just as for Lu Xun in the 1930s, Marxist aesthetics is introduced as a ground "theory" against which existing literary art must be tested and deconstructed. Unlike Liang Qichao, who features Byron's poems, in a unique translation, as an exemplary voice for new China, Lu Xun considers Byronic poetry as an ideal that Chinese poets must realize in their own actual social-historical conditions with their singular literary language — the ideal of *national* literature. If Liang Qichao tries to "[melt] the worlds and styles of Western masters" and "recast [them] into our poetry," Lu Xun transculturates "the worlds and styles of [a] Western master" as the "fire" to self-critique "our poetry."

The two different ways of transculturating Byronic poetry in Liang Qichao and Lu Xun indicate their distinctive engagements with literary tradition. Whereas in Liang Qichao, tradition functions as an aesthetic matrix into which Western literature needs to be translated so as to initiate its self-transformation, for Lu Xun, traditional aesthetics is something that needs to be radically severed *through self-criticism*, for the sake of the advent of a new — national — aesthetics. Lu Xun's categorical emphasis of severance of tradition, however, is not a simple renunciation for the sake of introducing newness, which the Promethean translator would claim to be able to do. Rather, exactly in order to practice modernist aesthetics, Lu Xun calls for the invention of a new way of engaging with traditional aesthetics, and he pursues it as self-critique, whose material actualization is "hard translation." If in ambivalent terms, Lu Xun in fact writes in "Moluo shili shuo":

Alas! Majestic and sublime as the voice of the heart and the writing of ancient people may have been, their breaths do not reach the present any more. What use would [the artifacts of the past] have for their descendants, while they may have been able to make ancient people caress and admire them? If you boast about their glorious past while they cannot [give anything to the descendants], that indicates the recent desolation [*jimo* 寂寞]. ... Although cherishing the past [*huaigu* 懷古] benefits the development of the nation, that remembrance means to think with a clear mind, as though reflected in the mirror; it lets you sometimes go forward, sometimes look backward; sometimes enter the long bright path [toward the future], sometimes recall that the past was illustrious. Only then will the new be renovated every day, and the old not perish.²²⁷

The dialectic engagement with the past, which is here rather ambiguously articulated as "*huaigu*," "cherishing the past," fundamentally informs Lu Xun's theory and practice of modernist aesthetics.

²²⁷ Ibid., vol.6, p.67.

Put in a comparative context, however, Lu Xun certainly is not an isolated case. In East Asian literary studies, an increasing number of scholars are tackling the question of how writers of the region negotiated their positions vis-à-vis their literary pasts in their creation of modern literature, beyond simple, progressive transition from the traditional into the modern.²²⁸ However, even in those new studies, scholars still approach the question within individual national contexts, failing to bring to light the very fact that the East Asian writers' "literary pasts" were, indeed, historically deeply interrelated transnationally. To be sure, for East Asian writers, modernist aesthetics first and foremost inspired the creation of *national* literature, something comparable to the powerful and illustrious literatures from Western countries. But this quintessentially *national* project, with which most modernist writers of the region were obsessed, could only be undertaken within contexts of the East Asian countries' transnationally interrelated literary traditions. If the transculturation of Western aesthetics into the region laid the groundwork for the birth of modern national literature, the traditions that this sea change was to critique were, in fact, also transnational, further rendering the structure and identity of modern literature in the region complex.

²²⁸ For example, Shengqing Wu, *Modern Archaics: Continuity and Innovation in the Chinese Lyric Tradition 1900-1937*.

2. Theory and Practice of “Literature” in Early Yi Kwangsu

The work of Yi Kwangsu, one of the most prominent founding figures of modern Korean literature, precisely embodies such complexity.²²⁹ Yi Kwangsu was born in 1892 in a rural village in North P’yŏng’an, a northwestern province bordering China. Sixteen years before his birth, Korea was forced to open its ports to the world (Treaty of Kanghwa, 1876). Yi spent his youth in an age when the regional powers vied for political and military control of the peninsula through full-scale wars, first the Sino-Japanese War (1894-5) and then the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5). As he lost parents to a cholera outbreak at the age of ten, Yi was raised among members of the Tonghak movement, the anti-Confucian, anti-Western religious rebellion popularized among Korean peasants in the late-nineteenth century. Yi then moved to Seoul to escape from the Chosŏn court authorities cracking down upon the rebels, where he became acquainted with members of Ilchinhoe, a political organization of pro-Japanese reformist intellectuals. With Ilchinhoe’s financial assistance, Yi went to Japan for study in 1905, the year Japan stripped Korea of diplomatic sovereignty with the Ŭlsa Treaty. He attended secondary school and continued his education at Meiji Gakuin in Tokyo, where he started to write short stories. Upon repatriation in 1910, the year Japan annexed Korea, Yi started to teach at Osan School, a progressive middle school that played an integral role in the

²²⁹ For my reading of Yi Kwangsu in what follows, I was most benefitted from Kim Yunsik’s classic: *Yi Kwangsu wa kŭ sidae*. I was also helped by: Han Sŭng’ok, *Yi Kwangsu changp’yŏn sosŏl yŏn’gu*; Kim Hyŏnju, *Yi Kwangsu wa munhwa ũi kihoe*; Munhak kwa Sasang Yŏn’guhoe (ed.), *Yi Kwangsu munhak ũi chaeinsik*; and Kim Kyŏngmi, *Yi Kwangsu munhak kwa minjok tamnon*. (For a list of Korean-language secondary literature on Yi Kwangsu, see: Han Sŭngok, *Yi Kwangsu changp’yŏn sosŏl yŏngu*, p. 231-82.) In English-language scholarship, I consulted, among others, Grant S. Lee, *Life and Thought of Yi Kwang-su*, and Ann Sung-hi Lee, *Yi Kwangsu and Early Modern Korean Literature*. I was also greatly helped by Hatano Setsuko’s *I Gwansu, “Mujō” no kenkyū: Kankoku keimō bungaku no hikari to kage*, particularly by her meticulous study of the early Yi’s exposure to Japanese and Western literature.

nationalist movement in colonial Korea. In 1915, Yi left the country again for Japan to attend Waseda University. While majoring in philosophy, Yi made his name as a progressive critic by publishing numerous articles attacking traditional discourse and promoting enlightenment; it was at that time, in 1917, that he serialized in the Korean-language newspaper *Maeil sinbo* 매일신보 (Daily News) what is considered to be the first full-length modern novel written in Korean, *Mujǒng* 무정 (Heartless, 1917). *Mujǒng* was very well received by its Korean audience.

In the aftermath of the First World War, in late 1918, as Woodrow Wilson's ideology of national self-determination resonated throughout the postwar world, Yi Kwangsu decided to go back to Korea and help organize an anti-imperialist society. In early 1919, he collaborated with fellow Korean intellectuals to draft the Declaration of Korean Independence, which ignited the widespread anti-Japanese resistance movement known as the March First Movement (1919). But as the movement was brutally suppressed by the colonial authorities, Yi fled to Shanghai and took part in the inauguration of the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea (*Taehan minguk imsi chǒngbu* 대한민국임시정부) and became the President and Editor-in-Chief of its official newspaper *Tongnip sinmun* 독립신문 (Independence Newspaper). In 1921, Yi made his way back to Korea, and, despite being arrested upon arrival, he managed to avoid prosecution and made a comeback in the Korean literary world. While assuming high-profile positions first in *Tong'a ilbo* 동아일보 (East Asia Daily) and then in *Chosǒn ilbo* 조선일보 (Korea Daily), the two major Korean-language newspapers in colonial Korea, Yi published numerous critical articles, short stories, and novels. In some of the essays, Yi softened his political tone and advocated for gradual strengthening of the

nation's power under colonial conditions, rather than immediate national independence, which, to some critics, appeared too weak and conciliatory. However, the beginning of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937 significantly tightened social and cultural policies in colonial Korea by the name of "*kōminka* 皇民化," or, "transformation [of the colonial population] into the Emperor's subject,"²³⁰ and this new discursive condition led to the ban of the prominent nationalist society called *Suyang tong'u hoe* 수양동우회 (Friendship Society for Moral Cultivation) led by Yi's long-term friend An Ch'angho 안창호 (1878-1938). Together with An and other members of the Society, Yi was arrested and detained without charge; Yi spent six months in detention before being released due to illness.

In the following year, to the shock of many of his colleagues, Yi Kwangsu began to lead a conversion campaign of the members of the Friendship Society and scandalously displayed in public his political transformation by worshipping at the Shinto shrine, an act that the imperialists started to impose upon the Koreans as part of the "*kōminka*." In the late colonial period (1937-45), the writer maintained his prominence in the colonial literary world that became increasingly integrated into the imperialist-sanctioned regional culture; he acted as one of the intellectuals most collaborative with the Japanese. In 1940, Yi showed an example by obeying the new imperial "*sōshi kaimei* 創氏改名" (creating family names and changing given names) policy and changed his registered name to the Japanese-style Kayama Mitsurō 香山光郎; in 1942, he participated as a Korean delegate in the first assembly of the "Conference of the Writers

²³⁰ For more on the "*kōminka*" policy, see Chapter Six.

of Great East Asia” (*daitōa bungakusha kaigi* 大東亞文学者會議) and advocated for mandatory conscription of Korean students into the Imperial Army; in 1943, he published a few notoriously pro-imperialist short stories in Japanese and traveled to Tokyo to recruit the Koreans to join the Army; and in 1944, he took part once again in the “Conference of the Writers of Great East Asia,” held in Nanjing that year. After the country’s liberation (1945), Yi was charged for treason in 1949, but was released without sentence owing to his deteriorating health. Yi was kidnapped by the Army of the North when the Korean War (1950-53) broke out, and died of tuberculosis and frostbite on the way to the North.

Due to the writer’s unjustifiably deep involvement in the imperialist policies in the late colonial period, Yi Kwangsu’s legacy has been controversial. But particularly since the publications of the two-volume collection of papers *Yi Kwangsu yōngu* 이광수연구 (Study of Yi Kwangsu, 1984) and of Kim Yunsik’s colossal *Yi Kwangsu wa kŭ sidae* 이광수와 그 시대 (Yi Kwangsu and His Time, 1986), this towering founder of modern Korean literature has been studied in various theoretical frameworks.²³¹ Despite controversy over his wartime activity, the writer’s contribution to breaking the ground for literary and cultural modernization in Korea has been widely acknowledged. Yi’s essay “Munhak iran ha o? 문학이란 하오?” (What is Literature?), published in *Maeil sinbo* in late 1916, is one of such pioneering texts. Yi begins this essay by contending that the meaning of the word “*munhak*” (literature) has become “different from what people have commonly understood,” and that it should now be understood as “what people in the

²³¹ Tongguk Taehakkyo pusŏl Han’guk Munhak Yŏn’guso (ed.), *Yi Kwangsu yōngu*; Kim Yunsik, *Yi Kwangsu wa kŭ sidae*.

West mean by ‘literature.’” “*Munhak*,” thus, is now “the translation of the word ‘Literature,’ or ‘literature,’ which are used in the West,” argues Yi using the terms in Latin alphabets.²³² Yi’s essay then determines the domain of literature as an autonomous aesthetic endeavor, as opposed to the traditional notion of literature, which was inseparable from moral connotations, arguing that new “literature” is to be an expression of “feeling” (*chǒng* 情), rather than “knowledge” (*chi* 知) or “will” (*ũi* 意), and that expression of feeling must pursue “beauty” (*mi* 美), rather than “truth” (*chilli* 真理) or “morality” (*sǒn* 善; *ũi* 義). One may readily notice that the conception of “literature” Yi introduces in this text is underpinned by the Kantian trilogy, to which the critic must have been exposed through some Japanese materials.²³³ Yi’s treatise at the same time foregrounds the “national nature [*minjǒk sǒng* 民族性] of literature,” calling for the creation of literature that is a “most powerful” expression of Korea’s “spiritual civilization.”²³⁴ Yi’s discourse exemplifies the modern notion of “literature” as an *aesthetic* and *national* endeavor.

The radical shift of the meaning of “*munhak*” leads the critic to make a hyperbolic statement: “In sum, Korean literature only has a future; it does not have a past.”²³⁵ The transculturation of the modern, aesthetic notion of “literature” from the West, on one hand, prompts Yi to express a wholesale denial of the value of the rich literary tradition in premodern Korea. On the other, the writer’s self-denial is also inextricably tied to his

²³² Yi Kwangsu, *Yi Kwangsu chǒnjip*, vol.1, p.547.

²³³ *Ibid.*, vol.1, p.548-550.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, vol.1, p.550-1.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, vol.1, p.555.

deep-seated consciousness that “the past” of Korean literature has been too much influenced by Chinese culture, causing the alleged lack of cultural subjectivity. As he claims, “the intrusion of Chinese thought had [traditionally] eradicated Korean thought ... Those heartless and thoughtless people in the past stupidly became slaves of Chinese thought, and so their own culture became extinct. Today, every single Korean has grown up under the influence of Chinese ethics and culture; they are Korean only in name, and are in fact a type of Chinese.” From this historical perspective, the introduction of modern civilization provides the agency for the Korean people to be freed from these old shackles; Yi continues, “Korean people should naturally take off their old clothes, get their old dirt off, and bathe their whole body in this new civilization, and thereby, with an emancipated spirit, create a new spiritual civilization.”²³⁶

Both in form and content, Yi Kwangsu’s *Mujǒng*, which began to be serialized just a few months after the publication of “Munhak iran ha o?”, is a literary manifestation of this civilizational transformation. The work, both constatively and performatively, is concerned with an attempt at establishing the “origin” of a new culture, just as Lu Xun had prescribed the birth of a new Chinese culture by transculturating Byronic poetry. But as is precisely the case for Lu Xun, Yi Kwangsu’s modernist project was only undertaken through intricate engagement with the very “past” of Korean literature, which the critic asserted did not exist. In fact, in negotiating the image of modern Korean culture and subjectivity, the novel *Mujǒng* extensively refers to the nation’s literary tradition, which not only includes traditional narrative literature in the vernacular Korean, but also Chinese classics.

²³⁶ Ibid., vol.1, p.551.

The full-length novel *Mujŏng* is the story of a love triangle involving a man named Yi Hyŏngsik, and two women named Pak Yŏngch'ae and Kim Sŏnhyŏng. Reflecting some of the author's autobiographical details, Hyŏngsik, born into a rural family and orphaned at a young age, was raised and educated in a private school run by the village's reformist literatus who was among the first to be exposed to Western civilization. Hyŏngsik's mentor, Pak *jinsa*, belongs to the elite *yangban* class, and yet undergoes atrocities as his family is slaughtered by the Chosŏn court for its alleged involvement in a regional rebellion. In the nation's crisis, the mentor then "traveled through the Qing and bought dozens of new books published in Shanghai," from which he "learned about situations in the West and Japan," inspiring him to start "the civilizational movement" in Korea.²³⁷ Just like Sin Ch'aeho, whom we discussed in Chapter Two, Hyŏngsik's teacher belongs to a generation of Korean literati who received knowledge about modern civilization from Chinese sources, whereas Hyŏngsik himself was sent to Japan for further study. Upon returning to his country, Hyŏngsik becomes a private English tutor for Sŏnhyŏng, the daughter of a former powerful *yangban* converted to Christianity, Elder Kim. A poor, yet diligent and ambitious teacher of English, Hyŏngsik soon begins to have romantic feelings for the young and naïve Sŏnhyŏng, and to regard the prospect of marrying her as a miraculous opportunity for his career, too, as he would then be able to continue his study in the United States, where Sŏnhyŏng is about to be sent by her rich father.

As Hyŏngsik moves to materialize this impeccable plan by getting engaged to Sŏnhyŏng, however, he unexpectedly encounters Yŏngch'ae, the daughter of Pak *jinsa*,

²³⁷ Ibid., vol.1, p.21.

his childhood mentor. The progressive intellectual Pak *jinsa* had broken with patriarchal customs and provided his young daughter with an orthodox education in the Chinese classics — from the introductory *Sohak* 소학 (Minor Learning; Chn. *Xiaoxue*) to *Yöllyöchön* 열녀전 (The Biographies of Exemplary Women; Chn. *Lienüzhuan*) to *Sichön* 시전 (Commentary to the *Book of Songs*). Hyöngsik was regarded as Pak *jinsa*'s best pupil and Yöngch'ae's future husband. But Pak *jinsa*'s pedagogical effort was cut short due to a crime committed by one of his students; he was accused of conspiracy and sentenced to life in prison. After the arrest of Pak *jinsa*, Hyöngsik left his private school, while Yöngch'ae was sent out to live with a relative's family. Now that the two meet each other after seven years, Hyöngsik comes to know the harsh life Yöngch'ae has had to endure thereafter. — At the relative's family, she was mistreated so severely that she escaped and sought help from her imprisoned father, only to find him exhausted and demoralized due to harsh prison conditions. Deeply saddened, Yöngch'ae decided to work in the pleasure quarters and earn money to help her father, so that she could fulfill the duty as a “filial daughter” (*hyo'nyö* 효녀). — Listening to this tragic story, however, Hyöngsik, despite the formative years he spent with her and her family, remains unsympathetic and even indifferent, as his mind has already been drawn to what Sönhöng represents in stark contrast with Yöngch'ae: enlightenment, free woman, and Western civilization, etc.

Shortly after the unexpected encounter with Yöngch'ae, Hyöngsik discovers that she is in fact working in a pleasure quarter in Seoul as an entertainer (*kisaeng* 기생). Meanwhile, Yöngch'ae is raped by an abusive customer, but Hyöngsik, who witnesses this crime, fails to save her. Devastated, Yöngch'ae decides to go back to her hometown

in Pyongyang and drown herself in the Taedong River. Hyöngsik locates her suicide note and rushes to Pyongyang to rescue her, but, in a surprising turn of the plot, he abandons the search in spite of her still unknown whereabouts, and returns to Seoul with a paradoxical sense of relief and freedom. While meticulously describing the protagonist's agonizing wavering between the two women, the narrative nevertheless dramatizes his "heartless" (*mujöng* 무정) forgetting of Yöngch'ae and conversion to Sönh yöng by staging his engagement to the latter right after his hasty return to Seoul. The engagement also satisfies the protagonist's ambition to study in the United States. In the meantime, the narrator reveals that Yöngch'ae, on the train to Pyongyang, in fact encounters an enlightened woman named Pyöngguk, who is studying music in Tokyo; Yöngch'ae is persuaded by Pyöngguk that such suicide was nonsense and she must follow her abroad to also study music. As the young men and women are now set to study abroad, the novel features a climactic scene where Hyöngsik and Sönh yöng, on the train bound for Pusan, from where they will travel to America via Japan, meet Yöngch'ae and Pyöngguk by chance, who are also leaving for Tokyo on the same train. In the end of the novel, then, the train suddenly gets stuck in a severe storm, and the four of them collaborate to organize a charity concert to help the victims, which symbolically unites them for the common purpose of "saving Korean people."²³⁸ The story ends with the prospect of their bright futures — Hyöngsik as an educationist, Sönh yöng a mathematician, and Yöngch'ae and Pyöngguk musicians.

The narrator concludes the story in his own voice:

²³⁸ Ibid., vol.1, p.207.

The world that has been dark should not be dark, or heartless [*mujǒng* 무정], forever. With our own power, we shall make it bright, filled with feeling [*ujǒng* 우정], pleasurable, wealthy, and strong. With this happy smile and shout of cheers, let us conclude *Mujǒng*, the work that mourns for the world of the past.²³⁹

The utopian hope of realizing a new world in Korea — a world that is “bright, filled with feeling, pleasurable, wealthy, and strong” — underpins the entire narrative. What the story describes as Hyǒngsik’s realization of “the inner human” or “the truly human” as the basis of a new civilization constitutes the leitmotif of Yi Kwangsu’s work. But the novel projects this ideal within the narrative of a “heartless” world, a world that is undergoing unpredictable, contingent, and alienating transitions from tradition into modernity. “The youth of the age of transition,”²⁴⁰ as the narrator calls him, Hyǒngsik’s “heartless” yet painful conversion from one female character to the other particularly allegorizes the Korean society experiencing just such a precarious transformation. Despite the story’s clear-cut telos, which is articulated in this happy ending, the storytelling is hardly teleological; the ending, suddenly brought about by the unlikely encounter with the storm as though in a mode of *deus ex machina*, indeed appears rather heterogeneous to the rest of the story. Besides the novel’s undeniable progressivist ideology, therefore, the narrative involves another temporality, one that is dialectic, constantly evoking the cultural past, and one through which the novel projects the image of Korean cultural modernity and a new civilization it is to realize, beyond simple enlightenment rhetoric. Simply put, it is precisely the overdetermined temporality of “the mourn[ing] for the world of the past” that underpins the writer’s modernist imagination.

²³⁹ Ibid., vol.1, p.209.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., vol.1, p.181.

In representing a society in transition and conveying its image to the contemporary audience, Yi Kwangsu's *Mujǒng* transculturates heterogeneous materials. Several autobiographical short stories and essays that Yi published are testimonies to the wide-ranging reading of Western and Japanese literature that he engaged in as he established himself as a modern writer.²⁴¹ For example, a short story titled “Kim Kyǒng 김경” (Kim Kyǒng, 1915), published two years before the serialization of *Mujǒng*, is a colorful autobiographical account of the young intellectual's struggles amidst the vast sea of foreign literature to which he was exposed in Tokyo. “... As he sometimes got drunk and desired for the opposite sex, Kim Kyǒng was a ‘Byronist,’ yet as he wished to become the soldier of justice, he was a ‘Tolstoist.’ While these two isms were vying with each other day and night, Mr. Hong carelessly further influenced him with Gorky and Maupassant — the spirit of the young Kim Kyǒng was as though blown away by fierce and torrential thunderstorms, almost to the point of going mad.”²⁴² Yi Kwangsu particularly mentions in this story Kimura Takatarō's *Bunkai no daimaō Bairon*, one of the primary sources of inspiration for Lu Xun's “Moluo shili shuo.” According to this and other writings, the young Yi's long reading list also includes Milton, Scott, Ibsen, Natsume Sōseki 夏目漱石 (1867-1916), Tokutomi Roka 徳富蘆花 (1868-1927), and Kinoshita Naoe 木下尚江 (1869-1937), among many others.

It was through transculturating literature from the West and Japan that Yi undertook to create a new literature for modern Korea. Juxtaposed to these modern figures, however, are classical Chinese texts. The autobiographical protagonist in “Kim

²⁴¹ For the young Yi Kwangsu's reading of Western and Japanese literature, see: Hatano Setsuko, *I Gwansu, “Mujǒ” no kenkyū: Kankoku keimō bungaku no hikari to kage*, p.125-81.

²⁴² Yi Kwangsu, *Yi Kwangsu chǒnjip*, vol.1, p.570.

Kyŏng” indeed determines to practice the virtues of “dignity” (*chung* 重), “taciturnity” (*muk* 默), and “love of the wife” by referring to sources from *Lunyu* 論語 (The Analects) and *Zhongyong* 中庸 (Doctrine of the mean), two of the Confucian “Four Books,” suggesting the complex construct of the cultural subjectivity of this enlightened character.²⁴³

Just as the character Kim Kyŏng attempts to become an educator for the modern Korean nation by drawing upon various cultural capitals in the story, Yi Kwangsu creates *Mujŏng* as a “novel for enlightenment” through transcultural engagement with foreign as well as domestic sources. The novel not only describes the modernizing nation, but also positions itself as a new, modern kind of literary work by making frequent reference to Western and Japanese cultures, while also alluding to cultures of “the world of the past,” which are symbolized both by classical Korean and Chinese texts. In contrast with his own contemporary anti-traditional, nationalist critical essays like “Munhak iran ha o,” this “first” modern Korean novel particularly strikes the reader with its repeated mentioning of Chinese classics in its crucial moments. Yi’s narration of the “heartless” world of modern Korea, indeed, is practiced through such multilayered transculturation that it undercuts the orthodox understanding simply reducing his literature to an “introduction” of Western aesthetics into Korea (via Japan).²⁴⁴ By examining how the novel’s narrative is constructed through diverse practices of transculturation, I will propose in what follows a more nuanced interpretation of the writer’s modernist

²⁴³ Ibid., vol.1, p.572. The sources are the “Xueer 學而” and “Xianwen 憲問” chapters of *The Analects*, as well as *Zhongyong* 中庸 (Doctrine of the Mean). Yi Kwangsu rather freely quotes those phrases in the narrative.

²⁴⁴ See: Michael D Shin, “Interior Landscapes: Yi Kwangsu’s *The Heartless* and the Origins of Modern Literature.”

aesthetics, which enables him to envisage a refashioning of “feeling” (*chǒng* 정) for the world to come.

3. From Heartless Cacophony to the Creation of a New Culture: A Close Reading of Yi Kwangsu’s *Mujǒng*

Cacophony and Harmony

The novel’s first installment, published on January 1, 1917 in the newspaper *Maeil sinbo*, includes a remarkable cacophony as the text extensively incorporates English and Japanese terms. The very first utterance in this novel is that of the protagonist Yi Hyǒngsik’s friend Sin Usǒn: “*misŭt’ŏ Ri ōdiro kanŭn ga* 미스터리어디로가는가” (Mr. Yi, where are you going?), addressing Hyǒngsik with the English appellation. The dialogue between Yi Hyǒngsik and Sin Usǒn is a unique demonstration of linguistic mixture. Sin Usǒn asks Hyǒngsik about Sǒnhŏng, the new student to whom he is going to give private English lessons:

「응 어떤 사람인데 말을 못 하고 얼굴이 붉어지나 응」
형식은 민망하여 손으로 목을 쓸어 만지고 하염없이 웃으며
「여자야」
「요— 오메테또오 이々나즈케 (약혼한 사람) 가 있나 보네그려 음 나루호도
(그러려니) 그러구도 내게는 아무 말도 없단 말이야 에 여보게」
하고 손을 후려친다
형식은 하도 심란하야 구두로 땅을 파면서
「아니야 저 자네는 모르겠네 김장로라고 있느니.....」
「옹지 김장로의 딸일세그려 응 저 옹지 작년이지 정신여학교를 우등으로
졸업하고 명년 미국 간다는 그 처녀로구먼 베리 곳」
「자네 어떻게 아는가」

「그것 모르겠나 이야시쿠모 (적어도) 신문기자가 그런데 언제
앵게지멘트를 하였는가」

“Hey, who is that? What makes you quiet and blush? Huh?”

Embarrassed, Hyōngsik rubs his neck with his hand and says with an ambiguous smile,

“It’s a girl.”

“Wow! *Omedeto!* You’ve got an *iinazuke* (fiancée), right? *Naruhodo* (I see). But you haven’t told me anything,” says Sin Usōn, hitting his hands.

Hyōngsik felt so uneasy that he kicked the ground with his shoes.

“No, you mustn’t know, but Elder Kim has a daughter and...”

“Okay, that was Elder Kim’s daughter, I see. Yes, she graduated from Chōngsin Women’s School with distinction last year and is going to go to the United States next year. *Berikut!*”

“How come you know that?”

“Who wouldn’t know? I am *iyashikumo* (at least) a newspaper reporter. But when are you going to do the *engkejiment’ū*?”²⁴⁵

As the narrative unequivocally sets the stage for the story, this dialogue is said to be taking place at “2 pm” in “An-dong,” or what is today Anguk-dong, a district to the north of the city of Seoul. In this fictional space, Sin Usōn, as a newspaper reporter, expresses his thorough knowledge about Elder Kim’s daughter, Sōnhyōng. The reader of this novel, itself serialized in a newspaper, is thus invited to appreciate this fictional story by projecting it onto the real space of the city, producing precisely the effect of creating an “imagined community.”²⁴⁶ But what is more remarkable in this particular case is the voice that assumes this very communal function of the novel. In this first installment, Sin Usōn in particular, and the narrator, too, use a number of Japanese and English expressions, and for most Japanese words, the narrative adds notes in parentheses to

²⁴⁵ My underlines in the quote of the original Korean text. *Maeil sinbo*, January 1, 1917, p.1. “*Omedeto*” means “congratulations” in Japanese. “*Berikut*” and “*engkejiment’ū*” are for the English expressions “very good” and “engagement,” respectively. Interestingly, in the text of the *Complete Works*, most Japanese terms are excised.

²⁴⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*.

explain their meanings in Korean. This striking opening suggests that the ideal reader should have at least some knowledge of Japanese and English in order to participate in the imagined community, and the narrative, appending Korean renditions, aids the reader in satisfying this elitist requirement. If the modern novel is instrumental in engendering imagined nationhood, Yi Kwangsu's *Mujǒng* plays this function not only descriptively but also prescriptively: it tries, with its pseudo-multilingualism, to *educate* the reader to become part of, as an enlightened individual, the imagined community.

This pedagogical task, in fact, is precisely what the protagonist Hyǒngsik takes as his mission as a young Japan-trained, up-and-coming educationist. “Hyǒngsik would always say: ‘The only way for us the Koreans to survive is to elevate us all to the level of all the civilized nations of the world — that is, to the civilizational level of the Japanese nation. In order to do so, our nation must have many people who venture to study ambitiously.’ Hyǒngsik says this as someone aware of his special responsibility, which was to study many books to fully understand the civilizations of the world, and propagate them to the Korean people.”²⁴⁷ Hyǒngsik, in his self-consciousness, is a “luminary” who should guide the rest of the nation into modern enlightenment:

Hyǒngsik has the self-confidence that he is a luminary who has the most progressive thought in Korea. Though he may appear modest, he harbors in his mind pride and conceit vis-à-vis the Korean people. He has read Western philosophy and literature: Rousseau's *The Confessions* and *Émile*, Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Goethe's *Faust*, Kropotkin's *The Conquest of Bread* — all of these he has read. He also reads political discourse and literary criticism in the newest issues of journals; he even published a novel in a Japanese journal, which earned him a prize. He knows the name of Tagore and has read a biography of Ellen Key. He thinks about the universe and life; he is self-confident that he has his own views on life, the universe, religion, and art, and he possesses his own systematic thought on education. When he watches those people jolted on a packed train, he

²⁴⁷ Yi Kwangsu, *Yi Kwangsu chǒnjip*, vol.1, p.52.

thinks he knows many words and thoughts that they do not know, and feels content with pride; but at the same time he questions, out of a sense of his responsibilities as a luminary, when on earth those people will become educated just like himself. He thus feels solitude and sadness at the thought that there are few people among those twenty-million Koreans who would comprehend his words and understand his intention. He then tries to think of his friends who may understand his words, and finds that he does not have to use both hands to count them. But those small number of people are the luminaries who understand new civilization [*sinmunmyōng* 신문명] and thus will educate and lead the entire Korean nation.²⁴⁸

Hyōngsik's cutting-edge reading experiences and habits reflect, at least in part, Yi Kwangsu's own exposure to modern literature in Tokyo. Yi, by way of transculturating works of world-literary value, projects an ideal image of the modern intellectual onto the novel's protagonist, and sets the goal for the Korean nation to achieve in order for them to take part in the "new civilization." Here and there throughout the story, the narrative highlights scenes of such enlightenment, particularly in episodes regarding Yōngch'ae, who embodies the cultural past. One thing she has to learn is to listen to new sounds, the pronunciations of foreign words and the cacophony of a modern city, the soundscape of "civilization":

"And do you know what we ate then?"

"I don't know. I just watched you eating it because I didn't even know how to eat it."

"That's what I thought. It was a Western food called *saendūwich*'i... Wasn't it pretty tasty?"

"Yes," says Yōngch'ae, nodding and learning the word "*saendūwich*'i" in articulated pronunciation.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁸ Ibid., vol.1, p.124-5.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., vol.1, p.175.

The backdrop of their conversation is the modernizing city Seoul, as the narrator continues,

Their train had arrived at Namdaemun station. Though it was not completely dark yet, electric lights were illuminated here and there. The sound of trains, the sound of rickshaws — the city soundscape that includes all those sounds is combined with the sound of wooden shoes that resounds through the wide platform. To the ears of those who have lived in tranquil nature until now, it sounds noisy.

The city sound? It is the sound of civilization [*munmyōng ūi sori* 문명의 소리]. The noisier that sound is, the better the country is doing. The sound of wheels, the sound of steam and locomotives, and the sound of steel carriages... only when all those sounds are combined is an illustrious civilization born. Indeed, modern civilization is a civilization of the sound. There are not enough sounds in Seoul. *The sound of civilization must become so noisy that you cannot hear each other's voice at Chongno or Namdaemun.* But it is a pity that those four-hundred-thousand white-clothed people [i.e., Korean people] who live in the capital, Seoul, do not understand the meaning of this sound. And they are not concerned with this sound, either. They need to learn to listen to this sound, with pleasure, and in the end, they must make this sound themselves.²⁵⁰

Yōngch'ae's learning of the English word "sandwich," "in articulated pronunciation," bespeaks the narrator's expectation that all the Korean people will appreciate the clamorous soundscape of a mechanized modern city. The cacophonous writing of the opening of the novel, then, represents what the modern reader should learn to read in a novel, so that it circulates among the reading public, providing them with a vernacular to articulate modern life. Then, just as the deafening sound of a city center overwhelms people's intimate conversation, the novel must represent modern acoustic experiences, even at the cost of silencing the sounds that the audiences may be accustomed to enjoying in traditional reading experiences.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., vol.1, p.175-6. My italics.

Unlike what the narrator insists on, it is, of course, *not* “in tranquil nature” that his audience has lived. In the narrative, indeed, contrasted to the cacophonous “sound of civilization” are the harmonies of classical poetry and traditional narrative, which Yǒngch’ae particularly masters, and all the other characters, too, know to appreciate.

Yǒngch’ae’s youthful training in the Confucian classics — in particular the texts traditionally used for female moral education including *Lienüzhuan* 列女傳 (The Biographies of Virtuous Women) and the “Neize 內則” (Domestic Rules) chapter of *Liji* 禮記 (The Book of Rites) — is combined with extensive cultivation in classical Chinese poetry. This makes Yǒngch’ae a modern incarnation of the idealized femininity expressed in traditional Korean narrative literature, such as the canonical *Ch’unhyang chǒn* 춘향전 (Biography of Chu’unhyang, c.18th C). As a pleasure-quarter performer, Yǒngch’ae is mentored by Wǒlhwa, who, while disparaging her greedy and licentious customers, is keen on “high-Tang poets such as Li Taibai 李太白 [Li Bai 李白, 701-762], Gao Shi 高適 [c.704-765], and Wang Changling 王昌齡 [698-c.756]” and is attached to virtuous male protagonists in traditional narratives like Yang Ch’angnok 양창곡 in *Ongnumong* 옥루몽 (Dream in the Jade Chamber, 19th C) and Yi Toryǒng 이도령 in *Ch’unhyang chǒn*. When she teaches Yǒngch’ae Tang poetry, Wǒlhwa wonders, “Why were you and I born in a country like Korea?”; and she expresses the regret that “she was not born in Jiangnan 江南 during the high Tang era.” “She regretted, the narrative adds, that there was no Sima Xiangru who would seduce her with the Song of Phoenix, even though she would be a perfect Zhuo Wenjun.”²⁵¹ The narrative here refers to an

²⁵¹ Ibid., vol.1, p.62.

archetypal topos of unconditional love in classical Chinese literature recorded in sources like *Shiji* 史記 (Records of the Historian) and *Hanshu* 漢書 (The History of the Han).

The well-known story goes that Zhuo Wenjun 卓文君 (2nd C BCE) falls in love with Sima Xiangru 司馬相如 (179-127 BCE) as she hears the latter's passionate song "Feng qiu huang 鳳求凰" (A Male Phoenix Longs for a Female Phoenix).

In light of the idealized aesthetic and moral world of traditional literature, contemporary Korean society appears all the more corrupt and hopeless to Yŏngch'ae and Wŏlhwa. Adapting the anecdote of Sima Xiangru and Zhuo Wenjun in particular, and the narrative format of the "scholar and beauty" (*caizi jiaren* 才子佳人) romance subgenre in general, *Mujŏng* features a melodramatic moment at which Yŏngch'ae and Wŏlhwa, at Taedong River, suddenly hear an anonymous poem unexpectedly conveying refined aesthetic taste and great moral integrity. The song goes:

굽이지는 대동강이
능라도를 싸고도니
등두렷한 모란봉이
우쭈우쭈 춤을 추네
청류벽에 걸어앉아
가는 물아 말을 들어
청춘의 더운 피를
네게 부쳐 보내고저

Curving, Taedong River
Wraps Nŭlla Islet.
Towering, the Morang Peaks
Are dancing a rhythmic dance.
I sit at the Ch'ŏngnu cliff.
Listen to my words, running water!
I shall send to you
The boiling blood of my youth.

And then goes:

새벽빛이 솟는다
해가 오른다
땅 위에 만물이
기뻐 춤을 추노나
천하 사람 꿈꿀 제

The morning sunshine is gushing out;
The sun is rising.
Everything on earth
Is dancing a happy dance.
When everyone under the heaven is dreaming,

나만 일어나
하늘을 우러러
슬픈 노래 부르네

Only I am awake.
Looking up the heaven,
I sing a sorrowful song.

It turns out to be students of a newly-built school who are singing this song, whose content implies the themes of the youth and enlightenment. The content, on one hand, distances this poem from traditional poetics; but on the other, the song's form clearly conforms to an orthodox prosody of Korean verse based on three- and four-syllable lines, giving it traditional sonority. "There must be a true poet among them!" Wŏlhwa exclaims, and her intuition is eventually proven true, when she later witnesses the nobleness and virtue of the school principal's reformist political will. But Wŏlhwa, knowing that she will not be able to bring to fruition her admiring love of the principal due to the difference in social status, drowns herself in Taedong River. Wŏlhwa's message, "Make old poetry [*yennal si* 옛날 시] your life's companion,"²⁵² is firmly inscribed in Yŏngch'ae's mind, enabling her to endure harsh life as a pleasure-quarter girl in the vice-ridden society, until she reencounters her idealized "true poet," Hyŏngsik.

Youth of "the Age of Transition"

In sharp contrast with the scene of poetic communication at Taedong River, and with the world of "old poetry" that it is modeled upon, Yŏngch'ae's encounter with Hyŏngsik in the modernizing capital of Seoul is but a clumsy one. The young man and woman first exchange much emotion and shed many tears at their serendipitous

²⁵² Ibid., vol.1, p.65.

reencounter after a harsh seven years, but as he listens to Yǒngch'ae's lengthy story, related in a style strongly reminiscent of traditional narrative prose, Hyǒngsik soon stumbles upon questions that he as an enlightened individual cannot but raise. "But what if Yǒngch'ae has not learned anything until now? What if she has not received enough education to understand my heart and thought? ... Ah! What if Yǒngch'ae is ignorant? How could we make a happy family if she were ignorant? Ah! What if Yǒngch'ae is ignorant!"²⁵³ While Hyǒngsik thus wonders whether Yǒngch'ae has, like Sǒnhyǒng, obtained a proper modern education, Yǒngch'ae in turn worries, urged on by her traditional morality, whether Hyǒngsik may disdain her if he comes to know that she works in the pleasure quarter.²⁵⁴ Despite the long-awaited reencounter, the abundant emotions of the man and the woman fail to bridge the distance between them, which separates an enlightened, "heartless" (*mujǒng* 무정) subjectivity from the old "feeling" (*chǒng* 정), which has already lost its currency in the modern world.

Young Hyǒngsik, moreover, is powerless if enlightened. Hoping to pay off a thousand-*wǒn* ransom to rescue Yǒngch'ae out of the *kisaeng* business and become her guarantor, he ponders whether he could make that money by selling off a hundred Western books he has collected. He also muses about writing and selling a book in English; but he quickly realizes that it would take too long for him to first study English composition, and then to prepare a manuscript, send it to an American or English publisher, have them review and publish it, have them send a check across the Pacific, and finally receive it at a post office in Seoul. "No! Too slow... When would I

²⁵³ Ibid., vol.1, p.32.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., vol.1, p.33.

accomplish ... this all?”²⁵⁵ Hyöngsik is thus unable to cash in his first-class educational capital. He can only speak Korean and Japanese and cannot reach the English-speaking market, and Seoul is still too remote from the capitals of modern print culture. As an untested intellectual living in a peripheral city of global print culture, Hyöngsik’s Korean or Japanese writing would be too minor a product to create any value in the worldwide market.

At the same time, for the domestic audience, Hyöngsik’s scholarship would be too idiosyncratic and modern to be appreciated. “What was characteristic about Hyöngsik,” says the narrator, “was that he mixed a lot of English and dropped a lot of famous names and words from the West, and rambled on about unclear topics. *Hyöngsik’s speech and writing seemed as though they were literal translations [chikyök 직역] of Western writing.*”²⁵⁶ Elsewhere, Hyöngsik is criticized by his friend Sin Usön for his insufficient training in classical Chinese.²⁵⁷ Sin Usön, the narrator observes, “had the style of a chivalrous young man coming from somewhere like Suzhou or Hangzhou during the Tang era,”²⁵⁸ and he publishes in the end of the story a best-selling book about the future of Korea, which gains him “literary fame that resounded throughout the country.”²⁵⁹ Drawing upon the traditional literary capital — particularly erudition in classical Chinese and styles associated with it — Sin Usön can sell his writing and secure his position in the contemporary Korean literary field. But Hyöngsik, representing a more radical

²⁵⁵ Ibid., vol.1, p.53.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., vol.1, p.125. My italics.

²⁵⁷ “Hyöngsik, to begin with, does not have enough classical Chinese.” See: Ibid., vol.1, p.74.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., vol.1, p.73.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., vol.1, p.208.

cultural transformation, remains an obscure, immature, and unproven youth who is about to engage in lengthy study in a country across the Pacific. If money — one thousand *wŏn* — is the medium that reconciles the two distinct aesthetic value systems — the traditional and the modern — Hyŏngsik’s scholarship and ambition, owing to their transitional nature, cannot gain currency, at least for now.

Hyŏngsik’s inability to pay the thousand-*wŏn* ransom to save Yŏngch’ae, therefore, allegorizes a fundamental *aporia* involved in enlightenment in early-twentieth-century Korea: the liquidation of traditional cultural capital in order to become part of the global circulation of literary and cultural products might in turn entail irrelevance, inefficacy, and meaninglessness of what the diligent yet aloof, and “heartless” elites like Hyŏngsik envision in such terms as “modern Korean culture” and “new civilization.” Hyŏngsik’s work, which “seemed as though they were literal translations of Western writing [*sŏyang kŭrŭl chikyŏk han kŏt kat’atta* 서양 글을 직역한 것 같았다],” might indeed end up being not only cacophonous, but even a mere “dead translation,” to quote from Liang Shiqiu’s criticism of Lu Xun’s barely readable, “hard” translation.

Enlightenment and Emotion

Yŏngch’ae thus fails to be saved by her imagined “true poet” Hyŏngsik, despite her aesthetic and moral integrity, while Hyŏngsik is unable to meet the expectations a heroic *litteratus* would have to live up to in the traditional cultural imagination. It is this failed encounter, much aggravated by the sexual victimization of Yŏngch’ae, that drives the latter to despair and to the suicide attempt at Taedong River following the suit of

Wŏlhwa. What separates Yi Kwangsu's novel from the traditional literary imagination, then, is that Yŏngch'ae does not commit suicide, for the Japan-educated, enlightened woman Pyŏnguk discourages her from such a futile attempt. But in the narrative, it is not only Pyŏnguk, but also the narrator himself who is involved in rescuing and giving a new, modern life to Yŏngch'ae. The narrator begins to relate the story of the aftermath of Yŏngch'ae's desperate escape to Pyongyang by stating that he is going to give her a new story, which, then, will save her from the world of "old poetry." As the narrator starts to reveal Yŏngch'ae's fates following her suicide attempt:

Now let us talk about Yŏngch'ae for a while. Did she plow through the blue water of Taedong River and become a guest of the Dragon Palace?²⁶⁰

Some of you, the readers, might have felt sorry for Yŏngch'ae's death and shed tears. Others might have smiled to expect the cheap tricks of the novelists, which would have Yŏngch'ae be saved by a certain noble man just as she tries to drown herself, and have her live as a nun at a certain small temple until she and Hyŏngsik reencounter each other and happily exchange marriage vows, thus leading a life blessed with longevity, wealth, nobleness, and lots of sons. For in any old story books [*iyagi ch'aek* 이야기 책], those who do not have a son until the old age do end up having one, sons do become noble, and those who are drowned do eventually survive.

Some of you might have thought that Yŏngch'ae's decision to drown herself was appropriate, and praised her travel to Pyongyang; others might have reckoned that she did not need to drown herself and regretted her deeds. No matter how the diverse ideas of the readers and what I am now going to write about Yŏngch'ae's fate agree with or differ from each other, what if you compare your thoughts and mine, and consider their differences? That should be a very interesting thing to do.²⁶¹

In initiating Yŏngch'ae's story, the narrator explicitly announces that he is going to betray the expectations of the reader — reader of the "[traditional] novelists" or the "old story books." He also invites the reader to the story by suggesting that the very

²⁶⁰ To "become a guest of the Dragon Palace" is an idiom meaning to be drowned.

²⁶¹ Yi Kwangsu, *Yi Kwangsu chŏnjip*, vol.1, p.149.

undermining of the clichés should be part of the pleasure of reading it. (“[What] if you compare your thoughts and mines, and consider their differences?”) Thus the narrator mentions the implied reader’s typical responses based on the old morality and cultural habits as a counterpoint to the new story, one that gives Yŏngch’ae a new life. Rather than progressivist rhetoric, what saves Yŏngch’ae is a dialectical narrative, one that relates the “modern” story by evoking what is to be overcome by modernity. If the protagonist Hyŏngsik is portrayed as a subject committed to irreversible, “heartless” transition from the old to the new, the narrator is so positioned that he prompts the reader to enjoy “compar[ing]” (*pigyo* 比 較) the new story to the old, so that they can experience, with their aesthetic sensitivities, that fundamental transition for themselves. By re-engaging with the cultural past, therefore, the narrator *transculturates* the modern concepts that Hyŏngsik barely grasps as though “literal translations of Western writing,” and as such, are premature and ineffective. The narrator not only keeps reminding the reader of the fact that on the flip side of Hyŏngsik’s progressive knowledge lies his heartlessness and Yŏngch’ae’s tragic fates that it fails to prevent; yet he also reveals old aesthetic and moral values residing deep in Hyŏngsik’s own sensitivities, which, indeed, leads him to a crucial self-criticism.

Refusing the traditional moral ideology that regards victimization by rape as a disgrace, and therefore Yŏngch’ae’s suicide attempt as “noble,” Hyŏngsik posits essential humanity that transcends any particular virtues. “Human life does not exist merely for a single duty or moral standard; rather, it exists for the entire responsibility for the human and the universe. Therefore things such as loyalty (*ch’ung* 忠), filial piety (*hyo* 孝),

chastity, and fame are not at the heart of human life.”²⁶² Appending the English word “life” in parentheses to qualify the Korean word “*saengmyōng* 생명,” a modern neologism that translates the word “life,” the narrative draws a clear contrast between the old and the new moralities.²⁶³ The former forces her to sacrifice herself and the latter requiring her to live on, Yōngch’ae’s survival should embody the advent of modern morality. The story describes several epiphanic moments at which such an essentialist notion of humanity — or, what the story more specifically calls “the inner human” (*sok saram* 속사람) and “the true human” (*ch’amsaram* 참사람) — comes to Hyōngsik’s mind. He experiences one such moment right after he first meets Sōnhyōng:

Hyōngsik was surprised when he reached *Kyo-dong* district which he had frequented for the last four or five years. The streets, the houses, the stuff in those houses, the people on the streets, the utility poles, the towering post box — they were just as they had always been, but within those things, Hyōngsik saw colors and felt smells that he had never perceived before. In other words, all those things seemed to have gained new colors and meanings.

The people walking on the streets were not just people walking on the streets; they seemed to have something within them that he could not know. The usual voice of the tofu seller, ‘Tofu or tofu lees!’ seemed to begin to have some deeper meaning than just selling tofu or tofu lees.

Hyōngsik felt as though the scales had dropped from his eyes.

But in fact, it was not that scales were peeled off from his eyes, but that an eye that had been shut until then was now newly opened.

...

Everything had vivid colors and vivid smells.

...

‘The human’ within Hyōngsik had now been awakened. He started to see with his ‘inner eyes’ the ‘inner meaning’ of everything. Hyōngsik’s ‘inner human’ had thus been awakened.²⁶⁴

²⁶² Ibid., vol.1, p.98.

²⁶³ Ibid., vol.1, p.98.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., vol.1, p.57-8.

Hyōngsik's realization of essential humanity is dramatized as a phenomenological moment where the usual relationship between signifier and signified becomes suspended and dislocated, causing the world around him to lose its evident meaning. The epiphany arrives as the world's significance then presents itself to the protagonist's mind without any shadows — “He started to see with his ‘inner eyes’ the ‘inner meaning’ of everything” — as though he had obtained, if you will, an *intellectual intuition*.

A similar epiphany takes place when Hyōngsik travels to Pyongyang in an attempt to save Yōngch'ae from committing suicide. After losing track of Yōngch'ae's whereabouts, Hyōngsik stops by at a pleasure quarter house for breakfast, where he realizes that female performers whom he has despised in fact “are all the same human beings.”²⁶⁵ As he is served by a girl in that house, he begins to feel a kind of pleasure that he has never felt before, a pleasure caused by “the naked spirits merging with each other, stripped of man-made external skins.”

Such is the most admirable pleasure that the heaven gives to the human.

There is originally something in people's minds that takes pleasure in our seeing each other, but people wrap it with this or that skin to block and keep it from pouring out, making the pleasurable world frigid and sad.

...

They [pleasure-quarter girls] are also humans; there is “the true human” [*ch'am saram* 참 사람] in them...²⁶⁶

While Yōngch'ae is still missing, Hyōngsik decides to visit the tomb of Pak-*jinsa*, Yōngch'ae's father and his childhood mentor, who died a pathetic death in prison. But Hyōngsik “[does] not feel very sad” because “his mind was too happy to feel sorry for

²⁶⁵ Ibid., vol.1, p.107.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., vol.1, p.108.

anything.” “He thought he should enjoy watching a living person rather than feel sorry for a dead one.” He is surprised at the complete transformation of his state of mind: he cried to read Yŏngch’ae’s suicide note and traveled to Pyongyang with serious worries and wanted to wail at her father’s tomb, but now he does not feel sorrow at all at his beloved teacher’s burial place. “He smiled and wondered how much a person could change all of a sudden.”²⁶⁷ “Because Yŏngch’ae has died, [Hyŏngsik] felt rather relieved.”²⁶⁸

To Hyŏngsik, the world around him now appears totally aestheticized. On the train back from Pyongyang, he listens to the sound of the train wheels as a “joyful music” and their noise as “a heroic military march,” and sees the mountains as though painted in a single color, without any materiality of valleys, trees, or stones, like “a piece of painting.” “He does not try to think; his eyes and ears do not try to watch or listen”; but he sees the whole world completely revealing itself to his consciousness. He hears the sounds of the entire universe — those of faraway stars colliding with each other, ether flowing, grasses and trees growing, the blood circulating his body, and the cells receiving the blood. His mind thus returns to “the state of chaos” where the heaven and earth are created and vanish; he feels himself reborn as a new “self” out of this original state. “Now I am awakened to my life; I know the self exists ... The self exists, and I have knowledge, will, position, task, and color that no one else has.”²⁶⁹ Thus, to cite Yi Kwangsu’s expression in the essay “Munhak iran ha o?”, Hyŏngsik has now taken off his old clothes, gotten his old dirt off, and has rid himself of “the habits that has been passed

²⁶⁷ Ibid., vol.1, p.116.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., vol.1, p.132.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., vol.1, p.118.

on” and “the customs of the society,” metamorphosing into an independent individual with “[his] own knowledge” and “[his] own will.” In this perfect configuration where the world is reduced to a pure object and the self perceives it as a pure subject, Hyöngsik is being transformed from an old human being into the subject of “a new civilization” — an individual recognizing the entire world with his own worldview.

At this very moment of revelation, however, Hyöngsik is struck with a persisting doubt:

Hyöngsik shut his eyes and imagined the faces of all those people [around him]. ... Particularly the figure of Yöngch’ae lingered and appeared many times. ... Ah! Am I wrong? Am I too heartless [*mujöng* 무정]? Should I have tried to locate Yöngch’ae’s whereabouts for a little longer?

Even though Yöngch’ae had died, should I have tried to search for her body? Or, at least should I have stood on the banks of Taedong River and shed hot tears? Yöngch’ae died because she thought of me, but I do not even shed tears for Yöngch’ae. Ah! I am so heartless! I am not a human! [*a a, naega mujöng haguna, naega sarami aniroguna* 아아, 내가 무정하구나, 내가 사람이 아니로구나] With those thoughts in mind, though Hyöngsik’s body may have arrived at Namdaemun [in Seoul], his heart was still attached to Pyongyang.²⁷⁰

Just as Hyöngsik’s consciousness crossed the threshold of a new civilization, he is dragged back to the world of feeling (*chöng* 정). He remembers the shadows of his parents who have long been dead and the profiles of his acquaintances, and standing out among those images is the figure of Yöngch’ae. He regrets that he did not put enough effort in searching for her and did not even try to look for her dead body; he, above all, did not shed a single tear. At the exact moment that he left his old emotion behind and became a modern subject whose “inner human” had been awoken, he is with the doubt, “I am not a human!”

²⁷⁰ Ibid., vol.1, p.119.

In order to become a modern subject, Hyöngsik should have forgotten those humane feelings (*chöng*) that retained traces of old habits and episteme, including corrupt and “inhumane” implications praising Yöngch’ae’s suicide attempt. But the narrative exposes Hyöngsik’s attachment to those old “shackles.” One contradictory detail is Hyöngsik’s obsession with chastity and virginity. While listening to Yöngch’ae’s tragic story about the aftermath of Pak-*jinsa*’s arrest, Hyöngsik repeatedly expresses doubt that she may have lost virginity during those ordeals and even feels “hatred” for that and compares her to the pure and naïve Sönhöng.²⁷¹ Featuring Yöngch’ae’s prolonged storytelling, the narrator, making effective use of his own voice, creates a sense of suspense around the unknown “truth” of what happened to Yöngch’ae’s body, thereby attempting to retain the implied audience’s interest in this serialized novel. Hyöngsik’s attitudes toward Yöngch’ae’s becoming a pleasure-quarter performer derive not so much from concerns about her grim life in that profession, as from doubts about her chastity. The movements of Hyöngsik’s psychology during Yöngch’ae’s storytelling unequivocally undercut his enlightened view of human life. The narrative sheds penetrating light upon his wavering mind: “In theory [*iron ŭro nŭn* 이론으로는], Hyöngsik thought that Yöngch’ae’s behavior this time [of attempting suicide] was wrong, but in emotion [*chöng ŭro nŭn* 정으로는], he had to shed tears for her. He regarded Yöngch’ae as a ‘woman,’ but then he had to add adjectives and consider her an ‘old-style, yet chaste and passionate woman.’”²⁷² According to the conceptual understanding of essential humanity, Yöngch’ae’s suicide attempt is to be blamed and criticized, but

²⁷¹ Ibid., vol.1, p.29.

²⁷² Ibid., vol.1, p.98.

Hyöngsik nevertheless praises her chastity and passion in her decision to sacrifice herself, leading him to shed tears. He thus cannot reconcile his new “theory” with his old “emotion.”

In addition to the content of Yöngch’ae’s tragic story, it is *the form* of her storytelling that moves Hyöngsik’s heart.

[While telling the story,] Yöngch’ae did not appear the same even for a single moment: the expressions of her face and eyes were constantly changing as though a flow of fogs was passing by in front of her. And that changing appearance was indescribably beautiful.

Her voice also went high and low, became thick and thin, as the feelings [*chöng* 정] were aroused, sounding like subtle music. It was in fact not so much Yöngch’ae’s pitiable fate as the beautiful art of her storytelling [*mal somssi* 말씀씨] that made Hyöngsik ... shed tears.²⁷³

In Yöngch’ae’s direct speech, in fact, the text makes frequent use of three- and four-syllable phrase units, creating a rhythmical prose. As a progressive intellectual, Hyöngsik should have exorcised old morality and emotion, gaining a crystal-clear worldview; but as a man in “an age of transition,” his subjectivity still retains old virtues and feelings, which are evoked by the aesthetics of Yöngch’ae’s beautiful act of storytelling. Though enlightened and disenchanted, Hyöngsik, reveals the narrator, “is a man of much emotion [*chöng i manŭn Hyöngsik* 정이 많은 형식].”²⁷⁴

Moreover, the critical scene where Hyöngsik recalls his childhood attachment to Yöngch’ae and her father even dislocates the modern concept of national culture, around which Yi Kwangsu had constructed his critical discourse. Hyöngsik discovers an envelope enclosed in Yöngch’ae’s suicide note, which is written in “vernacular script in

²⁷³ Ibid., vol.1, p.40.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., vol.1, p.41.

the palace lady style” (*kungnyŏ ch’e ōnmun* 궁녀체 언문).²⁷⁵ The “vernacular script” is a traditional designation of Korean writing, *Hangul*, in contrast with Chinese script (*hanmun* 한문).²⁷⁶ In the enclosed envelope, Hyŏngsik discovers a piece of old Korean paper filled with Korean alphabets. It is a copybook that Hyŏngsik gave Yŏngch’ae when they were studying at Pak *jinsa*’s home school, at the mentor’s request that after learning Chinese-language textbooks for children, from *Ch’ŏnja mun* 천자문 (The Thousand Characters; Chn. *Qian zi wen* 千字文) and *Tongmong sŏnsŭp* 동몽선습 (Initial Learning for Youth) to “Kyemong p’yŏn 계몽편” (Chapter for Enlightenment), they should “learn the national script [*kungmun* 국문].” In Pak *jinsa*’s direct speech, Yi Kwangsu introduces the notion of “national script,” a more nationalistic naming for *Hangul* than the premodern and pejorative “vernacular script.” But those Hangul letters, each of which “appear[s] as though telling the story of the past” to Hyŏngsik,²⁷⁷ are embedded in the context of traditional pedagogy, where Hangul was taught only *after* working with the orthodox Chinese-character textbooks. While Yi Kwangsu pioneered the idea of a national literature, which must break with the old influences of Chinese civilization, “national writing” in his novel implies an overdetermined and, above all, *transnational* context in order to serve as an affective medium between the protagonist and his childhood girlfriend. Though such a complex context was precisely what Yi as a national

²⁷⁵ Ibid., vol.1, p.92.

²⁷⁶ This archaic designation often has pejorative connotations, as a book written in *Hangŭl* was dubbed “vernacular book” (*ŏnsŏ* 언서), as opposed to the “true book” (*chinsŏ* 진서), which means books in Chinese characters.

²⁷⁷ Yi Kwangsu, *Yi Kwangsu chŏnjip*, vol.1, p.95.

writer hoped to cleanse from the literature of a new civilization, his work, at one of its most “emotional” moments, conjures up precisely that intricate literary past.

Due to such ambivalence, the narrator himself questions the legitimacy of Hyöngsik’s “realization” as a progenitor, as he states: “Though Hyöngsik is self-confident that he is a realized ‘human’ [*saram* <사람>], he still has yet to be baptized by the fire of life.”²⁷⁸ “In short, he [Hyöngsik] is subjective, and a man of ideals, but is not a man of practice.”²⁷⁹ In this novel, therefore, the values of modern civilization exist only in a dialectical relationship with traditional moral and aesthetic values, while the former are undoubtedly appraised as being the guide to the nation’s modernization.

Refashioning the Aesthetic

In narrating a modernizing society, Yi Kwangsu’s novel thus creates a twofold world: the society is to progress toward a new civilization, but that process can only exist in dialogue with memories of the culture of the past. The habitus of the “heart” continues to dislocate and undermine the clear-cut, dichotomous, and “heatless” narrative of “modernization” as linear transition from tradition into modernity, rendering Yi Kwangsu’s novel a complex, ambiguous case. As the protagonist’s “modern,” yet merely abstract concepts fail to save Yöngch’ae, it is on its flipside — i.e., in the world of “emotion” — that the narrative relates Yöngch’ae’s psychological cure and salvation.

²⁷⁸ Ibid., vol.1, p.57.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., vol.1, p.125.

While Hyöngsik unsympathetically cancels his search for Yöngch'ae, Yöngch'ae meets Pyönguk on the train to Pyongyang and is dissuaded from the suicide attempt. An enlightened woman, Pyönguk “furiously attacks old morality” and “old thought” which shackle Yöngch'ae's mind, and tells her to “live according to [her] own will.” She then takes Yöngch'ae to her countryside home, where they spend time with Pyönguk's family until they embark upon study abroad in Tokyo. During those pleasurable days, “Pyönguk and Yöngch'ae deeply sympathized with each other [*kip'i chöng i tŭrötta* 깊이 정이 들었다].” The time they share in the countryside allows them to translate between the two distinct cultures they live in: Yöngch'ae learns from Pyönguk “new knowledge and Western feeling,” while Pyönguk from Yöngch'ae “old knowledge and Eastern feeling.” Even though Pyönguk has “disliked everything old,” Yöngch'ae's thought inspires her to appreciate “a number of aspects of old thought” and even prompts her to think that she now wants to “learn *Sohak* [Minor Learning] and *Yölyöchön* [The Biographies of Exemplary Women], and Chinese verse and prose [*hansi hanmun* 한시 한문].” She takes out the dusty copy of *Komun chinbo* 고문진보 [True Treasures of Old Writing] and learns and recites phrases. She plays the violin for Yöngch'ae, but now she takes so much pleasure in Chinese poetry that she “even forgets about the violin.” On the other hand, Yöngch'ae realizes that she has merely been “a model of certain moral standards” and not “an independent human,” and learns to enjoy the sound of the violin and comes to appreciate “Western music.” Yöngch'ae begins to “understand the meaning of the word ‘art’ for the first time” and realize that the music and dance that she performed as a pleasure-quarter entertainer was, in fact, “an art” and that she herself “is an artist.” “Yöngch'ae plucks the *kömungo* [traditional Korean zither] and plays the violin. But

these sounds all take on new colors. And in the eyes of Yŏngch'ae, tears of joy and sorrow gradually gathered.”²⁸⁰

In *Mujŏng*, the modern ideas of the “human” and “human life,” which Hyŏngsik upholds like “literal translations of Western writing,” fail to save Yŏngch'ae. As her tragic fate implies, such a simple introduction has to entail her sacrifice. The “humane” communication between them, then, only takes place in old sounds, through the old aesthetic sensibility and moral emotions, which in modernity barely retain their values. The narrator, without doubt, welcomingly transculturates liberating and empowering modern civilization in place of the nation’s cultural past, which Yi Kwangsu alleged had been servile, corrupt, and immoral. But he equally unequivocally tries to represent in a sympathetic voice what is to be sacrificed by this civilizing rhetoric, namely the existence of Yŏngch'ae. In representing this twofold world, the narrative features the crucial moment of Hyŏngsik’s self-criticism — “Ah! I am so heartless [*mujŏng* 무정]! I am not a human!” His self-criticism derives from his memories of the “feeling” (*chŏng* 정) which the old culture expressed and communicated, even if, to Yi, it may not deserve the name of “culture,” and particularly, not of “national culture,” by modern standards. The marginalized remainders of old “feeling” thus bring about the paradoxical inversion of the significance of the word “human,” where modern humanity turns out to be “inhuman,” while traditional inhumanness appears as though more “human” — the essential moment somehow reminiscent of what Hegel describes in terms of the master-slave dialectics.²⁸¹

²⁸⁰ Ibid., vol.1, p.157-162.

²⁸¹ “The *truth* of the independent consciousness [of the master] is accordingly the servile consciousness of the servant.” (G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p.117.) This is the moment in which the master’s consciousness actually turns out to be “the unessential consciousness,” and this, in return, makes it happen

For Lu Xun, the transculturation of Western civilization must be synonymous with self-criticism, and for Yi Kwangsu, too, the realization of a new civilization is to be pursued through a critical engagement with the self in the age of transition. Hyōngsik’s immature, subjective, and hasty “literal translation” of Western discourse thus must lead him to the painful self-abnegation (“I am not a human!”), which Lu Xun would allegorize in terms of the “stew[ing] of [his] own flesh” on the Promethean fire. But Yi Kwangsu’s protagonist does not put himself too long on the translational fire, or wait until his self-criticism becomes “tastier.” Instead, the protagonist gets engaged to Sōnhyōng, who seems to allow him to exorcise the shadows of Yōngch’ae and, to employ again Lu Xun’s rhetoric, become a true, heroic Prometheus. As the young man is unable to endure the torment of self-criticism, the striving for new civilization in *Mujōng* is thus left to the compassionate aesthetic communication between Yōngch’ae and Pyōngguk. In terms of their dialogical pursuit of harmony between old and new sounds — harmony of the *kōmungo* and the violin that gives their sounds totally “new colors” — and the recognition of traditional cultural practices as a form of “art,” the novel allegorizes the creation of a new aesthetic, an aesthetic that will finally be able to give veritable meaning and expression to the transculturated concepts of the “human” and “human life.”

The new culture encrypted in the intimate and secluded communication between Yōngch’ae and Sōnhyōng suddenly materializes itself in a state of exception.²⁸² In the

that the servant’s “consciousness [is] forced back into itself” and “transformed into a truly independent consciousness.”

²⁸² One important detail is that Pyōngguk obtains permission from the police to hold the charity concert. Owing to severity of the sudden floods, the police are said to be still “looking for rescue measures” and thank Pyōngguk for her helpful proposal. Natural disaster suspends the power disparity and political antagonism in the colonial society, creating a state of exception. (Yi Kwangsu, *Yi Kwangsu chōnjip*, vol.1, p.202.)

climax of the novel, serious floods halt the train the four characters take to leave for study abroad. The sublime landscape of natural disaster and its miserable victims “[make] them forget about the idea of the individual and [give] them a shared idea — the idea that everyone has as a human being.”²⁸³ The larger-than-life force makes the protagonists once again face the fundamental idea of the “human,” and opens up a certain utopian space which they are led to actualize by organizing a charity music concert. The new culture that this unexpected moment projects is certainly a national one, as the young man and women are united around the question, “by what means shall we save Korean people”; but as the aesthetic interaction between Yŏngch’ae and Pyŏnguk clearly suggests, that new, *national* culture has its root in a transnational cultural past.²⁸⁴

In the ad hoc charity concert, Pyŏnguk plays “a doleful air from *Aida*” on the violin. The narrator describes the scene: “The audience becomes silent; only the subtle sound on the four strings reverberates in their hearts. ... Crushed in grief, they were about to cry. As Pyŏnguk’s hand slowly moves up and down along the strings, the breath of the audience stops and continues as though following that movement.” Attempting to convey that pivotal aesthetic communion that Pyŏnguk’s violin creates among the fictional audience, the narrator then has recourse to classical Chinese tradition; as he continues, “Rather than my explaining at length the taste of listening to that sorrowful tune, it would be most convenient to recall ‘The Song of the Pipa,’ which the ancient poet sung in Jiangzhou [where he took the post of] Sima.”²⁸⁵ “Song of the Pipa” (Kor. Pip’a haeng 비파행; Chn. Pipa xing 琵琶行) is one of the canonical *yuefu* poems by the great mid-

²⁸³ Yi Kwangsu, *Yi Kwangsu chŏnjip*, vol.1, p.198-9.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, vol.1, p.207.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, vol.1, p.203.

Tang poet Bai Juyi 白居易 (772-846), which is said to have been composed in Jiangzhou where the poet had been relegated to the post reserved for political transgressors, called “Sima.” Bai Juyi’s masterpiece is set against the backdrop of a moonlit riverbank where the poet sends off a guest, and happens to hear a song sung by a former pleasure-quarter performer. The poet is all the more touched by the song as his situation as a demoted official echoes the lonesome life of the Pipa player who has passed her prime. The poem’s occasion and theme are thus clearly heterogeneous to those of the novel, rendering rather inappropriate the narrator’s illustration of an air from *Aida* by means of analogy with the mid-Tang *yuefu*. But the reference to “Song of the Pipa” must instead be inspired by the poem’s hauntingly beautiful transposition of the performance of the Pipa zither into poetic language. Asking the reader to remember the Tang poem’s well-known description of the Pipa tune, the narrator expects them to supplement the prose with their memories of the poetic past in order to make sense of Pyŏnguk’s moving violin performance. The narrator thereby translates the unfamiliar Western sounds into the audience’s familiar acoustic imagination.

Yŏngch’ae then sings two hymns that she learned from Pyŏnguk, and the three women sing in unison a rather simple song:

어린아기 보칩니다
젓 달라고 보칩니다

A little baby frets;
Frets for breast milk.

짜도 젓이 아니 나니
무엇 먹여 살리리까

I try to squeeze it out but it does not come out;
What should I feed to save this baby?

봄에나 여름에나
애써 벌여 놓았던 걸

What we worked hard to make
In the spring and the summer

사정없는 붉은 물결

Is swept away by the red water

하룻밤에 쓸어 나가	That appeared for no reason.
비가 오고 바람 치고 날새조차 저됩니다	Rain falls and winds blow, Even the sun is setting.
늙은 부모 어린 처자 집 없으니 어디서 자	The old parents and the young wife and child, Where should they sleep without a home?
따뜻한 밥 한 그릇 국에 말아 드립시다	A bowl of warm rice, Let me offer to you in soup.
따뜻한 밥 한 그릇 국에 말아 드립시다	A bowl of warm rice, Let me offer to you in soup.

Composed mostly in four-syllable phrase unites and given sporadic accents by three-syllable phrases, the song gives an impression of simplicity and naïveté. “The simplicity of the song and the gentleness of the tune” stir the flood-victims’ emotions and have them “finally shed tears.” Despite its rustic taste, however, this song is said to be “a [Korean] translation [*pŏnyŏk* 번역] by Hyŏngsik of a song that Yŏngch’ae has just composed in classical Chinese.”²⁸⁶ The devastating floods and the suffering of the victims remind the protagonists of “the idea that everyone has as a human being” in a state of exception. The music they make gives expression to that fundamental humanity, and thus allegorizes a new culture that can “save Korean people.” Undermining cultural essentialism, the national culture that Yi Kwangsu thus allegorically illustrates at the novel’s climax does not exist without *transculturation*. That *transculturation*, moreover, not only involves Western sounds and a Korean acoustic imagination, but it also fundamentally engages literary memories of classical Chinese, which constitute an integral part of the latter. Only by conjuring up those transnational cultural memories can the narrative

²⁸⁶ Ibid., vol.1, p.203.

communicate the violin performance to the contemporary audience and present an emotional song in *Hangul* that touches the hearts of the suffering peasants. If the imagined cultural nationhood must “invent tradition,”²⁸⁷ the cultural past that Yi Kwangsu engaged with in his creation of modernist literature is a *transnational* one, making the *national* identity of the literature he created complex and, above all, essentially related to other modern national literatures in East Asia.

Conclusion

The novel *Mujöng*'s protagonist Hyöngsik is first and foremost a young believer in enlightenment. While the novel confidently entrusts the nation's future to this ambitious youth, its ideal to realize “the world ... filled with feeling [*ujöng* 우정],” rather, hinges upon this man's self-critical moment, when he realizes that pursuit of enlightenment may itself entail meaninglessness for human life, expressed in the exclamation: “Ah! I am so heartless [*mujöng* 무정]! I am not a human!”. This aporetic consciousness as an East Asian modernist is echoed by Lu Xun's refusal of the Promethean role in transculturating the West. For Lu Xun, as well as the early Yi Kwangsu, transculturation is a practice of self-criticism, the urge to critically reinterpret their cultural pasts in light of “the West” to project a new cultural modern.

Rather than relying on the rhetoric of particularism, we have examined these translingual practices in Lu Xun's criticism and Yi Kwangsu's narrative from a trans-East

²⁸⁷ See: Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger eds., *The Invention of Tradition*.

Asian comparative perspective. (I will examine the early Lu Xun's creative works in Chapter Six, in comparison with its intertextualization in colonial Korean and Taiwanese works.) Both writers practiced modern literature as a crucial means for refashioning the aesthetic realm for modernity, which would then bring about cultures that may give back human meaning to enlightenment.²⁸⁸ In Lu Xun and Yi Kwangsu, even though those cultures are quintessentially represented as *national*, they resonate with each other trans-regionally, precisely because their cultural pasts had fundamentally been intertwined through the medium of classical Chinese. In the next chapter, I will continue our examination of East Asian literary modernity by considering the Japanese writer Natsume Sōseki's work.

²⁸⁸ Cultural imagination in modern East Asia as a critique of enlightenment may be meaningfully compared to Theodor Adorno's and Max Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. But this is the subject of another study.

Chapter Four

Aesthetics and Morality

Modernism as Self-Criticism in Lu Xun, Yi Kwangsu, and Natsume Sōseki (II)

Introduction

1. Giving a Universal Foundation to Literature: Sōseki's Early Criticism
 2. Reinterpreting the Chinese Poetic Tradition: *Kusamakura*
 3. "Ethics" through Self-Criticism: *Gubijinsō* and *Kokoro*
- Conclusion: Traveling through Manchuria and Korea

Introduction

Continuing our discussion in Chapter Three, this chapter is devoted to examining the early criticism, novels, and a travelogue of one of the most important founding figures of modern Japanese literature, Natsume Sōseki 夏目漱石 (1867-1916), whose prominence may be only matched by Mori Ōgai 森鷗外 (1862-1922). Just like his Chinese and Korean counterparts whom we discussed in Chapter Three, Sōseki, a scholar of English and English literature, transculturated Western aesthetics and played a pioneering role in the practice of "modern literature" in Japan, and in doing so, grappled with disparity between that new endeavor and the literary tradition that he had internalized, an essential part of which was the tradition of classical Chinese literature. That transnational cultural past, then, constituted the source of his self-critical pursuit of an ethical core of modernist aesthetic endeavor.

In what follows, I will first explore Sōseki's early literary criticism, in which he tries to establish a creative position that can bridge and transcend the disparity between the notions of literature in Japan and the West. I will then consider three of his novels: *Kusamakura* 草枕 (Kusamakura, 1906), an embodiment of the writer's aestheticist endeavor, which is written in an archaic style heavily dependent on classical Chinese tradition, and eventually makes him confront the problematic relationship between aesthetics and morality; *Gubijinsō* 虞美人草 (The Poppy, 1907), Sōseki's first novel as professional writer, which builds upon *Kusamakura* and revisits the essential question of aesthetics and morality; and *Kokoro* 心 (Kokoro, 1914), in which Sōseki thematizes self-criticism in his search for the moral significance of the modern aesthetic. To conclude this chapter, I will finally consider Sōseki's controversial travelogue "Man Kan tokoro dokoro 満韓ところどころ" (Travels in Manchuria and Korea, 1909), thereby illustrating the transnational cultural past as an integral source of his aesthetic-moral endeavor.

1. Giving a Universal Foundation to Literature: Sōseki's Early Criticism

Theory of Literature

Natsume Kinnosuke 夏目金之助, better known by his pen name Natsume Sōseki, was born in 1867, just one year before the Meiji Restoration, into the family of a village

head in the Edo region of Ushigome Babashita.²⁸⁹ Once powerful, the family had lost its fortune amidst the social unrest in late-nineteenth-century Japan, and, as the fifth and unwanted child of that family, Sōseki was soon adopted by a married couple. He lived with them until the age of nine, when the couple divorced. Sōseki, together with the adoptive mother, then returned to the parents' home, but because of discord between the father and the adoptive father, his legal status was not settled until his early twenties. Sōseki frequently changed school, straddling the old education, based on the Confucian classics and a modern pedagogy, particularly in the English language.

In 1884, he entered the elite Preparatory Course for college admission, and in 1890, he was admitted to the Imperial University, which had just been established four years before. Sōseki was one of the few students to major in English literature. Upon graduation from this elite institution, Sōseki took a job as English teacher in Tokyo; yet unhappy with the work, he soon moved to schools in Matsuyama and Kumamoto. In 1900, he was selected for a governmental fellowship and was sent to England for study. In London, he attended lectures at University College London and was mentored by a private tutor, yet before long he suffered a nervous breakdown, which prompted him to return to Japan earlier than planned, in 1903.

Upon his return from London, Sōseki was appointed Lecturer in English literature at the Imperial University as well as at the First Higher School, an elite preparatory school in Tokyo. Sōseki inherited the position at the Imperial University from Lafcadio Hearn (1850-1904). A first job assigned to the newly hired lecturer was to offer an introductory course on English literature. Sōseki had come back from England with

²⁸⁹ For a comprehensive biographical account of Sōseki, see: Komiya Toyotaka, *Natsume Sōseki*. In English, see: Beongcheon Yu, *Natsume Sōseki*.

reading notes “written in tiny script the size of a fly’s head, amounting to a stack of five to six inches tall,” which, as he describes, were his “only fortune” taken from abroad.²⁹⁰ He offered a two-year-long lecture-course based on those notes, and at the request of a publisher, turned it into a volume entitled *Bungakuron* 文学論 (Theory of Literature) in 1907. This book, and its sequel *Bungaku hyōron* 文学評論 (Literary Criticism), published in 1909, constitute the early Sōseki’s most developed critical works.

In 1905, Sōseki published the first part of the novel *Wagahai wa neko dearu* 吾輩は猫である (I Am a Cat, 1905), his debut work. While teaching at schools in Tokyo, Sōseki began to devote himself to writing, and published several short stories and essays, which made him popular. In 1907, he decided to quit all his teaching positions and took a job at the leading newspaper *Asahi shinbun* 朝日新聞, becoming a professional writer. During the nine years before his death in 1916, Sōseki wrote fifteen mid- to full-length novels, most of whom were first serialized in *Asahi shinbun*, as well as numerous essays, lectures, critical essays, *haiku*, and classical Chinese poems.

In delivering the lectures that would be put together in *Bungakuron*, Sōseki was concerned with the disparity between the notions of “literature” in Japan and England, which, to him, seemed incompatible. As one of the earliest English literature majors in the Imperial University, the young Sōseki had struggled with the question of how he could understand and appreciate works of English literature “as a Japanese.” He confesses, in the famous memoir-style talk “*Watashi no kojinchugi* 私の個人主義” (My

²⁹⁰ Natsume Sōseki, *Sōseki zenshū*, vol.16, p.10.

Individualism) delivered at Gakushūin in 1914 that after studying works of English literature and their criticism by English critics for three years as student, he “could not understand at all ... what literature was to begin with — needless to say what English literature was.” Studying both literary works and their criticism on the sole basis of foreign discourse, the young English major found himself unable to engage with his field of study, just like “a blind man peeking through the hedge.” Sōseki eventually obtained a bachelor’s degree in literature and became a teacher of English, but even with that highly esteemed recognition, he continued to feel deep-seated discontent. “Something unpleasant, half-baked, and vague was hiding everywhere,” as he describes in “*Watashi no kojinchugi*,” and that feeling continued to occupy him, making him feel even worse than the sense of “emptiness.” Surrounded by contemporary Japanese intelligentsias who “behave arrogantly by blindly obeying whatever the Westerners say,” not only could he not share his agony with his colleagues, but also found himself acting just like those people.²⁹¹ The same “neurotic” state of mind lingered even after he moved to London; and even after devouring for a year what materials were available on English literature there, he was not relieved from the same problem. Those efforts, however, finally provided him with an idea that he calls the “self-centered” (*jiko hon’i* 自己本位) attitude, as he writes:

When for instance a Western person says a certain poem is well composed, or its tone is very good, that is an opinion of that person from the West. It might provide me with a reference point, but if I disagree with him, I do not have to repeat it at all. Since I am an independent Japanese and not a slave of the English, I, as a member of the nation, must understand this. And from the standpoint of the

²⁹¹ Ibid., vol.16, p.591-3.

world's common sense that honesty should be valued, too, I must not give up my opinions.²⁹²

Commonsensical as it may sound, this shift of perspective led Sōseki to undertake a task of fundamental importance: “I came to realize that the only way for me to achieve salvation was to *create by myself the concept of what literature was from the ground up.* [bungaku towa donnamono de aru ka sono gainen wo konponteki ni jiriki de tsukuriageru

文学とは何んなものであるか、その概念を根本的に自力で作上げる].”²⁹³

Despite the nationalist underpinning of the above quote, Sōseki's “concept” of what literature is should by no means be something particular to a certain national culture; instead, it would need to explain the ultimate question of “what literature [is]” in a universal sense — *more universal*, if you will, than the alleged “universality” of Western critical standards and aesthetic values. Only then would Sōseki be able to explain the reason behind the existence of distinct literary aesthetics in different parts of the world, which had long troubled him, and thereby forge his own “self-centered,” yet more universal, critical criteria to judge literary works. In order to thus reexamine literature “from the ground up” and “build anew” his “own standpoint” as to literature, Sōseki decided to “read books that were not at all concerned with the literary arts” and devote himself to “scientific examination and philosophical contemplation.”²⁹⁴ For “[he] believed that reading books on literature in order to understand what literature was would

²⁹² Ibid., vol.16, p.594. My italics.

²⁹³ Ibid., vol.16, p.593.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., vol.16, p.595.

be [as futile as] trying to wash off blood with blood.”²⁹⁵ The result was his *Bungakuron*, which is centered upon the well-known formula “ $(F+f)$ ”:

In general, the form of literary substance must be expressed by the formula $(F+f)$, where F designates impressions or ideas at the focal point of consciousness and f indicates the emotions that attend them. In this case, the formula stated above signifies impressions and ideas in two aspects, that is to say, as a compound of the cognitive factor (F) and the emotional factor (f).²⁹⁶

Citing contemporary authorities in experimental psychology of consciousness such as Théodule-Armand Ribot (1839-1916), Lloyd Morgan (1852-1936), and Edward Wheeler Scripture (1864-1945), Sōseki formulates literature in terms of the cognitive and emotional function of human consciousness.

For the young Sōseki, the transculturation of modern literature, from England in particular, and from the West in general, did not signify a mere transposition of “literature” as it was practiced and received in the West into Japan. Critiquing such a “blind” introduction, Sōseki instead undertook to found “literature” upon a more universal ground; and in order to do so, he consulted scientific discourse *outside of* the literary arts. Once his scientific “theory of literature” was complete, it would then be able to explain literary phenomena regardless of cultural contexts, be they English or Japanese. Sōseki’s universalist desire, however, is at the same time bolstered by his “self-centered” attitude as a modern Japanese writer since, as he explains, establishing a universal “theory” of literature was “the only way” for a Japanese to engage in modern literary practice. (“I am an independent Japanese and not a slave of the English...”) The

²⁹⁵ Natsume Sōseki, *Sōseki zenshū*, vol.14, p.9. For Sōseki’s *Bungakuron*, see: Natsume Sōseki, ed. by Michael K. Bourdaghs, et al., *Theory of Literature and Other Critical Writings*.

²⁹⁶ Natsume Sōseki, *Sōseki zenshū*, vol.14, p.27.

construct of national literary identity in Sōseki, therefore, displays a structural analogy with the other East Asian modernists, Lu Xun and Yi Kwangsu. Just as Lu Xun and Yi Kwangsu conceived of the creation of modern national literature in China and Korea as a practice that led to imagining and realizing a new culture of universal significance, so did the young Sōseki come to hold the idea that without a universal conception, the practice of literature would be inconceivable and futile in modern Japan. As we discussed in Chapter Three, the exploration of the question of national literature in Lu Xun and Yi Kwangsu necessarily involved a self-critical engagement with literary tradition; and Sōseki's conception of national literature, too, was fundamentally informed by a modern reinterpretation of the traditional literary arts. And precisely as was the case with the Chinese and Korean writers, the literary past that Sōseki critically conjured up, indeed, was also one that had a regional, *trans-East Asian* dimension.

According to his retrospect, Sōseki, prior to being exposed to Western aesthetic discourse, had learned the idea of “what literature was” not from Japanese, but from classical Chinese materials. The “theory of literature” that he tried to create, therefore, was essentially inspired by what appeared to him an irreconcilable disparity not so much between English and Japanese, as between English and *Chinese* ideas about literature. As he writes in the preface to *Bungakuron*,

In my childhood I was very fond of studying the Chinese classics. Despite my having studied them for only a short while, I nonetheless acquired from the Four Histories [*sakokushikan* 左国史漢; i.e., four major classical Chinese histories: *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (The Zuo Commentary to the Spring and Autumn Annals), *Guoyu* 國語 (Legends of the States), *Shiji* 史記 (Record of the Historian), and *Hanshu* 漢書 (History of the Han)] the vague definition of what literature was like. I then implicitly assumed that English literature must be of a similar nature and, if that were so, I believed it was a subject that one could devote one's life to studying without regret. The decision I made on my own to enter the Department of

English Literature [at the Imperial University], which was hardly fashionable at the time, was based entirely on this childish, simplistic reasoning.

...

It was quite regrettable that, given my innate stupidity and lack of scholarly ability, I had not attained any mastery of foreign literature, my supposed specialty. Given my past record, it seemed unlikely that my scholarly abilities would improve much in the future. Faced with these poor prospects, it seemed that I must develop some other means besides scholarly ability if I wanted to enhance my appreciation [of foreign literature]. But I was finally unable to discover any such method. In reflecting on my own past, moreover, I realized that, despite lacking a solid scholarly foundation in the Chinese classics, I nonetheless believed myself able to fully appreciate them. Of course, my knowledge of English was not particularly deep, but I did not believe it to be inferior to my knowledge of the Chinese classics. That my sense of like and dislike between the two was so widely divergent despite my having roughly equal scholarly abilities must mean that the two were of utterly different natures. In other words, what is called “literature” [*bungaku* 文学] in the realm of the Chinese classics, on the one hand, and what is called “literature” in English, on the other, must belong to different kinds [*ishurui no mono* 異種類のもの] and cannot be subsumed in a single definition.

...

Facing this situation, I decided that I must, first of all, resolve the essential question: What is literature?²⁹⁷

Sōseki, to be sure, was a connoisseur of *haiku* and first made his name as a *haiku* poet. Reference to elements of traditional Japanese culture, moreover, abounds throughout his *oeuvre*. But when it comes to the concept of “literature” itself, what he imagines as the counterpart to the “English” idea is not a certain Japanese notion, but one that is “in the realm of the Chinese classics.” Echoing Yi Kwangsu’s self-critical statement that we quoted in the previous chapter: “In sum, Korean literature only has a future; it does not have a past,”²⁹⁸ Sōseki in fact appreciated the literary tradition of his nation with reservations. “As I look back at Japan’s past in fresh eyes, I feel some kind of apprehension,” he says. “Political, military, religious, and economic aspects” aside, “with

²⁹⁷ Ibid., vol.14, p.7-9.

²⁹⁸ Yi Kwangsu, *Yi Kwangsu chōnjip*, vol.1, p.555.

regard to the domain relevant to me, i.e., the domain of literature, I almost end up suffering from the lack of inspiration that comes from the past ... Some may regard *The Tale of Genji* [Genji monogatari 源氏物語, early 11th C], Chikamatsu [Chikamatsu Monzaemon 近松門左衛門; 1653-1725], or Saikaku [Ihara Saikaku 井原西鶴; 1642-93] to be materializations of the genius that makes our past illustrious, but I cannot even think of having such self-conceit,” declares the writer.²⁹⁹ The now canonical work and playwrights in Japanese literary tradition were not able to give Sōseki a solid sense of a literary “past,” which would provide him with “inspiration” comparable to what Western literature and the Chinese classics had to offer. Placing Japanese classics on an equal ground to other works of world-literary value, to him, even amounted to “self-conceit.” The young Sōseki’s critical attempt at tackling the “essential question” — What is literature? — therefore emerged from the allegedly unbridgeable chasm between Western aesthetic discourse, on the one hand, and his cultural habitus, which was in large part rooted in classical Chinese tradition, on the other. Just like many other modern East Asian writers, Sōseki thus explored modern national literature within a multilayered literary field — one that involved not only Western and national discourses, but also an aesthetic tradition that had had regionally universal relevance: the tradition of classical Chinese. Precisely due to this overdetermined structure, Sōseki’s works, just like works of his peers of the region, call on us to examine them in a trans-East Asian comparative framework.

²⁹⁹ Natsume Sōseki, “Tōyō bijutsu zufu 東洋美術図譜” (1910), *Sōseki zenshū*, vol.16, p.306-7.

Universality of Taste

Bungakuron, however, was a failure. As he himself would later observe: “For various circumstances, I gave up my task [of making the concept of literature from the ground up]. *Bungakuron*, which I authored, is the commemoration [of my efforts], the corpus of their failure, just like the corpus of a deformed child. In other words, it is like the ruins of an incomplete city that was destroyed in an earthquake even before the construction was concluded.”³⁰⁰ In *Bungaku hyōron*, published two years after *Bungakuron*, Sōseki took a different approach to the problem “What is literature?” Whereas the critic explored resources external to literature, namely psychology, in *Bungakuron*, he formulated, in its sequel, an alternative idea based on discussions strongly reminiscent of Kantian aesthetics, particularly its notion of “subjective universality.”³⁰¹ His new arguments in *Bungaku hyōron* further elucidate how he conceived of literary practice in modern Japan within transcultural contexts.

Ideas that Sōseki lays out in the preface to *Bungaku hyōron* hinge upon the concept of what he calls “universality of taste” (*shumi no fuhensei* 趣味の普遍性). Once again rejecting the critical attitude that sacrifices one’s own aesthetic judgment for the sake of others’ critical authority, Sōseki maintains:

Even though the languages are different, the contents are still literature. As long as we are concerned with the same literature, and must judge according to our tastes, then we must not abandon our own standards of taste or obey other people’s opinions. The moment you obey others, you will lose your taste. If you

³⁰⁰ Natsume Sōseki, *Sōseki zenshū*, vol.16, p.596.

³⁰¹ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, p.97.

lose your taste, you are not qualified to critique even the literature of your own nation, let alone, needless to say, foreign literature.³⁰²

Sōseki to begin with acknowledges that taste is “local,” for it is formed in relation to the history, legends, institutions, and customs specific to a certain society. He also foregrounds the difficulty of appreciating the “delicate shades of meaning” in foreign language, implying that this tends to give authority to native critics.³⁰³ Cultural, social, and linguistic difference thus inevitably causes diversity of aesthetic taste. But this very fact at the same time means, first, that regarding foreign critics’ judgment as the only standard is tantamount to falsely universalizing what is in fact the taste particular to a society³⁰⁴; and, second, that merely considering one’s own taste to be the only aesthetic standard equals to disregarding the plurality of taste. In order to avoid the simple universalization of a particular, Sōseki then calls attention to certain feelings that seem to be shared across cultures, such as the parents’ grief over a dead child or people’s interest in sexual affairs. Inspired by such “partial” “universality of taste,” Sōseki further contends that whereas tastes may vary with regard to objects themselves, when it comes to “relationship and disposition” among objects, people’s tastes are shared universally.³⁰⁵ Taking examples of composition of painting and succession of events in a novel, Sōseki, very much agreeing with, again, Kantian formalist aesthetics, holds that taste in form, if

³⁰² Natsume Sōseki, *Sōseki zenshū*, vol.15, p.50.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, vol.15, p.46.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, vol.15, p.49.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, vol.15, p.42-3.

not content, is universal. He thus concludes that “in literary work, there must be necessary agreement [of taste] in certain respects.”³⁰⁶

Sōseki thus foregrounds shared aesthetic tastes, and this argument, indeed, is bolstered by the prescription that the area of universal taste will be expanded in modern times.

Taste tends to be unified — or become universal — as transportation in the world becomes more frequent and people better communicate with each other. It is an indubitable fact that the European countries such as England, France, and Germany have already been affected by this universalizing force [*fuhenryoku* 普遍力] in terms of their general tastes. Since it started to communicate with foreign countries, Japan has also been receiving the effect of this force, although even the first phase of that effect has not yet finished.³⁰⁷

Increasing transportation, and the increasing transculturation that it enables, in modern times will need to put aesthetic taste under the “universalizing force,” Sōseki argues. Just as the European countries now seem to share similar literary tastes, Japan will take part in that process as it opens its doors to global transportation. The “self-centered” attitude, with its very particularity, therefore, involves one’s own aesthetic value in this growing transnational literary communication, allowing that person to participate in this modern cultural dynamism. As a writer in a nation in which the “universalizing force” has just barely begun to work, Sōseki, precisely by engaging his “self-centered” aesthetic taste in communication with other aesthetic values, distances his literary and critical endeavor from both a simple universalism and a naïve particularism. He thereby engages himself in

³⁰⁶ Ibid., vol.15, p.45.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., vol.15, p.50.

a pursuit of universal aesthetic values in global transculturation that was precisely the practice of *modern literature* in Japan.

Just like the cases of Lu Xun and Yi Kwangsu, understanding Sōseki's modernist literature therefore fundamentally calls for a thorough analysis of how the writer transculturated diverse literary and cultural texts in his practice of modern, "national" literature. In doing so, we must attend to the fact that "the history, legends, institutions, and customs" that he argues form aesthetic tastes had historically existed, in the case of Japan as well as of other East Asian countries, *not* independently within a national context, but in *trans-regional* communication. In transculturating Western discourse into Japan, Sōseki therefore needed to reengage with a literary tradition that had been created through trans-East Asian cultural exchanges, especially through the medium of classical Chinese.

2. Reinterpreting the Chinese Poetic Tradition: *Kusamakura*

As many critics have pointed out, within the mere twelve years when Sōseki produced creative works, his work transformed significantly.³⁰⁸ While still working as lecturer at the Imperial University, in 1906, Sōseki published a novel called *Kusamakura*. In this fiction, Sōseki featured a young painter trained in Western painting who sets off

³⁰⁸ My interpretation of Sōseki has been helped in particular by the following works: Karatani Kōjin, *Sōseki ron shūsei*; Komori Yōichi, *Sōseki ron: nijū isseiki wo ikinuku tame ni*; Haga Tōru, et al., ed., *Sōseki wo yomu*. In English-language scholarship, I especially consulted: William N Ridgeway, *A Critical Study of the Novels of Natsume Sōseki, 1867-1916*; Alan J. Turney, *Sōseki's Development as a Novelist Until 1907: With Special Reference to the Genesis, Nature, and Position in His Work of Kusa makura*; Sakuko Matsui, *Natsume Sōseki as a Critic of English Literature*.

on a walking trip to a remote village without any other aims than to indulge in aesthetic contemplation; tired of mundane affairs and the hassles of modern life, the painter devotes himself in pursuing aesthetic moments when the world reveals itself in a single phrase of poetry, particularly of classical Chinese poetry. The pure aesthetic world that Sōseki undertook to reconstruct through the gaze of the painter, however, left him with discontent. Sōseki then quit his prestigious academic position and took a job at the newspaper *Asahi shinbun*, and serialized in this newspaper the novel *Gubijinsō* in 1907, his first work as professional writer. Heavily employing traditional rhetoric, style, topoi, and vocabulary, yet with reference to several Western texts, this full-length novel explores within a reconstructed aesthetic world “morality” (*dōgi* 道義) that would deny and sublimate the materially-oriented, morally-groundless modern world that Sōseki condemned. The question of morality that Sōseki raised in *Gubijinsō* was further sought through the theme of suicide in *Kokoro*, one of the most frequently discussed works in modern Japanese fiction.

Inspired by a contemporary prose aesthetic “*shasei bun* 写生文,” or, “prose sketching,” proposed by Sōseki’s friend Masaoka Shiki 正岡子規 (1867-1902), a renowned *haiku* poet, Sōseki wrote *Kusamakura* “in a spirit precisely opposite to the common idea of what a novel [was].” “All that matters is that a certain feeling, a feeling of beauty [*tada isshu no kanji* — *utsukushii kanji* 唯だ一種の感じ — 美しい感じ] remains with the reader. I have no other objective. Thus, there is no plot, and no development of events,” as he explains. In creating this “*haiku*-like novel whose heart is beauty,” the writer had in mind a clear antithesis to Naturalism (*shizen shugi* 自然主義),

which was increasingly being adopted in contemporary Japanese fiction.³⁰⁹ The pure aestheticism that drives Sōseki's creation also preoccupies the novel's anonymous protagonist, the artist of Western painting, who embarks upon a lonely trip away from the modern world into a remote village, in search precisely of “a certain feeling, a feeling of beauty.”

Kusamakura was published two decades after the publication of *Shōsetsu shinzui* 小説神髓 (Essence of the Novel, 1885-6), the seminal criticism put together by Tsubouchi Shōyō 坪内逍遙 (1859-1935), a writer, critic, and a scholar of English literature who completed a comprehensive translation of Shakespeare. Shōyō's *Shōsetsu shinzui*, often coupled with his student Futabatei Shimei's 二葉亭四迷 (1864-1909) *Ukigumo* 浮雲 (Floating Clouds, 1887-91), is frequently quoted as the critical work that first gave systematic theoretical foundation to modern “literature” (*bungaku* 文学) — especially the novel — in Japan, in contrast with premodern literary practices. Shōyō wrote this groundbreaking criticism in the wake of the sensation caused by a collection of Ernest Fenollosa's (1853-1908) lectures published with the title *Bijutsu shinsetsu* 美術真説 (The True Discourse on Fine Arts, 1882). Drawing upon Fenollosa's work, Shōyō declares, “The novel is a fine art [*shōsetsu no bijutsu taru* 小説の美術たる],”³¹⁰ where “*bijutsu*” is a neologism that translates the English word “fine arts.” “The fine arts,” Shōyō explains, quoting Fenollosa, are first and foremost “decoration” in human civilization as opposed to “utility.” In the cited passage, Fenollosa offers a synthesis of

³⁰⁹ Natsume Sōseki, “Yo ga Kusamakura 余が草枕,” *Sōseki zenshū*, vol.25, p.209.

³¹⁰ Tsubouchi Shōyō, *Shōsetsu shinzui*, vol.1, p.1.

decoration and utility, with the assertion that what is truly functional is beautiful, while offering decoration has great utility in human culture. Fine arts, claims Fenollosa, become part of “the development of human civilization” (*jinbun hatsuiku* 人文発育), but Shōyō, with striking theoretical nuance and elaboration, then advances his critical argument:

... That the fine arts have the function of developing human civilization, to be sure, does not have to invite suspicion; yet at the same time, [this discourse] is not free from a logical error in terms of the essence of the fine arts. I shall explain what I mean by this, thus expressing my doubts. The fine arts, first and foremost, are not arts of utility; they, it appears, should set their only “purpose” to pleasing the mind and eyes of the human, and perfecting that amazing effect to a miraculous degree. Once that effect achieves such a level of perfection, to be sure, those who appreciate them will naturally be moved, forgetting their mean desires and getting rid of their heartless disposition. But this is a natural effect, rather than the “purpose” of the fine arts. It is, as it were, a result of contingency [*gūzen* 偶然], and it is hard to say that it is their original objective. If this argument was false, then the artists, be they sculptors or painters, would have to first prepare the frame of “the development of human civilization” in order to practice their arts, and confine their ideas to those limits. What a fallacy this would be!³¹¹

Shōyō’s careful discussion of the significance of the fine arts in human culture fundamentally echoes Kant’s notion of “purposiveness without purpose” (*Zweckmäßigkeit ohne Zweck*) in the *Third Critique*.³¹² By claiming that the fine arts’ essential function in the advancement of human civilization is “a natural effect,” or “a result of contingency,” rather than their inherent purpose, Shōyō’s line of thought, just like Kantian aesthetics, demarcates an autonomous domain of the fine arts, thereby positing the independence of the aesthetic from other human endeavors, particularly those aimed at utility. This contention, which embodies a core of modern aesthetics, constitutes

³¹¹ Ibid., vol.1, p.2.

³¹² Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, p.112.

Shōyō's criticism of the traditional moralistic understanding of fictional art, epitomized in the idea “*kan chō* 勧懲” (promoting the good and punishing the bad).³¹³ The critic then holds that the realistic description of “*setai ninjō* 世態人情” (the state of society and human feeling) in aesthetic forms must be the “essence” of the modern novel, which is to be indifferent to moral concerns.

This pure aesthetic world, merely consisting of “a certain feeling, a feeling of beauty,” that Sōseki attempts to create in the novel *Kusamakura*, therefore, is decisively informed by the idea of the aesthetic as an independent, autonomous domain, which was introduced from the West and was well received in Japan by the 1880s, and adopted by Shōyō's pioneering work in the modern refashioning of fictional literature.

Kusamakura transculturates diverse literary and critical texts. Whereas the painter tries to compose many *haiku* and classical Chinese poems throughout the story,³¹⁴ he also mentions a number of Western materials, if with an ambivalent attitude. He appreciates a number of Western writers and artists, including Shelley and Wordsworth, Salvator Rosa (1615-73) and Turner; he also alludes to Da Vinci and Lessing. His aestheticist thought, above all, transculturates a formalist aesthetics that derives in particular from Kant. In the beginning of the novel, Sōseki quotes a stanza from Shelley's “To a Skylark” in English:

We look before and after
And pine for what is not:
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught;

³¹³ Tsubouchi Shōyō, *Shōsetsu shinzui*, vol.2, p.13-4.

³¹⁴ Sōseki, throughout his career, wrote numerous classical Chinese poems as well as *haiku*. For Sōseki's lifelong practice of classical Chinese poetry, see: Katō Jirō, *Sōseki to kanshi: kindai eno shisen*.

Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.³¹⁵

He then comments:

Yes indeed, no matter how joyful the poet may be, he cannot hope to sing his joy as the skylark does, with such passionate wholeheartedness, oblivious to all thought of before and after. In Chinese poetry one often finds suffering expressed as, for instance, “a hundredweight of sorrows” [*bankoku no urei* 万斛の愁] and similar expressions can be seen in Western poetry too of course. . . . Sorrows may be the poet’s unavoidable dark companion, but the spirit with which he listens to the skylark’s song holds not one jot of suffering. . . . But why is there no suffering here? Simply because I see this scenery as a picture; I read it as a set of poems. Seeing it thus, as painting or poetry, I have no desire to acquire the land and cultivate it, or to put a railway through it and make a profit. This scenery — scenery that adds nothing to the belly or the pocket — fills the heart with pleasure simply as scenery, and this is surely why there is neither suffering nor anxiety in the experience. This is why the power of nature is precious to us. Nature instantly forges the spirit to a pristine purity and elevates it to the realm of pure poetry.

Love [*koi* 恋] may be beautiful, filial piety [*kō* 孝] may be a splendid thing, loyalty and patriotism [*chūkun aikoku* 忠君愛国] may all be very fine. But when you yourself are in one of these positions, you find yourself sucked into the maelstrom of the situation’s complex pros and cons — blind to any beauty or fineness, you cannot perceive where the poetry of the situation may lie.

To grasp this, you must put yourself in the disinterested position of an outside observer, who has the leisurely perspective [*yoyū no aru daisansha no chii* 余裕のある第三者の地位] to be able to comprehend it. A play is fun, a novel is appealing, precisely because you are a third-person observer of the drama. The person who enjoys a play or novel has left self-interest temporarily behind. For the space of time that he reads or watches, he is himself a poet.³¹⁶

Sōseki chose the stanza in Shelley’s “To a Skylark” where the poet reflects upon “our songs” as opposed to the song of a skylark, as a metaphor for pure poetry. The following stanza reads: “Yet if we could scorn / Hate, and pride, and fear; / If we were things born / Not to shed a tear, / I know not how thy joy we ever should come near.” Here, the poet

³¹⁵ Natsume Sōseki, *Sōseki zenshū*, vol.3, p.7. For quotes from *Kusamakura*, I use translation by Meredith McKinney, with slight modifications.

³¹⁶ Natsume Sōseki, *Sōseki zenshū*, vol.3, p.7-9.

perceives in human affect, if it implies negative emotion, an avenue for the Romantic appreciation of nature's pure self-expression, a skylark's song.³¹⁷ As though following Shelley's poetic movement, Sōseki also focuses on aesthetic perception, which defies any utility or morality, yet can present nature for pure enjoyment. Thus, the novel's protagonist, strolling in the countryside, seeks a "disinterested position of an outside observer," so that he leaves behind worldly concerns — "love," "filial piety," and "loyalty and patriotism" —, and captures Shelley's "skylark," which would "[forge] the spirit to a pristine purity and elevates it to the realm of pure poetry."

Despite being a clearly modern work, *Kusamakura*'s aestheticism, however, is presented precisely as an antithesis to Western poetry: the "skylark," for Sōseki, exists especially in the realm of Chinese poetry. Besides inspiration from a *haiku* aesthetics, contrasted to Western poetry is classical Chinese poetry as Sōseki interprets it. The painter continues his contemplation on the road,

Particularly in Western poetry [*seiyō no shi* 西洋の詩], based as it is on human affairs, even the most sublime poem can never aspire to emancipation from this vulgar realm. It is nothing but compassion, love, justice, freedom — such poetry never deals with anything beyond what is found in the marketplace of the everyday world. No matter how poetic it may be, its feet stay firmly on the ground; it has a permanent eye on the purse. No wonder Shelley sighed deeply as he listened to the skylark.

Happily, in the poetry of the East [*tōyō no shiika* 東洋の詩歌], there are works that transcend such a state.

By my eastern hedge I pluck chrysanthemums,
Gazing out at the Southern Mountain in the distance.³¹⁸

³¹⁷ Percy Bysshe Shelley, "To a Skylark," *The Complete Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, p.596-8.

³¹⁸ Quote from the fifth of Tao Yuanming's 陶淵明 (365-427) twenty-piece poem series "Yin jiu 飲酒" (Drinking Wine).

Here we have, purely and simply, a scene in which the world of men is utterly cast aside and forgotten. Beyond that hedge there is no next-door girl peeping in; no friend is busy pursuing business deals among those hills. Reading it, you feel that you have been washed clean of all the seat of worldly self-interest, of profit and loss, in a transcendental release.

Seated alone in a deep bamboo grove,
I pluck my lute; I hum a melody.
Nobody knows me here within this wood,
Only the bright moon comes to shine on me.³¹⁹

In these twenty characters, the poet has constructed the space of a whole other universe. The virtues of this universe are not those of *Hototogisu* or *Konjiki yasha*.³²⁰ They are virtues equivalent to those of a luxurious sleep that releases a mind exhausted by the world of steamships and trains, rights and duties, morals and manners.

If such sleep is a necessity in this dawning twentieth century of ours, then the poetry of transcendence must also be important for this century. Unfortunately, our poets today and their readers have all become infected by Western writers, and no more do they set off in a cheerful little boat upstream to this land of Peach Blossom Spring.³²¹ I am not a poet by profession, so my intention is not to preach the virtues of Wang Wei or Tao Yuanming to the modern world. It's just that, for myself, I find more healing for the heart in the delights of these poems than in the world of plays or dance parties. Such poetry gives me more pleasure than does *Faust* or *Hamlet*. This is precisely why I stroll these spring mountains now with painting box and tripod slung on my back. I long to breathe and absorb the natural world of Tao Yuanming and Wang Wei's poetry, to loiter awhile in the realm of un-human detachment [*hi ninjō no tenchi* 非人情の天地]. Call it a whim of mine.³²²

By drawing a clear-cut East-West dichotomy, the painter quotes two celebrated passages of Chinese poetry from the fifth and eighth centuries to illustrate the pure aesthetic world that he searches for amidst the spring mountains. Western literature, in contrast, is

³¹⁹ Quote of the great Tang poet Wang Wei's 王維 (c.701-761) "Zhuli guan 竹裡館" (Residence in the Bamboos).

³²⁰ *Hototogisu* 不如歸 (1898-9) and *Konjiki yasha* 金色夜叉 (1897-1902) are popular novels by Tokutomi Roka 徳富蘆花 (1868-1927) and Ozaki Kōyō 尾崎紅葉 (1868-1903), respectively.

³²¹ "*henshū wo ukabete kono Tōgen ni sakanoboru* 扁舟を泛べて此桃源に溯る," reference to Tao Yuanming's "Tao hua yuan ji 桃花源記," allusion to whom in Shiba Shirō we discussed in Chapter One.

³²² Natsume Sōseki, *Sōseki zenshū*, vol.3, p.9-10.

mentioned as the counterexample that, for its alleged concern with “human affairs,” contaminates the desired purity and autonomy of the aesthetic.

Sōseki’s reading of Tao Yuanming’s and Wang Wei’s couplets as sublime expressions of “a whole other universe” *par excellence* (“Here we have, purely and simply, a scene in which the world of men is utterly cast aside and forgotten”) is, in fact, an unmistakably modern gesture. Returning to the original poetic contexts from which the Japanese writer extracts those couplets helps illuminate his modernist interpretation. Sōseki, for instance, quotes a couplet from the fifth of Tao Yuanming’s prominent twenty-piece poetry series “Yinjiu 飲酒” (Drinking Wine).

結廬在人境	Though I maintain a hut in the human realm,
而無車馬喧	there is no noise of carriages or horses.
問君何能爾	I would ask you, how could that be possible?
心遠地自偏	When the mind is far, the locale becomes remote.
採菊東籬下	By my eastern hedge I pluck chrysanthemums
悠然見南山	Gazing out at the Southern Mountain in the distance.
山氣日夕佳	In the mountain air, dusk of the day is beautiful;
飛鳥相與還	birds are flying home together.
此中有真意	In this there is a true meaning;
欲辨已忘言	but once I try to articulate it, I’ve already forgotten the word. ³²³

Sōseki alludes to the middle couplet. While that couplet and the following one, with serene images, visualize the natural landscape, they are preceded by self-referential descriptions of how the poet, despite residing in “a hut on the human realm,” is able to distance himself from cacophonies of human affairs and achieve that appreciative state of mind. In the answer to an imagined interlocutor, the poet emphasizes the working of the mind (“*xinyuan* 心遠”) that enables him to experience a physical distance in imagination

³²³ Lu Qinli, ed., *Xianqin Han Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi*, p.997.

(“*di zi pian* 地自偏”), visualizing the landscape. The images of nature, then, are followed by the last couplet, in which the poet acknowledges the difficulty, or even impossibility, of articulating in language the “true meaning” of the beautiful landscape. Suspended in the middle of the piece, therefore, the images of nature, if self-sufficiently beautiful, are not without senses of absence, yearning, and anxiety that result from the fundamental chasm between the poetic image and the unattainable truth of nature. The scene of homing birds in the last couplet, as a figure of desired and yet unrealized homecoming, may signify this implied loss. Tao Yuanming’s poem, thus, is not simply concerned with representation, but with the very process and even (im)possibility of representation. Accordingly, the poetic image in this poem, alluded to by Sōseki, is not an articulation of any “true meaning” (*zhenyi* 真意), so much as an *anticipation* thereof. Anticipatory temporality, in fact, is implied in the image of plucked chrysanthemums — the image that is a sign of indeterminacy and suspension, as well as urgency and anxiety. For the fate of the plucked plants is here undetermined, and yet they will wither sooner or later. The plucked chrysanthemums, therefore, constitute precisely a figure of the *poetic image*, which, to Tao Yuanming as well as to many of his contemporary poets and thinkers, is positioned between human language and natural truth, in the anticipation of sublimating the former to the latter.³²⁴

It is precisely this elaborate dynamism of the aesthetics of Tao Yuanming’s poetry that is *missed* in Sōseki’s interpretation. For *Kusamakura*’s painter, Tao’s middle couplet is purely and simply a representation of nature *per se* that realizes a “transcendental

³²⁴ For more on the question of the poetic image and imagination in Six Dynasty thoughts and poetry, see: Satoru Hashimoto, “Poetics of the Image: Xie Lingyun and the Question of the Image in Literature of the Fourth and Fifth Centuries” (unpublished paper).

release,” whereas the original poem is rather filled with real “humane” concerns — that he has to first use the mind’s power to detach himself from the worldly affairs, and that, above all, his poetic language may not be able to articulate nature’s true meaning. Sōseki’s understanding of “the poetry of the East” that cleanses the fifth-century Chinese poet’s all-too-human worries is based on a particular aesthetic idea — idea that the aesthetic constitutes an independent and autonomous realm. *Kusamakura*’s aesthetics thus involves the twist that it appraises “Eastern” literature in modern Western aesthetic terms, whereas it dismisses “Western” literature by the same virtue. Contradictory as it may sound, therefore, the reinterpreted Chinese poetic tradition serves to embody ideas and objectives of modern Western aesthetics in Sōseki — that is, to become a vehicle of his modernist literary project. This twist is also symbolized by the peculiar character of the protagonist, an artist of “Western” oil painting yearning for an “Eastern” aesthetic ideal. “[T]he poetry of transcendence must also be important for this century,” Sōseki writes at the dawn of the twentieth century; reinterpreted Chinese poetry is thus a product on the flip side of modernity, obsessed with “steamships and trains, rights and duties, morals and manners.”

Kusamakura as a novel produces a fictional space where the protagonist seeks to rediscover and refashion traditional aesthetics as a kind of modern beauty, and his aesthetic pursuit is represented as a criticism and even refusal of a tasteless modernity. This fictional beauty-hunting is narrated in a “*haiku*-like” style, as Sōseki puts it — in a prose style that is replete with some of traditional rhetoric, including parallelism, *haikai*-style humor, allusion to literary precedents, and the fragmentary narrative. The novel, on one hand, describes the painter’s self-sufficient quest for beauty as something totally

detached from the rest of the world. Secluded in a hot spring inn in the mountains, the painter indulges himself in poetic composition, producing a number of verses, which culminate in a long five-syllable-line classical Chinese poem whose “sense of forgetting all worldly thoughts” satisfies the aesthete.³²⁵

On the other hand, however, the narrative does not leave the world around the protagonist entirely heterogeneous or antagonistic to his aestheticist endeavor. For one, the painter encounters in the inn a woman named Nami, who scholars agree is modeled upon Maeda Tsuna 前田卓 (1868-1938), a woman who in the 1900s was known for aiding *Zhongguo tongmeng hui* 中國同盟會 (Chinese United League), the anti-Qing revolutionary organization in Tokyo led by Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925).³²⁶ In the novel, Nami is featured as a modernized woman. Struck by her beauty, the painter wants to paint her portrait, but soon loses interest as he merely sees a tasteless expression on the face, “a hovering smile of derision and the intently furrowed brow of someone with a frantic desire to win,”³²⁷ a trace of modern competitive social life. But the painter also shares his taste for “un-human detachment” with this woman. Nami listens to George Meredith’s *Beauchamp’s Career* as the painter translates and reads aloud its passages ad hoc in fragments; she enjoys segmented passages without a plot and suspended romantic emotions without an end. “If there were even a ‘detached’ way of reading a novel, this is it, and she, too, of course, will be hearing it with a ‘detached’ ear.”³²⁸ Through sharing

³²⁵ Natsume Sōseki, *Sōseki zenshū*, vol.3, p.152.

³²⁶ See: Azumi Kyōko, *Kusamakura no Nami to Shingai kakumei*.

³²⁷ Natsume Sōseki, *Sōseki zenshū*, vol.3, p.123.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, vol.3, p.110.

the disinterested aesthetic tastes with Nami, the protagonist thus finds unexpected “un-human” company on his secluded trip.

For another, the story is set against the backdrop of one of the quintessential events in Japan’s modernization, the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5). While the war is hardly mentioned in the narrative, never disturbing the protagonist’s aestheticist quest, this real political context is not, however, unrelated to the story. The war indeed casts its shadow over the entire story, as its chief background, the hot spring inn, is said to have been deserted since the beginning of the war, thus providing a secluded, noiseless space for the protagonist’s aestheticist pursuit.³²⁹ At the inn, the painter meets a young man named Kyūichi who had enlisted in the army due to the Russo-Japanese War, and who is about to be sent to Manchuria. The protagonist’s response upon knowing that Kyūichi’s departure to the front is imminent bespeaks this aesthete’s ambivalent relationship to the “real world”:

And so from him I learn the fate of this young man, who is destined to leave for the Manchurian front in a matter of days. I’ve been mistaken to assume that in this little village in the spring, so like a dream or a poem, life is a matter only of the singing birds, the falling blossoms, and the bubbling springs. The real world has crossed mountains and seas and is bearing down even on this isolated village . . . Perhaps a part of the blood that will dye the Manchurian plains will gush from this young man’s arteries, or seethe forth at the point of the long sword that hangs at his waist. Yet here this young man sits, beside an artist for whom the sole value of human life lies in dreaming. If I listen carefully, I can even hear the beating of his heart, so close are we. And perhaps even now, within that beat reverberates the beating of the great tide that is sweeping across the hundreds of miles of that far battlefield. Fate has for a brief and unexpected moment brought us together in this room, but beyond that it speaks no more.³³⁰

³²⁹ Ibid., vol.3, p.20.

³³⁰ Ibid., vol.3, p.105-6.

The young man's impending departure for the Manchurian battlefield faces the protagonist with his "mistake" of assuming the existence of a purely aesthetic place — a place just like the "Peach Blossom Spring." The flip side of the poetic topoi of nature — "the singing birds, the falling blossoms, and the bubbling springs" — is "the real world," bespoken by war, blood, and death, scenes that undermine any attempts at aestheticization. With an honest confession of "mistake," the painter does not either try to dismiss this disturbing realization or to deny the value of his aesthetic endeavor; rather, he finds himself suspended between the two worlds — the imaginary and the real —, renouncing any coherent comprehension or reconciliation of the profound contradiction implied in this singular scene: "Yet here this young man sits, beside an artist for whom the sole value of human life lies in dreaming." Daring to describe this uneasy moment at which the painter, surrounded by an aestheticized utopia, imagines hearing the heartbeat of this young soldier and of the war plaguing the Manchurian land, Sōseki exposes the irreconcilably ambiguous relationship between the aesthetic and the moral — the relationship that Tsubouchi Shōyō penetratingly regarded as "a result of contingency," and that Sōseki here can solely attribute to a silent "fate."

Throughout this novel, Sōseki refrains from trying to resolve this essential ambiguity of the relationship between the aesthetic and the moral, thereby creating the unique playfulness of this work. The unintelligible paradox that the protagonist confronts in the above-quoted passage constitutes the end of a chapter, and is only followed by a casual conversation between the painter and Nami about Meredith's novel, foregrounding the lightheartedness of the fragmentary storytelling. Thus the aesthetic, on one hand, and

the moral, on the other, maintain an ambivalent distance throughout the story, with the former avoiding comprehending the latter in it, and vice versa.

Sōseki, however, needed to reserve the novel's very ending for tackling this *aporia* once again. In the end of the story, the painter and Nami, accompanied by others, go to the train station to see off Kyūichi, who is leaving for the battlefield. "We are finally dragged into the real world. I call the places where you can see trains the real world," the painter says. While reflecting on this modern means of transportation, which "hurtles along, treating all on board indiscriminately as so much freight," and "utterly disregarding individuality," he perceives a troubling contradiction: "Having expanded all its means to develop the individual, civilization then proceeds to crush it by all possible means."³³¹ Coming out of the imaginary aesthetic space that he constructed upon cultural memories of "Eastern poetry," the painter here observes a profound "danger" of Western civilization in reality. Thus he reiterates the East/West dichotomy that underpins the entire novel. But as he watches on the platform Kyūichi finally being brought away by the "heartless" train, he suddenly discovers in one of its windows Nami's former husband, who he earlier saw visiting Nami at the inn, asking for some money. The painter looks at Nami at the very end of the story:

Then as the last third-class carriage is passing me, another face appears at the window. Gazing disconsolately out is the bearded visage of the wild mountain monk, under his brown felt hat. His eyes and Nami's suddenly find each other. The chugging train is picking up speed, and in another instant the wild face is gone. Standing there in a daze, Nami continues to stare after it, and astonishingly, her face is flooded with an emotion that I have never until this moment witnessed there: "pity" [*aware* 憐れ].

"That's it! That's it! That's what I needed for the picture!"

³³¹ Ibid., vol.3, p.167-7.

I murmur, patting her on the shoulder. At last, with this moment, the canvas within my own heart has found its full and final form.³³²

Just when the train — symbolic of modern civilization which — separates the former lovers, the painter finally sees “pity” appearing on Nami’s expression, completing her portrait. The heartless power of civilization thus brings about the precise emotion that he thought was absent on Nami’s face, and the tasteless Western technology “astonishingly” gives the picture a final stroke. Thus in an abrupt way, Sōseki provides a conclusion to the aesthetic world of *Kusamakura*, finally comprehending, in a negative manner, “the real world” within the aesthetic imaginary.

3. “Ethics” through Self-Criticism: *Gubijinsō* and *Kokoro*

Aesthetics and Morality

If the sudden turn of the story at the end of *Kusamakura* completes the protagonist’s picture within his “own heart,” it of course does not resolve the *aporia* that the novel implies: the relationship between the imaginary and the real, or, the aesthetic and the moral. Just several months after he published *Kusamakura* in 1906, Sōseki quit his position at the Imperial University and began to work for the newspaper *Asahi shinbun* as a professional writer. In 1906, he wrote in a private letter a criticism of his own work *Kusamakura*, and explained the motivation behind his first novel after leaving the university: *Gubijinsō*.

³³² Ibid., vol.3, p.171.

I believe simply living beautifully, or living as a poet, constitutes just a very small portion of the significance of human life, though I am not sure what the exact size of that portion may be. Thus I cannot [continue to] feature a protagonist like that of *Kusamakura*. ... While on one hand I occasionally write *haiku*-like novels, on the other, I want to practice literature in the spirit of those heroes at the [Meiji] Restoration — the spirit of life and death, and of giving and taking life.³³³

Acknowledging that aesthetic living merely constitutes a minute part of human life, Sōseki self-critically articulates his determination to engage in a more serious literature that concerns “life and death.” He is thus urged to tackle the problem of aesthetics and morality once again in *Gubijinsō*.

In the end, *Kusamakura* registered modern civilization within the protagonist’s aesthetic world by means of representing “*aware* 憐れ,” or the emotion of “pity”; but it indeed put forth *en passant* a much bolder statement as to the moral significance of beauty in an aloof and unusually serious voice of the aesthete.

I’m a painter and, as such, a man whose professionally cultivated sensibility would automatically put me above my more uncouth neighbors, even if I were to descend to dwelling in the common world of human emotions. As a member of society, my superior position allows me to educate others. Furthermore, the artist is capable of a greater aesthetic behavior than those who have no sense of poetry or painting, no artistic skill. In the realm of human feelings, a beautiful action is one of truth, justice, and righteousness [*ninjō sekai ni atte utsukushiki shosa wa sei de aru, gi de aru, choku de aru* 人情世界にあつて、美しくき所作は正である、義である、直である]; and to express truth, justice, and righteousness through one’s behavior is to become a model for all the citizens.³³⁴

Clearly in *Kusamakura*, the painter does not live up to this elitist self-recognition, which reflects the traditional literati mindset. He instead regards himself as a disinterested artist,

³³³ Natsume Sōseki, “Letter to Suzuki Miekichi” (October 26, 1906), *Sōseki zenshū*, vol.22, p.605-6.

³³⁴ Natsume Sōseki, *Sōseki zenshū*, vol.3, p.149.

which renders this statement sounding somewhat baseless and even pompous. Sōseki continued to be haunted by the essential question of the ethical significance of beauty beyond *Kusamakura*, confronting the difficulty of approaching it without a traditional moralist framework. This cultural memory may have inspired Sōseki's investment in a radical potential of modern aesthetics, which, by demarcating an autonomous realm of the aesthetic, may intervene in "truth" and "justice" creatively and critically, but Sōseki wrestled with this task in modern discursive conditions, where the aesthetic and the moral involve each other just as "contingency."

The full-length novel *Gubijinsō* features three main characters: two young intellectuals Kōno, a student of philosophy, and Ono, a student of literature, and Kōno's younger sister Fujio. It is the story of a failed marriage attempt of Ono and Fujio that ends in a tragedy. Ono is drawn to Fujio for her beauty and fortune, while Fujio is attracted to Ono because of the latter's prospect of earning a doctoral degree. In contrast, Kōno is a detached and aloof intellectual, for whom the personal diary is an important medium for self-expression; while occasionally composing classical Chinese poems, Kōno disinterestedly observes the vanity-driven marriage arrangement between Ono and Fujio and regards it as symptomatic of a modern society that has lost sight of what he calls "the primary significance" of human life. Meanwhile, Mr. Kodō, who had mentored Ono in his youth, is also worried about his student's futile affairs with Fujio, and urges him to instead marry his daughter Sayoko. As Ono feels a moral debt to his mentor and agrees to marry Sayoko, the story stages Fujio's sudden death out of anger and jealousy. The novel then concludes with a diary entry that Kōno writes on the day of Fujio's funeral.

Sōseki's prose style in *Gubijinsō*, just like in *Kusamakura*, is loaded with flowery rhetoric; it makes frequent use of parallelism, idioms, proverbs, and archaic vocabulary, particularly rare Chinese-character compounds. Its storytelling maintains certain rhythm throughout, as though relating the story as a single picture. The narration in the first chapter, for instance, alternates between characters' dialogue and florid descriptions of the background landscape of Kyoto, firmly embedding the characters within this aesthetically reconstructed world. While the men and women engage in conversations with worldly concerns and humane greediness, the third-person narrator, always demonstrating the impeccable conduct of a flamboyant prose rhetoric, maintains his detached voice. In relating the precarious drama of love affairs in the physical world, the narrator likewise occupies such a transcendental position that his voice always sounds as though it alludes to the world's meta-physical working that will eventually give a destined ending to the whole play. The narrator aesthetically recreates the world surrounding the protagonists so that he reveals, from behind the ordinary scenes of human affairs, an ultimate stage for the drama of "primary significance" to be enacted. Through aesthetic representation, the narrative thus tries to unveil certain moral laws as an immanent pattern of the world, laws which latently control the fates of the mortal being.

Kōno's diary entry at the conclusion of the novel explains the narrator's concerns. Responding to Fujio's abrupt death, Kōno writes,

Tragedy has finally arrived. I have long expected a tragedy to come. I allowed the anticipated tragedy to follow its natural course, without using a single hand to intervene. That is because I know that my hand is powerless toward the deeds of people with much karma; because I know tragedy is mighty; and because I tried to

have them taste the great force of tragedy, and fundamentally cleanse the karma accumulated for generations.

While thus justifying his detached attitude throughout the story with a moralist observation, Kōno continues,

[Fate is mighty] because it [reminds people of] the principle that the primary significance of human life resides in morality [*dōgi* 道義], and because the working of morality becomes unlocked when it meets tragedy. While people want others to practice morality, it is most difficult for them to practice it themselves. Tragedy is mighty because it makes individuals dare to practice it. Moral practice most benefits others; it is most against the interests of the self. But once people invest in it, it will promote general happiness and guide society to a veritable civilization [*shinsei no bunmei* 真正の文明]. Hence tragedy is mighty.³³⁵

For this full-length novel, Kōno's diary entry makes a perfect conclusion, to which all the moments of the story end up converging; the "tragedy" that Kōno theorizes here has been as though destined to happen from the outset. Demonstrating his extraordinary mastery of archaic rhetoric, Sōseki relates modern love affairs in traditionalist-aestheticist prose; thus represented within an aesthetic space, the tasteless and egotistic modern society finally receives a fatal blow. Sōseki's private correspondence, penned while *Gubijinsō* was still being serialized, bolsters this interpretation: "You shouldn't be too sympathetic to this woman Fujio ... She is a woman who lacks the sense of morality [*tokugi shin* 徳義 心]. The primary intention of this work [*Gubijinsō*] is to finally kill her. ... Then I will append a philosophy in the end; that philosophy is a kind of theory. I am writing this whole work in order to explain that theory."³³⁶ If in *Kusamakura*, Sōseki negatively aestheticizes modern society, in *Gubijinsō*, he kills Fujio so that he punishes and takes his

³³⁵ Ibid., vol.4, p.453-4.

³³⁶ Natsume Sōseki, "Letter to Komiya Toyotaka" (July 19, 1907), *Sōseki zenshū*, vol.23, p.84.

revenge upon the vice of modernity, whereby materializing his moral ideal (*dōgi* 道義) and completing his worldview.

As the term “*dōgi*” (Chn. *daoyi*) indicates, Sōseki’s moralism is rooted in Confucian virtue; and *Gubijinsō* in the end may be interpreted as a Confucian morality play à la traditional drama of “*kanzen chōaku*” (promoting the good and punishing the bad) — the precise ideology that was to be purged from the modern novel, according to Shōyō’s *Shōsetsu shinzui*. Nevertheless, *Gubijinsō* fundamentally departs from traditional moralist literature, and even criticizes it. In describing a dialogue between Kōno and his friend Munechika during their trip to Kyoto, the narrator begins to linger upon a moment when a subtle smile on Kōno’s face suddenly makes the interlocutor feel serious. Rejecting any dramatization of shallow anger, the narrator comments on Kōno’s nuanced expression,

Elusive waves of feeling [*nasake no nami* 情の波] have barely flowed out of the bottom of his heart, through a tube as thin as a hair, shedding shadows in the daylight of the world. It is different from expressions usually found on the streets. It peeks out, yet quickly recoils back to the deep chamber as it perceives worldliness out there. You have to capture it before it retreats; otherwise, you can never understand Kōno.

... Suppose you would grasp Kōno, saying, “Ah, Kōno is such a person!” by putting him in a context of the violent fighting. Then, even if you were his parent, you wouldn’t deserve it; even if you were his sibling, you would merely be an unrelated person. It would be a vulgar novel that would try to portray Kōno’s character by putting him in a context of the violent fighting; in a twenty-century novel, there are not many such scenes.

A spring travel is tranquil; an inn in Kyoto is quiet. The two are peaceful, playful. Amidst this, Munechika gets to understand Kōno, and vice versa. This is called the world.³³⁷

³³⁷ Natsume Sōseki, *Sōseki zenshū*, vol.4, p.59-60.

Inserting this lengthy comment within the dialogue between Kōno and Munechika, the narrator compares his literary endeavor with “the vulgar novel,” which suggests traditional narrative literature featuring chivalric heroes in scenes of “violent fighting” (*kitta hatta* 斬った張った) for practicing the “promotion of the good and punishment of the bad.” Unlike those fictional heroes who would prove moral integrity through force, Kōno’s virtue could only surface through subtle expressions that a “twentieth-century novel” is only able to capture; *Gubijinsō*’s narrator grasps, through his aestheticist sensibilities, the subtlest “waves of feeling” that unexpectedly make their delicate and ephemeral appearance in the real world, bespeaking a human morality embodied in the person’s character. Unlike traditional notions of virtue, it is therefore through the pure aesthetic that traces of morality are to be perceived and interpreted. The “*dōgi*,” thus, if deriving from Confucian moral thought, has its content already deconstructed, and its actualization in *Gubijinsō* in fact is also a criticism of traditional moralistic fiction.

Ethics, Self-Criticism, and Utopian Hope

In *Gubijinsō*, Sōseki endeavored to recover the connection between the aesthetic and the moral by “finally kill[ing]” Fujio, yet in doing so, he positioned the narrator as well as Kōno so that they transcend and are immune to the vice of the modern world. They have the luxury of waiting for “tragedy” to unfold on “its natural course.” In the last passage of the novel, it is said that Kōno sends an excerpt of his diary entry to Munechika in London, and receives a reply that says, “They only perform comedy here,” suggesting that at a heart of modern civilization, people are blinded by unessential matters “of

second or less significance.”³³⁸ Sōseki’s aesthetic-moralist undertaking in *Gubijinsō* thus concludes with a critique of modernity and Western civilization, and on its flip side, it expresses, in the voice of Kōno, the hope that realization of the “*dōgi*” will “promote general happiness and guide society to a veritable civilization.” Though Kōno is not confined to a space of traditional morality, this utopian hope still sounds idealistic and abstract, precisely because of his detached position within the story.

Seven years after becoming a professional writer, in 1914, toward the end of his short yet prolific creative career, Sōseki published the novel *Kokoro*, perhaps the most well-received and oft-commented novel in his work. In *Kokoro*, Sōseki once again grapples with the question of aesthetics and morality as critique of modern civilization — the question of approaching morality by means of the modern aesthetic medium: the novel.

Kokoro was first serialized in *Asahi shinbun* in 1914 with the subtitle “Sensei’s Testament” (Sensei no isho 先生の遺書). A first-person narration, *Kokoro* is the story of suicide committed by a young intellectual called “Sensei” (Lit. “teacher”), who privately mentors the narrator “I,” who, originally from the countryside, goes to college in Tokyo, and meets Sensei during the summer holidays on a beach near the city, quickly becoming attracted to him. Motivated by vague curiosity and sympathetic feeling, he begins to frequent Sensei’s house back in Tokyo. Living on a bequeathed family fortune, Sensei on the surface leads a peaceful and leisurely life with his wife, but “I” comes to notice that Sensei seems to suffer from the burden of an irreconcilable past and, for that, he goes to a grave every month. “I” exchanges regular correspondence with Sensei after he returns to

³³⁸ Ibid., vol.4, p. 456.

his hometown, where his ailing father is on his deathbed. But Sensei's letter abruptly stops arriving for a while before "I" receives an unusually thick envelope in which he discovers Sensei's suicide note; surprised and worried, "I" leaves his expiring father and rushes to catch a train for Tokyo, where he reads Sensei's final letter.

The second half of the novel is devoted to Sensei's lengthy testament, in which Sensei confesses his past experience. When Sensei was in college, he boarded with a family near the school, and met their daughter, Shizu, with whom he gradually fell in love. Satisfied with his life with them, Sensei, out of kindness, invites his best friend, named K, to live there together. Sensei had regarded K highly for his moral integrity, erudition, and diligence in study, and felt it impossible to emulate him, while K also trusted Sensei. But Sensei was deliberating ways to confess his love of Shizu to her widowed mother and ask her to arrange marriage with her, when he heard from K that he, too, was in love with Shizu. Surprised and worried that K might get her before him, Sensei did not tell K his love of her and decided to ask her mother, without K's notice, for permission for marriage. Though as a result marriage was secured, Sensei suffered from regret that he had betrayed his best friend, but even before he could apologize K, K came to know of their engagement, and committed suicide. Shizu, who did not know this secret behind K's sudden death, got married to Sensei, and they began to live together. However, suffering from poignant regret, Sensei increasingly regarded himself as immoral and came to see his life as meaningless. Then, upon hearing the news of General Nogi's suicide at the death of Meiji Emperor, the nationwide scandal that happened two years before Sōseki wrote *Kokoro*,³³⁹ Sensei finally decided to take his own life.

³³⁹ General Nogi (Nogi Maresuke 乃木希典, 1849-1912), together with Admiral Tōgō (Tōgō Heihachirō 東郷平八郎, 1848-1934), are best known for their heroism in the Russo-Japanese War. Nogi explained in

As he confesses to “I” this past that no one else knows, Sensei writes in the beginning of the suicide note:

Without hesitation, I am about to force you into the shadows of this dark world of ours. But you must not fear. Gaze steadily into the shadows and then take whatever will be of use to you in your own life. When I speak of darkness, I mean ethical darkness [*rinriteki ni kurai* 倫理的に暗い]. For I was born an ethical creature, and I was brought up to be an ethical man. True, my ethics may be different from those of the young men of today. But they are at least my own. I did not borrow them for the sake of convenience as a man might a dress suit. It is for this reason that I think you, who wish to grow, may learn something from my experience.³⁴⁰

Later in the letter, Sensei reveals the experience of being betrayed by his uncle, who deceptively stole most of the family fortune at his father’s death; this shocking incident in particular informs Sensei’s perception of the “moral darkness” of this “world of ours.” But in general, his pessimism is concerned with his discontent with the modern world. Sensei says, “The memory that you once sat at my feet will begin to haunt you, and in bitterness and shame you will want to degrade me. . . . You see, loneliness is the price we have to pay for being born in this modern age, so full of freedom, independence, and our own egotistical selves [*jiyū to dokuritsu to onore to ni michita gendai* 自由と独立と己れとに充ちた現代].”³⁴¹ To Sensei, modern society, where traditional social relations are broken, is crippled with competing pursuits of egotistic self-interests. And K, to him,

his suicide note, which was published in the newspaper at the time of his suicide, that as a young officer, he had lost his banner to the enemy during the Seinan War (a.k.a. Satsuma Rebellion, 1877), and that he waited for thirty-five years until he could no longer serve his emperor to redeem his honor. For literary reflections of this event in contemporary Japan, see: Doris G Barga, *Suicidal Honor: General Nogi and the writings of Mori Ōgai and Natsume Sōseki*.

³⁴⁰Natsume Sōseki, *Sōseki zenshū*, vol.9, p.157. For quotes from *Kokoro*, I consulted Edwin McClellan’s translation, with occasional modifications.

³⁴¹Natsume Sōseki, *Sōseki zenshū*, vol.9, p.41.

appears someone who lives in this modern world with idealism and sincerity, so that he will overcome its “moral darkness”; Sensei feels unable to emulate K in this regard.

Hence Sensei’s respect for K.

Born in a Buddhist family, K harbors the belief that “anyone who has no spiritual aspirations [is] an idiot.”³⁴² K is fond of the word “devotional cultivation” (*shōjin* 精進) and takes it as his primary conviction that everything has to be sacrificed for the sake of “the Way” (*michi* 道); he suggests that one should restrain appetite and practice abstinence, and even avoid “love” without carnal desire.³⁴³ For K, studying in college is not only for scholarly knowledge, but chiefly for “becoming a stronger person through nourishment of the power of will.”³⁴⁴ Sensei sees in this essentialist friend the “unbending regard for honor” that one would find in a “*samurai*.” As Sensei observes, what this idealist character represents is an antithesis to modernity.

In those days, such phrases as “self-realization” [*jikaku* 自覚] and “the new life” [*atarashii seikatsu* 新しい生活] had not yet come into fashion. But you must not think that K’s inability to discard his old ways and begin his life anew was due to his lack of modern concepts. You must understand that K held the past as so precious [*tattoi kako* 尊い過去] that he could not throw it away; it was for the sake of that past that K had lived thus far. That K did not rush to his object of love does not mean that his love was in any sense lukewarm. Though with burning love, he was unable to move; unless he was in such a moment as a strong impulse made him forget himself, he had to hold himself back for a while and look back at his past. Then in so doing he was urged to continue along the path that the past had indicated him. Moreover, he had the kind of stubbornness and forbearance that is unknown to modern people. In both senses, I thought I was able to see through K’s mind.³⁴⁵

³⁴² Ibid., vol.9, p.231.

³⁴³ Ibid., vol.9, p.258-9.

³⁴⁴ Ibid., vol.9, pp.208; 210.

³⁴⁵ Ibid., vol.9, p.263.

Based on K's essentialist words and deeds, Sensei perceives in K's mind certain memories of a past that was the source of his morality, which held him back from abandoning the "old ways" and beginning a new life, by rushing to Shizu. It is not that K, an elite college student, does not have modern concepts, but because of the weight of this "precious" past, K was unable to simply adapt himself to the modern way of life, reflects Sensei.

What is absent in the modern world is precisely such ethics. But if his uncle's blind desire for money and treachery first gave Sensei that sense of darkness, then, it is Sensei's own sexual desire and betrayal of K that exposes him to becoming part of that very immoral world. "I had come to distrust people in money matters, but I had not yet learned to doubt love," Sensei writes; but it was he who ruined that pure love.³⁴⁶ When K confesses to Sensei his love for Shizu, moreover, Sensei accuses K of self-contradiction, saying that K has abandoned his own moral ideal. Taking advantage of K's "wavering between ideal and reality," Sensei tells K, "twice," K's own motto: "anyone who has no spiritual aspirations [is] an idiot," and criticizes K's idealistic hypocrisy, all growing out of egoistic wish to marry Shizu.³⁴⁷ Sensei, thus, even abuses "ethics" for the sake of his desire. "I felt dizzy when I became conscious that I was the same kind of man as my uncle," Sensei confesses. Losing his ethical ground, Sensei is deprived of the sense of meaning and objective in life, increasingly feeling solitary and desolate (*sekibaku* 寂寞). After K's suicide, all that has been lost becomes irrecoverable; threatened by K's

³⁴⁶ Ibid., vol.9, p.183.

³⁴⁷ Ibid., vol.9, p.258-9.

shadows, Sensei suffers from the poignant awareness that he stands “completely alone in this world, cut off every other living person.”³⁴⁸ Then he writes, “When at least it became clear to me that I could not remain still in that prison much longer, and that I could not escape from it, I was forced to the conclusion that the easiest thing I could do would be to commit suicide.”³⁴⁹

Morality and the Cultural Past

In the above-quoted beginning of the testament, Sensei writes to “I,” “I was born an ethical creature, and I was brought up to be an ethical man,” alluding both to human nature and cultural upbringing. He then suspects that the young “I” may not understand that old ethics. On one hand, the ethics (*rinri* 倫理) that Sensei tries to convey in his suicide note to “I,” as well as the one that Sensei sees in the mind of the dead K, have their origins in particular cultural “pasts” that were actually experienced. And yet, on the other, they at the same time seem abstract, without reference to any concrete moments in the past. In *Gubijinsō*, as we have discussed, the morality that the character Kōno embodies is to be grasped by aesthetic means; likewise in *Kokoro*, K’s essentialist sense of morality is reconstructed from a modernist perspective. K, to be sure, was born into a Buddhist family; but he was adopted into a relative’s family at a young age and was eventually disowned by the father, for he betrays the promise of becoming a medical doctor. K does so “for the sake of the Way,” but “he himself perhaps did not understand

³⁴⁸ Ibid., vol.9, p.289-91.

³⁴⁹ Ibid., vol.9, p.295.

that word ‘Way.’” Besides Buddhist sutras, K also reads the Bible and the Koran.³⁵⁰ The past that K is attached to and looks back at is therefore at once autobiographical and metaphysical: while it derives from K’s historical existence, it also designates a certain metaphysical temporality that is inherent in the ethics (the “Way”) that K struggles to practice in the modern world, in such idealistic, if solitary, ways.

That ethics, or, in Kōno’s words in *Gubijinsō*, the “*dōgi*” would be the foundation for society to achieve “a veritable civilization” — a new form of culture that would be a critique of modern civilization, and yet would *not* be a simple return to a particular cultural past. But unlike in *Gubijinsō*, the narrator and the characters in *Kokoro* — including K himself — are unable to practice that ethics, as they are inextricably embedded in the “moral darkness” of the modern world. If in *Gubijinsō*, that ethics may be put forth from a secure position, then in *Kokoro*, suicide symbolizes the *self-criticism* through which that ethics is to be projected. An utopian ideal, that ethics, once materialized as the foundation of a new civilization, would then constitute a universal moral law, and as such, it would imply metaphysical temporality, just like the “gate” in Kafka’s “Before the Law,” which has *always already* been there.³⁵¹ It is exactly the metaphysical “past-ness” of the moral law that K, and now Sensei, too, inscribe through their own irreversible passing — i.e., suicide.

A modern ideal, thus, the “ethics” in *Kokoro* is *form*, rather than content, while its *origin* nevertheless resides in an actual cultural past. The novel in the end conjures up an obsolete word, “*junshi* 殉死,” which, for Sensei, “had almost rotted, sunken at the bottom

³⁵⁰ Ibid., vol.9, p.202-4.

³⁵¹ For the discussion of law and its transcendental temporality in Kafka’s “Before the Law,” see Jacques Derrida, *Force de loi*.

of memory.” Meaning the virtue of “following one’s lord to the grave” in premodern culture (Chn. *xunzang* 殉葬; Kor. *sunchang* 순장), this word suddenly strikes Sensei at the death of the Meiji Emperor. He then says to his wife, “just as a humor,” “I would follow the Meiji spirit to the grave [*Meiji no seishin ni junshi suru* 明治の精神に殉死する].” At that moment, he unexpectedly feels as though “this antiquated, unnecessary word had come to hold a new meaning.”³⁵² Sensei then hears the news of General Nogi’s “*junshi*” on the funeral day of Meiji Emperor, which finally makes him decide to commit suicide, as he confesses in the end of his testament. But Sensei says to “I,” “I did not exactly understand why Nogi committed suicide, just as you may not comprehend why I am going to commit suicide.”³⁵³ The reference to Nogi’s suicide is not meant to uphold any specific moral values, personal character, or cultural practice; rather, it is intended to evoke the cultural “past” that Sensei’s generation inherits, only through engagement with which “ethics” as the foundation of a new, “veritable civilization” may be expressed as self-criticism. In *Gubijinsō*, Sōseki, through an aesthetic reconstruction of the world, tried to turn the literary text into a fictional space where that “ethics” may be imagined; but in *Kokoro*, Sōseki pursues the utopian hope for the modern aesthetic medium to become an expression of new “ethics” precisely as self-criticism. Thus that hope is allegorized in the receipt by the young “I” of Sensei’s suicide note, the material record of his ultimate self-criticism in the form of self-sacrifice. In stark contrast to Kōno’s moralistic diary entry, Sensei writes to “I” in the beginning of his testament,

³⁵² Natsume Sōseki, *Sōseki zenshū*, vol.9, p.297.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*, vol.9, p.298.

Now, I myself am about to cut open my own heart, and drench your face with my blood. And I shall be satisfied if, when my heart stops beating, a new life [atarashii inochi 新らしい命] lodges itself in your breast.³⁵⁴

Conclusion: Traveling Through Manchuria and Korea

To Sensei, the death of the Meiji Emperor bespeaks the end of an age, and if his generation, who “received the strongest influence of Meiji,” survived that end, then that would mean they “are left behind the times [jisei okure 時勢遅れ].”³⁵⁵ If “Meiji” signifies an era when the introduction of modern civilization from the West created a strong nation-state, then Sensei’s life is a fictional testimony to the “moral darkness” of that revolutionary modernization. Sensei’s suicide note, as self-criticism, expresses an “ethics” for breaking that darkness; and the novel *Kokoro*, narrated by the young “I” who receives this testament, conveys the desire for that “ethics” not to be wasted, but to be transmitted as the foundation for a “new life.”

Sensei says, “My effort of writing down my past sincerely will not be wasted when you, or any others, want to understand the human, for no one except for me can talk about my past as part of human experience.”³⁵⁶ *Kokoro*, even though it is the story of the private confession of an individual’s inner life, allegorizes the sociopolitical situations of Japan as a modernizing nation: it narrates the nation that recalls memories of the cultural past in transculturating modern civilization from the West, thereby projecting, as self-

³⁵⁴ Ibid., vol.9, p.158.

³⁵⁵ Ibid., vol.9, p.297.

³⁵⁶ Ibid., vol.9, p.299.

criticism, the utopian image of new ethics. As such, it is the story of the modern “human experience” in general — of the subject that resists the eradication of historicity in modernization, and seeks in the reinterpreted “past” moral origins for a new culture.

As an expression of such aspiration for a new culture, Sōseki’s modernist aesthetic endeavor structurally echoes that of the other founding figures of modern literature in China and Korea, Lu Xun and Yi Kwangsu. If in *Kokoro*, the characters Sensei and K, under the weight of the “past,” transculture modernity through self-sacrifice, then, their fictional lives precisely embody Lu Xun’s image of the self-cannibalistic practice of “hard translation.” While *Kokoro*, through its narrative structure in the *mis-en-abyme*, hopes for Sensei’s troubled “modern way of life” resulting in suicide not to be left in oblivion, but to engender “a new life,” Lu Xun’s polemical piece of *zawen* (miscellaneous essay) defends the transitional, even “unreadable” “hard translation,” so that the transculturation of modernity does not become “dead,” but will provide “advantages” for a future audience. If both Sensei and K, elite college students, have to “hold [themselves] back for a while and look back at [their] past” before rushing to adopting a modern way of life, then, the character Hyōngsik in Yi Kwangsu’s *Mujōng*, just as he ventures into a new life with his new girlfriend, is struck by memories of the past and critical self-consciousness: “I am so heartless! I am not a human!” While Sōseki saw in the cultural “past” the origin of a new “ethics” for modernity, Yi Kwangsu likewise evoked in the end of *Mujōng* the literary past and tried to harmonize it with modern sounds, thus projecting a new culture for modern Korea. Self-criticism thus constitutes an intertextuality between Lu Xun, Yi Kwangsu, and Natsume Sōseki that

constitutes the moral heart of their modernist aesthetic practices: the utopian envisioning of a new civilization.

More importantly, however, once we read *Kokoro* in the context of the writer's early criticism and novels, the cultural "past" evoked in this work turns out to be the one that had been created through history of *trans-regional* cultural communication. In early criticism, though unequivocally with a specific national consciousness, Sōseki maintained that the culture with which he attempted to bring Western aesthetics into dialogue was, in fact, the classical Chinese tradition. In fiction, the writer undertook to aesthetically reconstruct the modern world by thick reference to precedents in classical Chinese literature, as well as in other traditions. In *Mujōng*, Yi Kwangsu alludes to the cultural past, which not only the protagonists evoke in their striving for enlightenment, but also the narrator recalls in relating a modern story. Classical Chinese tradition, despite Yi's outright rejection thereof for the sake of a national literature, nevertheless plays a pivotal role in his narration of the national culture to be realized. Thus the trans-regional relevance of the tradition of classical Chinese constituted an integral part of the "past" that the Japanese and Korean writers self-critically engaged with in their creation of modernist literature. Lu Xun's transculturation of Western literature, too, conjured up the cultural past. He performed that transculturation in a fundamentally different way than Liang Qichao, and it was precisely the "universal" relevance of Chinese literary tradition that he tried to deconstruct by doing so. Lu Xun's transculturation inscribed Chinese literature anew in the universality of "modern literature" as a singular aesthetic practice that critically involves particular socio-historical contexts; but through the self-

critical “hard translation,” he translated the West as the subject of a transitional age, still inheriting that “inhumane” cultural past.

If at the ethical core of modernist literature, writers in East Asia recalled different forms of the cultural past, and if those forms inextricably involved each other through the old medium of classical Chinese, then the identities of those literatures cannot be fully articulated within the classical picture where the national literatures exist independently from each other, merely facing the universal West. Modernist literature in East Asia is an overdetermined dynamics of rhizomatic transculturation, which involves not only the universality of modern Western aesthetics and national particularity, but also the afterlives of the old regional “universality” of the classical Chinese tradition.

On the flip side, this trans-regional dynamics of modern East Asian literary practice is, at least to some extent, incompatible with the idea of an independent, particular national identity, and in affirming the latter in the modern discursive conditions, the former tends to be suppressed. Natsume Sōseki, for instance, embodies this problematic. In 1909, on the eve of Korea’s Annexation by Japan (1910), Sōseki was invited by the President of the South Manchuria Railway Company, a long-time friend of his, and traveled through northeast China and Korea for forty-six days. He serialized a travelogue titled “Man Kan tokoro dokoro” (Travels in Manchuria and Korea) in *Asahi shinbun*. In this account, Sōseki infamously expressed unsympathetic and contemptuous views of Chinese people in Manchuria; and his description was bolstered by the idea of the civilizational hierarchy, in which he ranked races according to their degree of modernization. In a recently discovered essay titled “Kan Man shokan 韓滿所感”

(Observations on Korea and Manchuria), published in the newspaper *Manshū nichinichi shinbun* 滿州日日新聞 (The Manchuria Daily) in 1909, Sōseki said,

During these travels, I gained the self-awareness that, born as Japanese, I was fortunate. When I was confined to mainland Japan, I was always threatened by the thought that the Japanese were one of the world's most miserable nations. But as I traveled from Manchuria into Korea, I witnessed my compatriots busily undertaking various aspects of the civilizational mission [*bunmei jigyō* 文明事業] and becoming the superior people [*yūetsu sha* 優越者]. Hence the impression that the Japanese were a very powerful race [*jinshu* 人種] was deeply carved into my head.

At the same time, I was thankful for the fact that I was not born as Chinese or Korean. Facing these peoples, my compatriots engage in enterprises with the enthusiasm of the winner [*shōsha* 勝者]. I must say that my compatriots are truly a favorite of fortune.³⁵⁷

Along the South Manchurian Railway, which Japan took over from Russia in 1905 as a result of the victorious Russo-Japanese War, Sōseki witnessed the landscape where Japanese settlers began to undertake various development projects, from coal mining and iron manufacture to infrastructure construction, urban planning, and hotel business. Sōseki sees those economic ventures as forming part of a “civilizational mission,” and regards the Japanese, by virtue of advanced modernization, to be a “superior people,” a “powerful race,” and “the winner.” In contrast, he considers the Chinese and the Korean to be inferior for the lagging pace of their modernization, though “when [he] was confined to Japan,” he had seen the Japanese to be “one of the world's few most miserable nations” for the same reason. Competently adopting the discourse of the *mission civilisatrice*, the modernist Sōseki here reveals himself as racist and imperialist.

³⁵⁷ Sōseki, “Kan Man shokan,” in *Manshū nichinichi shinbun*, November 6, 1909.

Scholars have criticized Sōseki for his notorious travel discourse on Manchuria and Korea, and this “moral darkness” in fact casts its deep and indelible shadows on this founding figure of modern Japanese literature.³⁵⁸ Sōseki’s usage of language in this travelogue enabled him to describe Manchuria from this perspective. In the essay, Sōseki self-consciously makes use of classical Chinese vocabularies in peculiar ways. For one, in describing a towering mountain range along the way, Sōseki says, “In the classical Chinese vocabulary [*kango* 漢語], there would be plenty of words such as *saikai* [崔嵬; Chn. *cuiwei*] and *sangan* [巒岏; Chn. *cuanwan*] to illustrate this kind of mountain, but in Japan, there is not a single [word like them].”³⁵⁹ While the landscape reminds Sōseki of appropriate classical Chinese words to depict it, he, instead of using them, demarcates the semantic boundaries of Japanese, even at the cost of failing to represent that landscape. (“... in Japan, there is no single [word like them].”) For another, in relating the episode of riding a carriage on a rough road, Sōseki writes,

Watching this carriage rumbling past along, I wanted to describe it ‘*gei tari getsu tari*’ [輓たり輓たり]. For I thought someone riding that carriage should be ‘*gei getsu* 輓輓,’ though I do not know the exact meanings of the characters ‘*gei* 輓’ or ‘*getsu* 輓.’ But in fact, what was ‘*gei getsu*’ was not only a Chinese carriage, but, I am afraid, also myself.³⁶⁰

³⁵⁸ Pak Yuha, *Nashonaru aidentiti to jendā: Sōseki, bungaku, kindai*; Joshua Fogel, *The Literature of Travel in the Japanese Rediscovery of China: 1862–1945*, p.252-4.

³⁵⁹ Natsume Sōseki, *Sōseki zenshū*, vol.12, p.308.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, vol.12, p.345.

The two words, “*gei* 輓” (Chn. *ni*) and “*getsu* 輓” (Chn. *yue*), both designate parts of cow carriage;³⁶¹ and as a compound, which derives from the “Weicheng 為政” chapter of *The Analects*, “*geigetsu* 輓輓” is a metaphor for something indispensable. If inspired by the image of the horse carriage on the road, Sōseki here uses these words, with humor, completely out of the context, as onomatopoeic descriptions of the rumbling carriage and of his stomach nauseated on the bumpy ride.³⁶²

In these details, Sōseki excludes some classical Chinese words from his descriptive vocabulary, and takes the liberty to put some of those words totally out of the context and appropriate them in his language. These lexical operations, if minor, performatively allegorize the suppression of the historicity of his literary language, particularly traces of the tradition of classical Chinese. In his racist-imperialist representation, the only medium that can paint the pictures of Manchurian and Korean landscapes must be some version of the Japanese language. Such language, then, “colonizes” those lands aesthetically, together with economic and political occupation. For such an imperialist language, its cultural past that had its roots in the very land that it wants to appropriate must have been cleansed. Such an uprooted language, however, would on the other hand constitute a condition for the sense of “solitude” and “desolation” that torments *Kokoro*’s Sensei, who loses the moral core of his existence, finding himself complicit in the “moral darkness” of Japanese modernity, and has recourse to suicide in order to self-critically transmit the cultural past for an ethics to come.

³⁶¹ “輓” designates the wedge that attaches a cross bar at the end of the carriage poles; “輓” designates the part of the carriage poles to which a cross bar is attached. *Hanyu da cidian*.

³⁶² Natsume Sōseki, *Sōseki zenshū*, vol.12, p.345-6.

With the outbreak of the full-fledged war between China and Japan in 1937, the Japanese Empire began to expand its colonial territories further into mainland China and tried to build an integrated emporium. Drawing upon the region's interrelated cultural traditions, the imperialists forged the idea of "Great East Asia" as a regional identity, legitimating the expanding imperial boundaries. In Part Three, I will examine a semicolonial Chinese and colonial Korean and Taiwanese writers who, unlike Sōseki's travelogue, evoked the region's transnational cultural pasts and critique thereof, thereby deconstructing the Japanese ideologies of cultural imperialization.

Chapter Five

Cultural Specters

Zhou Zuoren in Wartime East Asia

Introduction

1. The Aestheticized “Nation”: Cultural Identity
2. Culture and Writing: Contingent Boundaries
3. The Aestheticized “Asia”: *Sigu zhi youqing*, or, “Feeling of Recollecting the Past”
4. “Playfulness” and Imagined Cultural Identity

Conclusion

Introduction

In 1924, the inaugural issue of *Yusi* 語絲 (Literary Threads), a prominent literary and cultural journal that drove the New Culture Movement, carried an essay titled “Shenghuo zhi yishu 生活之藝術” (The Art of life). In it, the author Zhou Zuoren 周作人 (1885-1967), a prominent leader of the Movement, presented a bold, idealistic manifesto:

What China sorely needs now are new kinds of freedom and moderation that will establish a new Chinese civilization. This means the revival of a millennia-old Chinese civilization, one consistent with the Greek civilization which formed the foundation of Western civilization. These statements may probably sound too broad and aloof, but I do believe that if we do not follow this path, there is no other ways to save China.

Raising the anti-traditionalist, anti-Confucian banner around which the new generation of writers and critics have gathered since the May Fourth, Zhou Zuoren attributes the disharmonious contemporary “Chinese way of life” to the lasting influence of post-Song

(960-1279) Confucian thought, commonly known as Neo-Confucianism. According to Zhou, contemporary China is split between asceticism and hedonism, thus failing to produce a harmonious “style.” Contrasted with the Chinese situation is Japan, which, as he admits, “has received great influence from Song scholarship, to be sure. But in life there, we can see that Japan has inherited the tradition of the Heian period [794-1185] and still preserves many remainders of the elegance of the Tang [618-907]; they therefore better understand the art of life. In many of its customs, Japan in fact maintains the flavors of the arts of life, which we Chinese cannot emulate. Or, maybe that is exactly the shortcomings of the Japanese in the eyes of the Confucians — who knows?”³⁶³

The towering essayist, critic, poet, and translator Zhou Zuoren, whose prominence in the Chinese literary field from the late 1910s to the 1930s could probably be only matched by that of his elder brother Lu Xun 魯迅 (1881-1936), stood unique among his peers for his idiosyncratic, *transcultural* path that he envisioned for the New Culture Movement in its search for Chinese cultural modernity.³⁶⁴

Firstly, while arguing for a renaissance of the “millennia-old Chinese civilization,” he at the same time asserts that that revival will have to realize some kind of “consistency” with ancient Greek civilization. Secondly, while discussing Chinese

³⁶³ Zhou Zuoren, *Zhou Zuoren sanwen quanji*, vol.3, p.514. Quotes from this source are hereafter referred to by the abbreviation ZZSQ, followed by a volume number and a page number, separated by a slash. Ex. ZZSQ, III/514.

³⁶⁴ Susan Daruvala also emphasizes the uniqueness of Zhou Zuoren’s literature and cultural criticism in comparison with other May Fourth writers, yet she does not particularly pay attention to how they were informed by transculturation. See: Susan Daruvala, *Zhou Zuoren and an Alternative Chinese Response to Modernity*. My reading of Zhou Zuoren, in general, has been particularly helped by: Qian Liqun, *Zhou Zuoren zhengzhuan*; Qian Liqun, *Zhou Zuoren yanjiu ershiyi jiang*; Ryū Gan’I, *Tōyōjin no hiai: Shū Sakujin to Nihon*; Xudong Zhang, “The Politics of Aestheticization: Zhou Zuoren and the Crisis of the Chinese New Culture, 1927-1937”; David E. Pollard, *A Chinese Look at Literature: The Literary Values of Chou Tso-jên in Relation to the Tradition*. For Zhou Zuoren’s wartime activities in particular, see Kiyama Hideo’s seminal study: *Shū Sakujin tainichi kyōryoku no tenmatsu*.

cultural modernity, he discovers a model for that in its neighboring nation, which he claims retains traces of an original, pre-Song Chinese cultural tradition. Finally, while thus drawing upon premodern East Asian cultural communication, he also emphasizes down-to-earth locality in his appraisal of the Japanese “art of life,” with key terms such as “life” (*shenghuo* 生活) and “customs” (*fengsu* 風俗). In his quest for cultural reforms in early-twentieth-century China, Zhou Zuoren transculturated a sea of literary and cultural resources particularly along these three interrelated threads — the trans-civilizational dialogics of Chinese and Greek antiquities, the trans-East Asian cultural interaction, and the localities of everyday life. With his unique transcultural imagination, he attempted to reconstruct “a new Chinese civilization” without aligning himself with the prevailing nationalist or revolutionist ideologies.

While the permeability of Zhou Zuoren’s idiosyncratic strategy, straddling these three dimensions, poses a challenge to any reader, the “East Asian” factor in particular renders Zhou’s discourse all the more difficult to fathom and even problematic. Zhou Zuoren’s collaboration with the Japanese during the period of the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-45) makes the assessment of his work much more complex. While many intellectuals fled south when Beijing fell to the hands of the imperialists in July 1937, Zhou chose to remain. Despite repeated pleas and invitations from his colleagues and students, he in the following year emerged as a participant of the imperialist-sanctioned Forum for Cultural Building for Renewed China (*gengsheng zhongguo wenhua jianshe huiyi* 更生中國文化建設會議), and eventually assumed a number of official positions in the collaborationist Wang Jingwei government until the 1945 liberation. This high-profile case of what was viewed as national betrayal (*hanjian* 漢奸) caused a huge scandal

among Chinese intellectuals, a scandal that many in China today still regard as one of the greatest “shames” in its modern cultural history. The writer’s questionable behavior during the national crisis, on the one hand, tends to make his focus on East Asia too politically sensitive to deal with in any scholarly depth.³⁶⁵ On the other hand — and more importantly — it raises the question as to whether his discussions of the issue of an “East Asian” identity was evidence of some real complicity with Japanese imperialist ideology, which took advantage of the region’s transnational cultural tradition in order to promote the concept of a regional “Great East Asian” (*dai tōa* 大東亞) cultural identity, and thereby forge a legitimating rhetoric for Japan’s colonial rule.³⁶⁶

Both in his essays during the Second Sino-Japanese War and those in prior years, in fact, Zhou Zuoren extensively discussed the distinctive culture of the “East” (*dongyang* 東洋), of “Asia” (*yazhou* 亞洲), and of “East Asia” (*dongya* 東亞) as well as of Japan, and his focus on the *regional* character of all these cultures was an inextricable part of his reflections on Chinese cultural modernity, which was a central question for the New Culture Movement. Zhou’s discourse on regional culture, however, has thus far received little scholarly attention due largely to its sensitive political implications. Judged on the basis of nationalism, to be sure, Zhou’s wartime political activities were collaboration and betrayal; yet that judgment does not spare the need to study his voluminous writings during the War. My goal in this chapter is to argue that only by

³⁶⁵ For a discussion on Zhou Zuoren’s relationship to the state during the wartime era, see: Dong Bingyue, “Zhou Zuoren de ‘guojia’ yu ‘wenhua.’” See also Dong Bingyue, “*Guomin zuojia*” de lichang: *Zhong Ri xiandai wenzue guanxi yanjiu*.

³⁶⁶ For the essential relationship between the making of the regional cultural identity and Japanese imperialist ideology, see: Li Wenqing, *Gongrong de xiangxiang: diguo, zhimindi yu da dongya wenzue quan, 1937-1945*.

examining Zhou's wartime discourse within a transnational, and particularly within a *trans-regional* comparative framework will one be able to achieve a fuller understanding of its significance. As I demonstrate in what follows, Zhou's long-held conception of regional cultural identity, on one hand, allowed him to approximate his cultural criticism to the official imperial ideology of "East Asia" during the War; but on the other, it also had its structural roots in the writer's criticism as to the construct of modern Chinese culture in the 1920s. At the crux of this problematic, yet singular and radical, configuration of Zhou's cultural critique is *transcultural imagination* that hinges upon *aesthetic judgment*. In the final analysis, Zhou's aesthetic reconstruction of East Asian as well as Chinese cultural identities can be seen to fundamentally undermine the imperialized cultural formation, if in a totally different fashion than that adopted by cultural nationalism. Zhou's cultural critique, therefore, embodies the ambivalent working of a trans-East Asian cultural tradition in the region's modern cultural discourse — the ambivalence that it can at once inform regional imperialism and a fundamental critique thereof.

I will first explore Zhou Zuoren's rare self-reflection on his collaboration with the Japanese during the War, a 1949 letter that he sent to the communist leadership, as a window into his wartime discourse on the "nation" (*minzu* 民族) as essential cultural identity, which he tried to tease out through aesthetic appreciation of the artifacts, namely literature. I will then examine Zhou's wartime criticism, some of which he quoted in the 1949 correspondence, in constellation with his pre-war essays in the 1920s and 30s, and consider how his aesthetic reconstruction of national identity may in fact defy national boundaries, gaining a transnational dimension. This then leads me to further revisiting

Zhou's early essays. In those essays, Zhou, in reflecting upon cultures of China, Japan, and East Asia, intertextualized numerous contemporary Japanese discourses on the country's cultural self-identity vis-à-vis the West and Asia. Japanese intellectuals whom Zhou quoted repeatedly, such as Okakura Kakuzō 岡倉覚三 (aka Okakura Tenshin 岡倉天心, 1862-1913), Mushanokōji Saneatsu 武者小路実篤 (1885-1976), Tanizaki Jun'ichirō 谷崎潤一郎 (1886-1965), Nagai Kafū 永井荷風 (1879-1959), and Watsuji Tetsurō 和辻哲郎 (1889-1960), considered modern Japanese cultural identity by negotiating its position with respect to the modern and premodern centers of civilization, the West and China, respectively. In examining Zhou's cultural criticism, I will especially focus on how Zhou transculturated these Japanese writers and critics, and thus constructed his aestheticist imagination of cultural identity. He staunchly practiced and defended such imagination during the War against cultural imperialization, which, among others, the Kyōto-school philosopher Watsuji Tetsurō's thought particularly epitomizes.

1. The Aestheticized “Nation”: Cultural Identity

Zhou Zuoren was born in 1885, four years after his brother Lu Xun. Just like his elder brother, the young Zhou received orthodox education in the Confucian Classics in preparation for the imperial civil service examinations, although Zhou did not even pass the initial county-level tests. Changing the course of his education, he followed Lu Xun and entered the Jiangnan Naval Academy in Nanjing in 1901, where he studied the natural sciences and the art of navigation, all taught in English, as well as traditional

Chinese texts. Zhou took advantage of the imperial program for training the modern navy and left the country for Tokyo in 1906. There, he first took preparatory courses in Japanese, and chose to study ancient Greek at Rikkyo University in Tokyo, while reading extensively works of Japanese and Western literatures, the latter through English and Japanese translations. He also published several essays, and translated, together with Lu Xun, short stories particularly from Eastern Europe. In 1911, Zhou returned to China with a Japanese wife named Hata Nobuko, and took a few teaching and educational administrative positions in the new Republican government, before he was offered a professorship at Peking University in 1917. In Beijing, Zhou became one of the leaders of the New Culture Movement, which promoted the modern discourse of science and democracy; he joined iconoclastic colleagues including Lu Xun, Chen Duxiu 陳獨秀 (1879-1942), and Hu Shi 胡適 (1891-1962) in publishing a number of essays and cultural criticisms in influential newspapers and journals, particularly *Xin qingnian* 新青年 (*La Jeunesse*), to advance anti-Confucianism and the establishment of a new culture for modern China.

Chinese society in the aftermath of the idealistic May Fourth Movement, however, continued to be stricken with political turmoil: as the alliance of the Nationalist and Communist Parties against the northern warlords fell apart following the 1927 Shanghai Massacre, the massive purge of communists by the rightwing nationalists, Zhou Zuoren became increasingly pessimistic about the divisive politics between left and right. Though many of his colleagues left Beijing, the capital plagued with warlordism, for the south during those years, Zhou chose to remain in this old city. With the well-known

declaration to “Read Behind Closed Doors,”³⁶⁷ he retired from the position of a public intellectual and changed his style dramatically to produce “small essays” (*xiaopinwen* 小品文), while becoming the mentor and intellectual pillar of the younger-generation modernist writers and critics based in Beijing, who would later be dubbed “the Beijing School” (Jingpai 京派). Zhou did not move residence even at the fall of the city to the Japanese army in July 1937, rejecting repeated calls from his colleagues and students in the south for his relocation. He had managed to keep a low profile in the occupied city for several months, teaching at private schools to support family, until February 1938, when he appeared at the Forum for Cultural Building for Renewed China, which had been set up on the initiative of the imperialists. On New Year’s Day of 1939, he became the victim of a failed assassination attempt. Fearing intimidation, Zhou accepted the position of the Director of the Library at Peking University, and was promoted to a standing member of the State Council and the Deputy Minister of Education in Wang Jingwei’s collaborationist government in 1941.

As Kiyama Hideo has argued in his seminal study of Zhou Zuoren’s wartime activities, one can safely conclude that the writer’s collaboration was at least in part motivated by his conscientious intention to protect the property of Peking University from the hands of the invaders, as well as practical concerns about the family finances.³⁶⁸ Signs of Zhou’s lukewarm attitudes toward the puppet regime are indeed abundant. His refusal to attend the so-called Conference of the Writers of Great East Asia (*daitōa bungakusha kaigi* 大東亜文学者会議), held three times in Tokyo and Nanjing between

³⁶⁷ Zhou Zuoren, “Bihu dushu lun 閉戶讀書論” (1928), *ZZSQ*, IV/509-11.

³⁶⁸ Kiyama Hideo, *Shū Sakujin tainichi kyōryoku no tenmatsu*.

1942 and 1944, in particular disappointed the Japanese organizers; Zhou otherwise kept his style and wrote a number of “small essays” and reading notes. Yet on the other hand, he also gave total endorsement to imperialist ideology in many documented speeches and talks, in the unequivocal voice of a supporter of the foreign regime. After the Japanese defeat in 1945, Zhou Zuoren was arrested by the Nationalist government and sent to Nanjing to be tried for treason; though Zhou pleaded not guilty, he was sentenced to fourteen years in prison. On the eve of the communist takeover in 1949, however, Zhou was released on bail together with other wartime treason-related prisoners. Despite invitations from friends, he chose not to follow the Nationalist government to Taiwan and remained on the mainland, and soon returned to his home in Beijing. Under the communist rule, he was allowed to publish a number of translations of Greek and Japanese literature as well as voluminous essays, until he was forced to die a miserable death in the wake of the Cultural Revolution in 1967.

Zhou Zuoren, with the aloofness of an aesthete, regarded any apology or explanation about his wartime deeds “banal,” and kept silence on this matter after the conviction throughout the rest of his life. But on one exceptional occasion, he abandoned his policy and wrote a lengthy account on his alleged treason, with a mixed tone of defense and apology. Shortly after he was released from prison, on July 4, 1949, Zhou sent a long letter to the communist leadership to obtain recognition from the incoming government. While revisiting the writer’s early works on gender equality and sexual psychology, and trying to demonstrate some alleged affinity between his thought and communism, this long-unpublished letter is mainly concerned with allaying and

dispelling the suspicion of treason.³⁶⁹ On the practical side, Zhou emphasizes that his collaboration with the imperial authorities helped protect the property of Peking University; on the theoretical side, he repeats his long-held anti-traditionalist conviction and squarely denies the betrayal of the nation, asserting, “Admittedly, I have defied the Classics and rebelled against the Way, offending the Confucian dogma. However, I have never had the intention to offend the nation. This is not an apology; this is only an explanation of a fact.”³⁷⁰

That Zhou Zuoren tries to bolster his self-defense against the charge of treason by evoking a virtually irrelevant topic — i.e., his advocacy of anti-Confucianism — may be unconvincing, to be sure. But this dubious rhetoric, I argue, also gestures toward a unique status of what he here calls “the nation” (*minzu* 民族). It is not only opposed to the orthodox cultural tradition (“the Confucian dogma” [*lijiao* 礼教]), but it is also figured as something defensible even under the aggressive foreign political regime, with which he collaborated. While admitting that his argument may be “but an empty, shallow theory,” Zhou further elaborates his peculiar rhetoric by referring to one of his most developed wartime essays, entitled “Zhongguo de sixiang wenti 中國的思想問題” (The Question of Chinese Thought). In this and other pieces during the wartime period, Zhou configured the “nation” as something so fundamental that all moral or political institutions remain external to its inalienable, intrinsic identity. This essentialist conception, moreover, is one of the basic structures that had underpinned Zhou’s critical thought since the May Fourth era. Against both the traditional moral dogmatism and pre-structured political ideologies,

³⁶⁹ This letter, first published in *Xin wenxue ziliao* 2 (June 1987), is reprinted as “Yijiusijiu nian de yi feng xin 一九四九年的一封信” in Zhou Zuoren, *Zhou Zuoren wenlei bian*, vol.10, p.63-71.

³⁷⁰ Zhou Zuoren, *Zhou Zuoren wenlei bian*, vol.10, p.67.

Zhou had foregrounded this essential dimension of “nationhood” and ventured to reconstruct its identity by means of the aesthetic appreciation of its culture. The nation’s “culture” defines its domain and identity autonomously as though by nature, only through free pursuit of individual artistic creation, rather than by means of determination from without. It is this primordial aesthetic construct of nationhood, which Zhou implicitly reiterated in his only elaborated postwar apology, that is the key to understanding the double-edged relationship of his cultural criticism to the imperial ideology of “East Asia.”

Published in 1942, Zhou Zuoren’s essay “The Question of Chinese Thought” begins with an odd paragraph:

The question of Chinese thought: this is an important issue. Important as it is, however, this is not a serious issue at all. I usually do not take anything rashly or optimistically; but the question of Chinese thought is the one and the only area that I feel totally optimistic about. I do believe there is much hope in its future. There indeed are confusions recently in the world of Chinese thought, but these are only superficial and temporary phenomena. Seen from far-reaching and in-depth perspectives, in fact, the thought of the Chinese people is intrinsically very healthy. There is this essential foundation, so if you keep up careful cultivation, there will necessarily be growth: based on this healthy thought, we can create a healthy nation.³⁷¹

This 1942 essay, according to Zhou’s memoir *Zhitang huixianglu* 知堂回想錄 (Memoire of Zhitang [i.e., Zhou Zuoren]), was written against discussions on how to “guide [Chinese] thought in accordance with the new great East Asian order,” which were pursued in collaborationist organizations based in Beijing, such as the New

³⁷¹ Zhou Zuoren, *ZZSQ*, VII/708.

Citizen's Society (*Xinmin hui* 新民會), a mouthpiece of the imperialist propaganda.³⁷² Indifferent to the ideological campaigns to “guide” Chinese thought in the wake of the outbreak of the Pacific War (1941-45), Zhou has recourse to rhetoric of naturalism: his “totally optimistic” conviction that “the thought of the Chinese people is intrinsically very healthy” implies an essentialist ontology of culture that remains unaffected and constant despite any artificial manipulations from outside. Contrary to what those intellectuals advocating for “the preservation of the national essence” might believe, in fact, one “need not preserve or advocate anything” when it comes to the essence of Chinese culture, for it “cannot perish as long as China does not vanish,” Zhou argues in another 1941 essay.³⁷³ By way of historicizing this “original existence of the core Chinese thought,” Zhou identifies it with the archaic “Confucian thought,” which, he claims, had already existed even “before there was the name of ‘Confucianism’” and “has not changed at all for a few thousand years.” Citing a few canonical passages from *Mencius* and later commentaries on them, Zhou contends that this primordial thought is crystalized in the concept of “*ren* 仁” (goodness). “The *ren*, Zhou claims, means to treat others as humans: not only do you not do to others what you do not want others to do to you, but also you do to others what you want [them to do to you].”³⁷⁴

³⁷² Zhou Zuoren, *Zhitang huixianglu*, vol.2, p.404-5. For the New Citizens Society, see for instance: Wang Qiang, *Hanjian zuzhi Xinmin hui*. According to its pamphlet dated 1942, the society adopted a new five-item platform in that year: 1. Promote the Spirit of the New Citizen; 2. Realize Peace and Defeat Communism; 3. Establish the National Organization; 4. Forge Solidarity among Eastern Nations; 5. Create a New World Order. (See: Zhonghua minguo xinminhui zhongyang zonghui, *Xinmin hui xin gangling jianshi*, p.2-3.) The society's agendas closely reflect the imperialist propaganda put forth by the Tōjō cabinet in the wake of the outbreak of the Pacific War (1941-45).

³⁷³ Zhou Zuoren, “Zhongguo guomin de sixiang” (1941), *ZZSQ*, VIII/583.

³⁷⁴ Zhou Zuoren, *ZZSQ*, VIII/710.

One may certainly criticize Zhou Zuoren for his return to what sounds like traditionalist conservatism here; all the more so given his prominent status as a spearhead of the progressive, anti-Confucian New Culture movement. However, once read against the backdrop of the contemporary sociopolitical context, this essay must turn out to be much less concerned with the content of an original culture — “*ren*,” or “archi-Confucianism” (*yuanshi rujia* 原始儒家)³⁷⁵ as he elsewhere dubs it — than the form thereof. At stake is not to defend Chinese culture and the “nation” within embattled political situations by virtue of an imperishable morality (the “*ren*”), but to do so by means of positing an absolute inviolability and autonomy of the original national culture. With its simple imperatives (“not only do you not do to others what you do not want others to do to you, but also you do to others what you want [them to do to you]”), this morality is universal and indeed could also bolster “co-existence and co-prosperity [*gongcun gongrong* 共存共榮],”³⁷⁶ so Zhou claims by daring to use the much-abused imperial rhetoric underlying the idea of the so-called Great East Asian Co-Prosperty Sphere. While the moral content of the Chinese thought is so broad and plain that it can thus even speak to the enemy’s rhetoric, its existence *per se*, in contrast, is absolute by definition, immune to any artificial interventions. As he argues:

This primordial morality of existence is the source of being human, shared by the entire humanity... To argue from the bottom up, this morality is based on life’s instinct of survival; thus its foundation is sufficiently deep. To argue from the top down, this morality, just like the consideration of the sages, lets everything and everybody occupy their appropriate places. But such [an ideal state] is what ordinary people can also strive for. This morality totally conforms to the order of things and the nature of man; there is no single point in it that is unnatural. This is

³⁷⁵ Zhou Zuoren, *Zhitang huixianglu*, vol.2, p.405.

³⁷⁶ Zhou Zuoren, *ZZSQ*, VIII/711; 712.

why I claim Chinese thought is healthy. Since it derives from human nature, it is different from something that is artificially inculcated from outside. So learned and knowledgeable men can certainly understand it more clearly, but even those ordinary people who *do not recognize a single letter, without having read a single phrase from the books by the sages*, can also understand it. Such people's attitudes toward things and other people naturally have an order, nothing in them going against the sagely Way. This is why I say I can be optimistic.³⁷⁷

Because Chinese culture is rooted in the nature of “being human,” its essence is ontologically independent of any meta-physical characterizations of its identity, which may be affected by certain artificial means from outside. All that should concern people is thus to avoid “disorder” (*luan* 亂), which might physically harm its existence. However, to do so is a matter of “politics” and not of “moral cultivation,” and “because disorder is induced by irrationalism, it is not something that letters and language are able to preclude,” Zhou argues.³⁷⁸ Hence by disengaging real politics from morality and culture, Zhou Zuoren at a time secures his essentialist/culturalist position amidst the actual sociopolitical “disorder,” and immunizes the essence of Chinese culture against external discursive interventions, including the imperialist ideology.

With distant echoes of Heidegger's 1949 “Letter on ‘Humanism,’” where the philosopher elaborates on his ontological exploration in *Being and Time* (1927) of “the essence of humanity” prior to any determinations “with regard to an already established interpretation of nature, history, world, and the ground of the world,”³⁷⁹ Zhou Zuoren, in his postwar letter, also dated 1949, revisits his earlier works to redefine Chinese culture as an expression of humanity so essential that it precedes any discourses “artificially

³⁷⁷ Zhou Zuoren, *ZZSQ*, VIII/712. My italics.

³⁷⁸ Zhou Zuoren, *ZZSQ*, VIII/713; 715.

³⁷⁹ Martin Heidegger, “The Letter on ‘Humanism,’” p.245.

inculcated from outside.” To be sure, Heidegger’s ontology and Zhou Zuoren’s cultural criticism may be too disparate to be directly compared, but as Zhou pushes his cultural criticism so far as to consider an essential articulation of humanity that even those who “do not recognize a single letter” (*mu bushi yiding zi* 目不識一丁字) can readily understand, his critical endeavor corresponds from afar to a unique task of the Heideggerian philosophy: the phenomenological description of the existence of the human. In “Letter on ‘Humanism,’” Heidegger argues, “Language is the clearing-concealing advent of being itself” (*Sprache ist lichtend-verbergende Ankunft des Seins selbst*).³⁸⁰ Heidegger regards “language” — especially poetic language — to be the paradoxical, yet the only agent for at once revealing *and* concealing the essential “being itself.” Likewise, language for Zhou Zuoren is a contradictory yet indispensable means for approaching “humanity” so essential that its expression does not even need “a single letter.” Zhou imagines “Chinese culture” as just such a primordial expression of the fundamental truth of humanity; it is, moreover, in this precise sense that Zhou parallels Chinese civilization with ancient Greek civilization, to be distinguished from later “Christian” states in Europe.³⁸¹

In a paradoxical gesture, in fact, Zhou Zuoren considered *writing* to be the medium through which this primordial culture was to be expressed and transmitted. In another wartime essay mentioned in his 1949 letter, called “Han wen xue de chuantong 漢文學的傳統” (The Tradition of Sinographic Literature, 1940), Zhou argued,

³⁸⁰ Martin Heidegger, “The Letter on ‘Humanism,’” p.249.

³⁸¹ Zhou contends, “Their [Greek] civilization has many similarities with China. Religion, civilization, and history in Greek may be far inferior to those of the Christian states, but they are very similar to [those of] China. . . . Morality in Greece is founded upon natural law, and this kind of conception totally corresponds to that in China.” Zhou Zuoren, “Zhongguo de guomin sixiang,” *ZZSQ*, VIII/582.

What I here call “Sinographic literature” [*han wen xue* 漢文學] is, in usual terms, Chinese literature [*Zhongguo wenxue* 中國文學]. But since I thought “Chinese literature” could have too broad a connotation for the present discussion, I chose to instead use this term. Chinese literature should include all sorts of literary activities done by the Chinese, while Sinographic literature is limited to that which is produced in Sinographic writing [*hanwen* 漢文]. This is the distinction I wanted to make, although works by foreign people are not included in it. The great progenitor of the Chinese people, to be sure, is the Han people; but among them, there were also quite a few elements from southern and northern ethnic groups, and those from the Manchu, Mongolian, and Muslim people, too. These peoples join this group called the Chinese, and write in Sinographic writing, so that they naturally merge into a grand current, producing the tradition of Sinographic literature. And this tradition has not been broken at all until now.³⁸²

Elsewhere, Zhou Zuoren expands on his conception of Chinese literary tradition: “As long as [a text] is written in Chinese characters [*hanzi* 漢字], it is called Sinographic writing [*hanwen* 漢文], no matter what vernacular style it may be written in.” He then elaborates, “In this sense, if a text does not use Chinese characters but some other methods of writing — be they the *zhuyin* or the Roman alphabet transliteration — it becomes a different stuff: such a text is not within the category [of what I call ‘Chinese literature.’] For I believe any text that uses Chinese characters more or less inherits the tradition of Sinographic literature [*han wen xue* 漢文學], and thus assumes certain specific characteristics. But if it is transliterated in some other characters, then probably it ends up departing that tradition, gradually.”³⁸³ Rather than sound, it is *writing* that bestows “Chinese literature” its identity and tradition, and such a formal, *materialistic* concept enables the Chinese cultural identity to be imagined regardless of “external” factors such as ethnicity or voice, much less moral teaching or political ideology.

³⁸² Zhou Zuoren, *ZZSQ*, VIII/407.

³⁸³ Zhou Zuoren, “Han wen xue de qiantu 漢文學的前途” (1943), *ZZSQ*, VIII/778.

2. Culture and Writing: Contingent Boundaries

Zhou Zuoren's focus on Chinese characters, as well as the unique construction of cultural identity based on materialistic conditions, indeed dates back to the May Fourth period. Zhou then articulated his idiosyncratic position vis-à-vis the single most important guiding principle of the May Fourth literary movement: the vernacularization of Chinese literature. While being a central voice in the *Xin Qingnian* intellectual circle promoting Literary Revolution, Zhou at the same time shed a most unexpected light on what many in his progressive cohort regarded as the pinnacle of the country's corrupt traditional literature. The "eight-legged essay" (*ba gu wen* 八股文), the highly stylized composition used in the imperial civil service examinations during the Ming and Qing dynasties, became a symbol of the classical Chinese writing shackled by formalities and conventions, lacking personal voice and creativity. In one of the founding treatises of the May Fourth literary movement, "Wenxue geming lun 文學革命論" (On Literary Revolution, 1917), for instance, Chen Duxiu mentioned the "eight-legged essay" as *the* exemplar of how bad a literary writing can possibly become — as bad, indeed, as "a clay doll applied with powder and rouge."³⁸⁴ Despite its obsolescence and alleged lack of

³⁸⁴ Chen Duxiu, in his rough historicization of the development of Chinese literature since the fourth century, argues, "Since the Eastern Jin [319-420 CE], parallel prose was used even for minor reports and notices; in the Tang [618-907 CE], it evolved to engender a parallel form. Therefore the idea that poetry should be 'regulated,' and prose 'parallel' originated in the Six Dynasties [222-589 CE] and culminated in the Tang period. These genres further evolved into long regulated poetry, and then into prose in four- and six-syllable phrases. At its best, this kind of ornate, sycophantic, pompous, and hollow classical literature of the aristocrats is no better than a clay doll applied with powder and rouge, and its value is no greater than that of those 'eight-legged' examination essays." Chen Duxiu, "Wenxue geming lun 文學革命論," *Xin*

literary value, Zhou Zuoren insisted that the eight-legged essay should still be counted as part of national literature since it had for centuries been part of “Sinographic literature”; as he claimed in 1926, “I always say that national-language literature [*guoyu wenxue* 國語文學] is nothing but a new name for Sinographic literature [*han wen xue*], which includes whatever literature composed in Sinographic writing [*han wen*], even examination verse in the eight-legged format. For the eight-legged essay in fact represents a special kind of style, although there is naturally no literary value to it.”³⁸⁵

Zhou Zuoren’s reconceptualization of “Chinese literature” (*Zhongguo wenxue*) as “Sinographic literature” (*han wen xue*) bespeaks his unique understanding of the Chinese literary tradition, which squarely undercuts a leading May Fourth conceptualization of this tradition in terms of social evolution. Representing the historical imagination of the modernist intellectuals, this evolutionist idea historicizes “Chinese literature” as a tradition that has progressively evolved toward the modern vernacular form from its original, immature state in the past. Hu Shi, who put forward this concept most prominently, for instance, located modern Chinese literature in an invented tradition in which vernacular literature had allegedly evolved from its “seeds” (*zhongzi* 種子) in Tang poetry into today’s full-scale experiment along “the single consecutive line that had not been interrupted all the way until now” (*yixian xiangcheng, zhijin bujue* 一線相承, 至今不絕).³⁸⁶ Imagined as a linear, progressive history, this version of Chinese literary

qingnian 2, no.6. I used Kirk Denton’s translation with some modifications: *Modern Chinese Literary Thought: Writings on Literature: 1893-1945*, p.142.

³⁸⁵ Zhou Zuoren, “Guoyu wenxue tan 國語文學談” (1926), *ZZSQ*, IV/484.

³⁸⁶ Hu Shi, “Lishi de wenxue guannian lun 歷史的文學觀念論,” in *Hu Shi quanji*, vol.1, p.30-1.

tradition has to suppress, if not ignore, traditional literary forms that are not immediately compatible with the modern concept of vernacular literature, such as the infamous eight-legged essay. According to Zhou Zuoren, on the contrary, this literary form must be examined exactly because it undercuts the May Fourth ideas of literature. He writes, “The literary revolution in the first years of the Republic ... may well be considered as a reaction [*fandong* 反動] to the culture [embodied in] the eight-legged essay. People’s praise and disparagement both contain a little misunderstanding. If you want to understand the significance of this movement [of literary revolution in the Republic], then you first need to comprehend what on earth this eight-legged essay is. Otherwise, you would be no different from someone who tries to understand the significance of the Republican Revolution [1911] without knowing the history of the Qing dynasty [1644-1912], which would be a completely futile attempt.” Therefore, the eight-legged essay not only is “a pinnacle of the old tradition,” but also is “an origin [*qi yuan* 起源] of the modern reaction.”³⁸⁷

Zhou Zuoren developed his unique conception of Chinese literary history in *Zhongguo xinwenxue de yuanliu* 中国新文学的源流 (The Origin of the New Chinese Literature), published in 1932.³⁸⁸ Based on a series of lectures delivered at Furen University in Beijing, this work takes a clear position against the evolutionist concept that Hu Shi had advanced — the concept that “regards vernacular literature as the one and the only goal of Chinese literature.”³⁸⁹ Zhou instead asserts, “Literature in China never took a

³⁸⁷ Zhou Zuoren, “Lun baguwen 論八股文,” in *Zhongguo xinwenxue de yuanliu*, p.118.

³⁸⁸ For an interpretation of this work, see: Xudong Zhang, “A Radical Hermeneutics of Chinese Literary Tradition: On Zhou Zuoren’s *Zhongguo xinwenxue de yuanliu*.”

³⁸⁹ Zhou Zuoren, *Zhongguo xinwenxue de yuanliu*, p.36.

straight path in the past; instead, like a winding river, it flowed from point A to point B, then again from point B to point A. Each time it met resistance, it changed its course.”³⁹⁰

In this “winding” model, Zhou argues that Chinese literature has been pendulating between two polar-opposite traditions since antiquity: expressionism, or “*shi yan zhi* 詩言志” (lit. poetry expresses intention), on the one hand, and didacticism, or “*wen yi zai dao* 文以載道” (lit. writing carries the way), on the other. Each time the country experienced political and social turmoil, people expressed whatever they wanted to say, as the society did not have “controlling power to restrain” literary creation: hence expressionism gained momentum. But then when the country regained stability, literature received “control by Confucian thought” and served as a didactic tool. In this zigzag scheme, Zhou Zuoren posits a certain propensity inherent in Chinese literature that changes its direction in response to actual sociopolitical conditions, yet always remaining existent. From lyrical verse in *Shijing* 詩經 (The Classic of Poetry) to the formalistic poetic exposition in the Eastern Han, from late-Ming drama to Qing eight-legged essays, different manifestations of writing are all included in this comprehensive current, where a form in a later age is always a “reacting” (*fandong* 反動) transformation of its predecessor faced with a new sociopolitical reality. From this genealogical perspective, Zhou historicizes the May Fourth literary revolution not so much in terms of secession from the past tradition, as in terms of the “reaction” of the preceding literary culture of the Qing within the modern sociopolitical context. Ossified, formalistic, and dogmatic as it allegedly is, therefore, Qing literature is nevertheless an “origin” of modern Chinese literature.

³⁹⁰ Ibid., p.35.

Such an imagined genealogical continuity in transformation, or, if you will, the plane of immanence that Chinese literature constructs and is bound to, has a material foundation: Sinographic writing. The eight-legged essay, for example, might have declined already, but “it, suggests Zhou Zuoren, forever constitutes Chinese literature” as long as it is composed in Chinese characters. As he discusses:

The value of the eight-legged essay should never decrease for this reason [that there are no more people these days who are versed in this prose style]. It forever constitutes part of Chinese literature — or rather, to put it simply, I would even dare to say that it is a crystallization of Chinese culture. This is an undeniable, obvious fact whether people now accept it or not. *The eight-legged essay, to be sure, is already dead, but it is precisely like the ghost that appears in children’s literature — that ghost that is chopped into pieces by the hero, becoming completely inactive, but each of whose pieces turns out to be still alive. Judging from its ghostly appearance and power, we can prove that the ghost in fact has not been dead.* Let us examine Chinese characters [*hanzi* 漢字] first. Chinese characters are unlike any other letters in the world, including those used in Japan or Korea: they have what is known as “the six classifications” [*liushu* 六書], hence pictographs and compound ideographs [*xiangxing huiyi* 象形會意]; they have what is known as “the four tones,” hence level and oblique tones [*pingze* 平仄]. Thus, quite a few ways of playfulness [*baxi* 把戲] emerge from here [such as parallelism and regulated prosody]. ... The eight-legged essay, therefore, includes in it all sorts of subtle playfulness [*youyi* 遊藝] that derive from the unique characteristics of Chinese characters themselves, and we whereby claim that it is a crystallization of Chinese literature.³⁹¹

What the eight-legged essay epitomizes are certain aesthetic characteristics of Sinographic verse and prose (“quite a few ways of playfulness”) that are said to derive from the inherent attributes of Chinese characters themselves; no matter how thoroughly you may “revolutionize” Chinese literature, it will continue to be shaped by those deep aesthetic qualities as long as its building blocks remain the same, as though haunted by the ghost that survives complete dissection. Rather than a particular form (vernacular or

³⁹¹ Zhou Zuoren, “Lun baguwen,” in *Zhongguo xinwenxue de yuanliu*, p.119. My italics.

classical), genre, or content, Zhou Zuoren thus attributes the identity of Chinese literature to aesthetic qualities that stem from the very nature of *letters* in which it is written. No matter what form a piece of writing takes, that materially-conditioned “literariness” will have to be perceived as long as it is produced in Chinese characters, registering it as belonging to the tradition of “Chinese literature.” In this imagined configuration, therefore, literary revolution, just like any other moments in the history of Chinese literature, needs to continue to explore possibilities of those intrinsic aesthetic qualities of Sinographic writing, despite the demand for vernacularization; hence, an ideal achievement of literary modernization should be, in Zhou’s words, “the creation of a kind of new, classical style” (*chuangzaochu yizhong xin guwen ti* 創造出一種新古文體).³⁹²

Zhou Zuoren thus conceived of the history of Chinese literature as an aesthetic tradition of Sinographic writing that had never been broken, and would persist despite — or rather because of — the country’s changing sociopolitical circumstances, due to its unrelenting ability to create new forms in response to them. Zhou believed that this tradition would in fact survive foreign invasion and occupation, just as it had done so under the rule of foreign peoples throughout Chinese history.³⁹³ The detached and oddly “optimistic” tones in the writer’s wartime treatises are thus to be attributed to his idiosyncratic conception of Chinese cultural tradition, which is at a time materialistic and aesthetic. “Admittedly, I have defied the Classics and rebelled against the Way, offending the Confucian dogma. However, I have never had the intention to offend the nation. This

³⁹² Zhou Zuoren, “Guoyu wenxue tan,” *ZZSQ*, IV/483.

³⁹³ Kiyama Hideo, in his *Shū Sakujin “tainichi kyōryoku” no tenmatsu*, even compares Zhou Zuoren’s wartime situation with “the Han person serving for the Manchu Qing dynasty.” Kiyama Hideo, *Shū Sakujin “tainichi kyōryoku” no tenmatsu*, p.195.

is not an apology; this is only an explanation of the fact.” So Zhou defended his wartime collaboration in the 1949 letter to the communist leadership. His unapologetic logic, therefore, must be understood in its most literal sense, provided that “the nation” is understood in *cultural* terms. From Zhou’s perspective, the best that a writer can do in embattled sociopolitical conditions is to carry on, to keep creating in Sinographic writing, searching for its new forms in response to those unfavorable realities. Only such creative perseverance can transmit the cultural tradition and create new literature, precisely by deconstructing its past forms within contemporary, if hostile, circumstances, just as the May Fourth literary revolution did so by virtue of “offending the Confucian dogma.” In his culturalist self-understanding, thus, Zhou Zuoren’s wartime activities were no different from his earlier iconoclastic aesthetic endeavors during the May Fourth era. The only aspect that distinguishes his wartime discourse is his pressing worry that “if there is problem in the very survival of the country’s people, then [Chinese] thought will be at risk and there will be the danger of disorder.” The actual survival of the people, of course, *was* genuinely at stake; but, as we argued above, Zhou distanced himself from this real problem, adding, “because disorder is induced by irrationalism, it is not something that letters and language are able to preclude.”³⁹⁴ The only security Zhou hoped to maintain, then, was that of a personal space for “reading behind closed doors,” rather than that of a sovereign nation-state — a space where he could keep a certain distance from the immediate sociopolitical reality out there, while firmly remaining part of it, and continue to create. I argue that it was collaboration that realized such security for Zhou. For this writer, collaboration was thus a necessary evil in order to protect and

³⁹⁴ Zhou Zuoren, *ZZSQ*, VIII/713; 715.

practice “the nation” as he perceived it as a *cultural* existence; but the same deed turns into a flagrant treason once his culturalist logic collapses, and “the nation” is starkly understood, despite his entire aestheticist imagination, as the subject of a nation-state threatened by foreign encroachment.

In the occupied city of Beijing, Zhou Zuoren thus defended his aestheticist position, and thus performed the “nation” as he reimagined it as a cultural identity. In ascribing that identity to Sinographic writing and its unique aesthetic qualities, Zhou made it clear that those material-aesthetic conditions were particular to China, and not pertinent to other countries, even though literati in East Asia had used Sinographic writing for centuries. In the above-quoted passages, Zhou indeed claimed that Sinographic literature did not comprise “works by foreign people,” and asserted that “Chinese characters” — *hanzi* 漢字 — were as much different from those used in “Japan or Korea” as from “any other letters in the world.” At his most nationalistic moment during the wartime period, Zhou wrote:

The origin of Chinese characters and words can be traced back far into the past. Vernacular writing was recently introduced, but national language is [still] written in Chinese characters. . . . Today’s young people who write in Chinese characters can communicate their feeling and thought to each other no matter how far they may be geographically separated. This simple fact has enormous significance. The traditionalists would lament the rise of the vernacular and the decline of classical writing, while the modernists would likewise express dissatisfaction, claiming that vernacularization and dialectalization have not been pursued far enough. But in my opinion, [such a disagreement] is only appropriate when it comes to writing. What matters more, then, is political success: i.e., the promotion of intellectual and emotional communication and unity among the people of the country. We do not necessarily need to praise the pioneers of the [May Fourth] new literary movement, but we still have to acknowledge that the movement made far greater achievements in the political domain of the Republic than in the [purely] literary domain.³⁹⁵

³⁹⁵ Afterword to “Han wen xue de qiantu.” Zhou Zuoren, *ZZSQ*, VIII/785.

Drawing upon what he perceives as the “political success” of the May Fourth vernacular literary practices in producing an imagined national community, Zhou Zuoren reaffirms, within the country now under full-fledged attacks by the Japanese, the political efficacy of literature. He attributes that efficacy to intellectual and emotional communicative function of Sinographic writing.

May Fourth Chinese writers pursued the creation of such a national literary community precisely by writing literature in the vernacular as a popular literary medium, but Zhou Zuoren slightly shifts the focus from the vernacular to Sinographic writing. This change, however, enables Zhou in occupied Beijing to assert what amounts to a statement radically heterogeneous to the May Fourth contexts. Following the above quote, he continues, “Those who wish to devote themselves to literature from now on must also clearly understand this: by means of grasping the unity of Sinographic literature, you should work both for the nation, on the one hand, and literature, on the other. Needless to say, national literature must first be established as a foundation, so that it can then participate in and be active as a member of the literature of the Great East Asia [*da dongya wenxue* 大東亞文學].” The notion that a national literature can be practiced as part of a regional “Great East Asian” literary sphere was a cliché asserted also by the contemporary colonial Korean and Taiwanese writers, and this notion, of course, was an imperialist creation.³⁹⁶ Also discussing the mediating function of Chinese characters, Zhou Zuoren argued, “From individual standpoints, Chinese characters and Sinographic writing may appear very inconvenient [to use]. But speaking from the point of view of

³⁹⁶ For this matter, see Chapter Six.

the state and the nation, they not only possess enormous communicative power across time and space, but they also become an indispensable medium [for communication] within the East Asian cultural sphere [*dongya wenhua quan* 東亞文化圈]. I shall continue to pay more attention to this important question.”³⁹⁷

Though in a reserved tone, Zhou Zuoren tries to engage with the problem that Sinographic writing has historically been used not only nationally, but also transnationally. It has constituted material conditions for literary creation and produced much aesthetic value in greater “East Asia.” To the precise extent that Zhou attributes the identity of Chinese culture to the material/aesthetic qualities of Sinographic writing, therefore, the boundaries of the “nation” that its communicative power is to integrate can become ambivalent. Rather than questioning whether Zhou’s reserved mentioning of “East Asian” culture was serious or not, I want to emphasize the *plasticity* of cultural identity irreducibly inscribed in Zhou’s criticism and aestheticist discourse. Whereas his wavering conception of “Sinographic writing” and “Chinese characters” symptomizes this ambivalence, it is the problem inherent in Zhou’s aesthetic reconstruction of cultural identity not only in the wartime but also earlier periods. This leads me to explore the complex relationship between Zhou’s national and regional cultural discourses.

³⁹⁷ Zhou Zuoren, *ZZSQ*, VIII/784.

3. The Aestheticized “Asia”: *Sigu zhi youqing*, or, “Obscure Feelings of Recollecting the Past”

Just as Zhou Zuoren’s imagination of the Chinese “nation” hinged upon aesthetic judgment, so is his discourse of “East Asia” — and the “East” — an *aesthetic* construction. Zhou published an essay in the journal *Xin Qingnian* about his 1919 trips to Japan. In this piece, Zhou, distantly echoing the Japanese art critic Okakura Tenshin’s well-known formula: “Asia is one,”³⁹⁸ argued that “[i]n what is called Eastern civilization [*dongfang wenming* 東方文明],” “only the fine arts enjoy eternal glory,” and added that this applies to “all of India, China, and Japan.”³⁹⁹ Written in the immediate aftermath of the May Fourth Movement, this essay draws on the writer’s experiences during his visits of Japan, and tries to counterbalance the popular Chinese sentiment of “boycotting Japan” (*pairi* 排日), which drove the May Fourth Movement. Zhou’s essay, on the one hand, argues that what China should staunchly boycott is Japan’s “newspaper reporters, bureaucrats, scholars, politicians, the military clique, and the like” who, in theory and practice, are pushing the invasion. It on the other hand expresses sympathetic observations on Japan’s ordinary hardworking people, who, as Zhou argues, are crushed by serious socioeconomic inequality in the rapidly capitalizing society and are themselves “in a sense also victims of invasion.”⁴⁰⁰ Zhou’s compassionate attitudes toward Japanese working-class people is tied to the impressions he got from the highlight

³⁹⁸ See: Okakura Kakuzō, *The Ideals of the East*, p.1.

³⁹⁹ Zhou Zuoren, “You Riben zagan 遊日本雜感” (1919) *ZZSQ*, II/192.

⁴⁰⁰ Zhou Zuoren, *ZZSQ*, II/191.

of his 1919 trips: a visit to *atarashiki mura* 新しき村. *Atarashiki mura*, or the New Village, is a communal settlement in the mountains of southern Kyūshū established in 1918 on the writer Mushanokōji Saneatsu's 武者小路実篤 (1885-1976) utopian, egalitarian ideals inspired by the Tolstoyan anarcho-pacifism.⁴⁰¹

Mushanokōji Saneatsu and his group's experiment and other aspects of everyday life in Japan convince Zhou Zuoren that the country, despite its modern militarism and feudalistic tradition, has a potential of taking a “third” path of human civilization. Zhou observes that Japan learned most from China and Germany in premodern and modern times, respectively. But now that these countries are on the verge of collapse, “is Japan, Zhou questions, still going to gather remaining pieces of the two ruins and try to bolster the old house? Or is it going to learn to rebuild itself by seeking for a third teacher?” And he then continues, “The third teacher will be able to guide mankind to build ‘a third land’ — a heaven on earth — and realize human life. Japan and China have both aptitude and opportunities for sharing such happiness.”⁴⁰² What underpins this “strong conviction” is an aestheticized image of the life of the ordinary people in Japan and China. Praising the “beauty” of the work of Japanese and southeastern Chinese farmers on paddy fields, Zhou visualizes an idealized “culture” where the state of nature expresses a beautiful pattern through human work. The fine arts, in this discourse, are symbolic of such an idealized culture of the people. Through the aesthetic imagination, Zhou thus envisions a primordial “culture” in the two nations.

⁴⁰¹ For more on Mushanokōji Saneatsu's “New Village” movement, see: Ōtsuyama Kunio, *Mushanokōji Saneatsu kenkyū: Saneatsu to atarashiki mura*.

⁴⁰² Zhou Zuoren, *ZZSQ*, II/194.

Zhou Zuoren's aestheticized imagination of Japanese and Chinese culture is a modern reconstruction, though it is essentially informed by the long history of transnational communication in East Asia, history where "China, from the point of view of Japan, is surely something similar to what Greece and Rome are [for the Europeans]." ⁴⁰³ A modernist intellectual, Zhou particularly refuses to identify with the Confucian tradition what he imagines as constituting a deep affinity between the cultures of China and Japan. He goes as far as to assert, "I even feel sorry in some regards: Confucianism, for instance, did do poisonous harms to the Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese nations." ⁴⁰⁴ What Zhou Zuoren admires as "the beauty of the Japanese national character," instead, resides in that "it is rich in human feelings [*fu yu renqing* 富於人情]." ⁴⁰⁵ Zhou bolsters his observation by quoting from the Kyoto-school philosopher Watsuji Tetsurō's *Nihon kodai bunka* 日本古代文化 (Ancient Japanese Culture, 1920). Watsuji in this well-received book discusses the "artistic value" of the oldest extant Japanese historical record *Kojiki* 古事記 (Record of Old Matters, 8th C), and emphasizes the richness of "instinctive imagination" in its description, which supplements the lack of "rational unity" in its composition. ⁴⁰⁶ Admiring its primordial, direct, and even "infantile" expression of imagination, Watsuji concludes that *Kojiki*'s artistic value resides in the abundance of "feeling"; as he argues, "The 'absence of depth' in *Kojiki* is to be supplemented by a Humane view of life. The pastoral beauty that colors the whole pages

⁴⁰³ Zhou Zuoren, "'Zhina minzuxing' '支那民族性,'" *ZZSQ*, IV/583.

⁴⁰⁴ Zhou Zuoren, "'Zhina minzuxing,'" *ZZSQ*, IV/583.

⁴⁰⁵ Zhou Zuoren, "Riboren de renqing mei 日本人的人情美," *ZZSQ*, IV/32.

⁴⁰⁶ Watsuji Tetsurō, *Watsuji Tetsurō zenshū*, vol.3, p.189-93.

of *Kojiki* is the outflow of this moist feeling [*shinjō* 心情] ... The histories that record old Chinese myths and legends may surpass *Kojiki* in their grandeur and depth. But as a work of art, they cannot match *Kojiki*. For there is not enough feeling [*kanjō* 感情] in them; the moist feeling that I have discussed is particularly absent.”⁴⁰⁷ Quoting this passage, Zhou argues, “It is exactly such feeling [*xinqing* 心情] that is the greatest beauty of Japan, and that makes us feel affinity with Japanese culture.”⁴⁰⁸

As Watsuji Tetsurō focuses on details of individual expressions in the Japanese ancient historiography rather than its structure, so does Zhou Zuoren particularly shed light on minute, detailed, and everyday aspects of Japanese culture. Zhou’s perspective on Japan, therefore, fundamentally hinges on his subjective, aesthetic judgment, rather than moral or political concerns. Zhou writes: “There may be aspects of Japanese culture that are several times better than China, but ‘loyalty to the sovereign’ [i.e., a Confucian virtue] cannot be one of them. ... When we are at home, or walking on the streets, we all wear everyday clothes, and it is in everyday outfits that we show our true selves. If we want to observe Japan, we do not need to examine them carrying a pair of those swords [of the *samurai*]. Instead, it is when you look at them sipping tea, or arranging plants, that you witness their true nature.”⁴⁰⁹ Rather than a Confucian value (“loyalty to the sovereign [*zhongjun* 忠君]”) or military might, Zhou sees the essence of Japanese culture in its everyday life, which, to him, is an expression of “human feelings.”

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid., vol.3, p.202. “Humane” is written in English in the original.

⁴⁰⁸ Zhou Zuoren, *ZZSQ*, IV/33.

⁴⁰⁹ Zhou Zuoren, *ZZSQ*, IV/32.

Those aspects of ordinary Japanese lifestyle that touch the sensibilities of the Chinese writer are also signs that remind him of an imagined “past” of the culture of his own. The imagined cultural past is a mixture of memories of his youthful life in southeastern China, a reconstructed Chinese cultural tradition, and what he wanted to “restore” through anti-Qing nationalist revolution, which Zhou supported during his years in Tokyo. In one of the essays on Japan that Zhou Zuoren put together on the eve of the Second Sino-Japanese War, entitled “Riben guankui zhi er 日本管窺之二” (My Humble View on Japan II, 1935; later retitled “Riben de yi shi zhu 日本的衣食住” [Japanese Clothing, Food, and Living]), he articulates his “attachment” to Japanese culture as an amalgamation of his “personal taste” and what he calls “the obscure feelings of recollecting the past [*sigu zhi youqing* 思古之幽情].”⁴¹⁰ These “obscure feelings” occur to the writer whenever he perceives that traits of Chinese old customs are as though preserved within Japanese life. Guided by the Chinese literatus/politician Huang Zunxian’s 黃遵憲 (1848-1905) *Riben zashi shi* 日本雜事詩 (Poems on Miscellaneous Aspects of Japan, 1879), Zhou discusses Japanese houses, clothes, and food with cultural archeological curiosity. Zhou takes examples from these aspects of Japanese culture and, wherever possible, tries to tease out their similarities with some characteristics of Chinese culture as well as what he thinks as their origins in the latter. Zhou, for one, sketches a genealogy of *hakama*, the Japanese-style trousers: “Like in China and the West, people wore trousers in ancient Japan. As Japan introduced the Tang culture and reformed its clothes, cylinder-shaped trousers became lamp-shaped ones. Then the bottom of the trousers further became wider, their crotch lower, making today’s *hakama*, which looks

⁴¹⁰ Zhou Zuoren, “Riben de yi shi zhu” (1935), *ZZSQ*, VI/657.

almost like a skirt.”⁴¹¹ For another, Zhou draws a comparison: “*Sashimi* is exactly what they call *yusheng* in Canton; *sushi* is nothing other than what was in the past called *yuzha*, whose recipe appears in *Qimin yaoshu* 齊民要術 [Key Techniques for Governing the People, 6th C].”⁴¹² Zhou’s essay does not care about historiographical accuracy and is too episodic — and even fragmentary — to be a full-fledged cultural history, as the author makes it clear that this essay “is totally subjective, a sort of chatting about recollection and impression, insufficient to let you understand truths about Japan.”⁴¹³ By meticulously attending to his subjective “obscure feelings of recollecting the past,” Zhou’s essay reimagines a cultural past that Japan would have shared with China. Details of Japanese everyday culture that Zhou are attached to, and make him “recollect the past” are signs of the existence of such a past, and yet the reconstructed cultural past is not so much intended to be a well-developed historiography, as an aesthetic projection.

When Zhou Zuoren claims that the Japanese and Chinese are “in the end, the same Asian people,” thus, “Asia” is precisely such an aestheticized concept. Zhou’s discourse on “Asia” in the late 1930s, in fact, constitutes an exact dialectic counterpoint to his hopeful opinions during the May Fourth era about its positive potential, potential that, as Zhou argued, would have brought about a “third” path of human civilization. Zhou’s otherwise pleasurable essay “Riben guankui zhi er” ends on an unexpectedly dim note:

In terms of cultural relationship, Japan and China were originally like Rome and Greece; recently, they have become the Germany and France of the East. But

⁴¹¹ Zhou Zuoren, *ZZSQ*, VI/661.

⁴¹² Zhou Zuoren, *ZZSQ*, VI/663-4.

⁴¹³ Zhou Zuoren, *ZZSQ*, VI/666.

these days, who would want to listen to discussions on Japanese life if they are not flavored by the spice of ‘national crises’? However, judging from my careful reflections on Japan in the past and the present, and on its actions in the current ‘state of emergency,’ I clearly see that Japan and China are, in the end, the same Asian people. Though their prosperity and fortune are different right now, their ultimate fates are still the same. Would Asian people be finally destined to be the inferior race? — This doubt leaves me in a daze. Begun as a discourse on [Japanese] clothing, food, and living, and ended in this way, [my essay] is indeed a dark fatalism [*suminglun* 宿命論].⁴¹⁴

With his typical elusiveness, Zhou Zuoren does not articulate what association he makes between Japanese culture and Japan’s wartime action, and what makes him conclude that “Japan and China are, in the end, the same Asian people,” who may be ultimately doomed to be “the inferior race.” While arousing deep attachment in the mind of the Chinese writer, the phenomenology of Japanese culture thus at the same time engenders a self-critical and melancholic perspective on “China” and “Asia,” which is contrasted with the West. In the May Fourth era, the writer’s aesthetic judgment of the detailed facets of Japanese culture that are “rich in human feelings” anticipated a beautiful synthesis — a possible “third” form of human civilization —, but on the eve of the Second Sino-Japanese War, those facets are as though about to fall apart, leaving the writer merely with fragmented, “obscure” sensations unable to be synthesized. “Asia” as an aesthetic concept here displays its paradoxical signification: it is at a time the name of an alternative universality *and* of its structureless fragmentation. If Zhou’s essay “Ribenguan kui zhi er” is a literary attempt at weaving together his “obscure,” fragmented sensations and thereby projecting a cultural synthesis, whether this essayistic endeavor leads to the positive “strong conviction” of the relevance of “Asian” culture or to the “dark fatalism,” is far more contingent than one might imagine.

⁴¹⁴ Zhou Zuoren, *ZZSQ*, VI/666.

As a sequel to “Riben guankui zhi er,” Zhou Zuoren put together in the following year “Riben guankui zhi san 日本管窺之三” (My Humble View on Japan III, 1936). In this essay, Zhou distances himself from “Western” “Japanophiles” such as Lafcadio Hearn (1850-1904), Ernest Fenollosa (1853-1908), and Edmond de Goncourt (1822-1896), whose “views on the East are quite romantic ... as if they are alternating between praise and disappointment in examining tropical plants.”⁴¹⁵ Against their alleged romanticizing “illusions,” Zhou sees himself as part of a culture “that is in the same lineage [*xitong* 系統] as Japan,” and adheres to his own subjective judgment. Further pursuing his interest in popular aspects of Japanese culture, Zhou in this essay focuses on a most unusual topic: a fictionalized culture of treating decapitated heads. He zeroes in on a scene in Tanizaki Jun’ichirō’s latest historical novel *Bushūkō hiwa* 武州公秘話 (The Secret Story of the Lord of Musashi, 1935), where women “dress” the heads of enemy soldiers killed in a battle before they are inspected by the generals in an ill-lighted attic. Zhou cites from Tanizaki’s *Bushūkō hiwa*:

Of the five women present, three sat with one head each before them, while the other two assisted. The first woman poured hot water into a basin and, with the help of one of the assistants, washed a head. When she was finished, she placed the head on a ‘head-board’ and passed it to her neighbor. The second woman would dress the hair, and the third, attach a label. Finally, the head would be put in line with the other finished heads, on a long plank behind the women.

Zhou’s lengthy quote then focuses on a detail:

⁴¹⁵ Zhou Zuoren, *ZZSQ*, VII/9-10.

When she received a freshly washed head from the woman on the left, she would first cut the cord that bound the topknot; then she would comb the hair carefully, caressingly. Sometimes she would apply a bit of oil, touch up the shaven area with a razor, or, taking an incense burner from the sutra stand at her side, hold the hair over the smoke. Next she would take up a new cord with her right hand, hold one end in her mouth as she gathered the hair together with her left hand, and tie up the topknot again — all exactly as a professional hairdresser might do.⁴¹⁶

Tanizaki's representation of this grotesque scene aesthetically inspires Zhou Zuoren, who concludes that this is the expressions of “the respect of the dead” and of “a beauty of human affection [*yizhong renqing zhi mei* 一種人情之美].”⁴¹⁷ Tanizaki's writing features contrasting images to create aestheticizing distance — the images of the “round face” with “a natural charm” of a girl among the decapitated heads, of her “supple” and “graceful” hands working on the dead's hair, and of the “deliberate, modest, and graceful” movements of those women, “dressing” the dead heads.⁴¹⁸ By discovering a trace of “human” culture in Tanizaki's aesthetic sublimation of the real materiality of death and violence, Zhou foregrounds what he dubs “the affection of *samurai* [*wushi zhi qing* 武士之情]”; as he states, “In sum, I only wanted to briefly discuss human affection [*renqing* 人情] within the life of Japanese *samurai*. By particularly taking the example of that gruesome and terrifying scene of head inspection, we witness a bit of human feeling expressed in cruel mutual killing. I suspect this must point to a tiny bit of bright light on the very dark path of human life.”⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁶ Zhou Zuoren, *ZZSQ*, VII/12. I use Anthony H. Chambers's translation: Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, *The Secret History of the Lord of Musashi*, pp. 23-4; 29.

⁴¹⁷ Zhou Zuoren, *ZZSQ*, VII/15.

⁴¹⁸ See: Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, *The Secret History of the Lord of Musashi*, p.24-5.

⁴¹⁹ Zhou Zuoren, *ZZSQ*, VII/15

If Tanizaki's fiction aestheticizes a most cruel moment of the feudal *samurai* life, Zhou Zuoren's reading of Tanizaki's literature likewise aestheticizes the increasing militarization of the neighboring country. Zhou's act of fathoming, through Tanizaki's representation, a "human" and affective dimension of the otherwise militaristic life of Japanese *samurai* is an allegory of his effort to reimagine certain humanity and civility in the culture of the radicalizing Japanese Empire, as "a tiny bit of bright light." Zhou's effort is grafted upon his long-pursued endeavor of reconstructing, through his personal aesthetic sensations, a Japanese cultural past that would possess certain essential traits shared by Chinese tradition. In this 1936 essay, Zhou's gaze shifts from tea drinking and planting; clothing, food, and living; and "*hakama*" and "*sushi*" toward, among other things, the fictionalized "head dressing." The Chinese writer's meticulous attention to details of Japanese cultural life is here as though straying into and trapped in the dimly-lit attic in the Tanizaki novel. Zhou's synthesizing hermeneutic gesture that reads in this "tiny bit of bright light" the general "affection of *samurai*," and thus the "human affect" in the Japanese life, therefore, sounds farfetched and fanciful, if not total nonsense. His "obscure feelings of recollecting the past" thus have to remain vague and unfathomable, isolated in this writer's personal language. His aesthetic reconstruction of the Japanese cultural past, then, has to reveal its limitations, prompting to him to draw an even darker conclusion that casts pessimistic doubts upon his very practice of cultural criticism; as he closes the piece,

But the attempt of understanding a nation's culture is not only very hard; it indeed also makes me feel very sad and lonely. I always pay attention to its cultural past; my spirit cannot but long for it. But the reality often undercuts it, or even directly opposes it; at such moments, I feel contradiction and disappointment. . . . Those who study a culture would want to see that culture all over, but this is impossible.

Japanese culture is not an exception. Therefore, those who cannot stand sadness and solitude should not undertake to study [culture]. If you are too enthusiastic, then you will forcibly try to match your image with the reality, and as a result find yourself in contradiction and disappointment, leading to the termination [of your study]. . . . This kind of conclusion may sound very dim and discouraging, but as my experiences tell, this really is an honest and truthful conclusion.⁴²⁰

In terms of “sadness and solitude [*jimo* 寂寞],” Zhou Zuoren describes the irreducible *aporia* inherent in his aestheticist discourse. The writer’s meticulous attention to his subjective, and even “obscure” sensations provides him with the essential freedom in imagining a cultural identity, but his cultural criticism, as long as it is such an *aesthetic* discourse, remains groundless, always and already at the risk of failing in synthesis and losing relevance, suspended between “[his] image” and “the reality.” Aesthetic autonomy, in this sense, is another name of “sadness and solitude.” A cultural critic must thus maintain the pathetic sensibility of nevertheless attending to his sensation, or the ability to “stand sadness and solitude,” in the hope that he may, by collecting and recollecting fragmented sensations, reconstruct the cultural past. Against the backdrop of the rapidly deteriorating Sino-Japanese relationship, Zhou’s idiosyncratic, aloof, and, indeed, solitary discourse of reimagining the enemy’s cultural life betrays the aporetic condition of possibility for his cultural criticism.

Elaborating on the “Riben guangkui” series, Zhou Zuoren further produced a piece called “Huai Dongjing 懷東京” (Remembering Tokyo) in 1936. In the form of a retrospection of the writer’s years in Tokyo as a student, Zhou, in his typical essayistic style, undertakes to talk about “trifles around me and random personal thoughts.”⁴²¹

⁴²⁰ Zhou Zuoren, *ZZSQ*, VII/16.

⁴²¹ Zhou Zuoren, *ZZSQ*, VII/325

Drawing on his previous essays, Zhou discusses his cultural experiences in Tokyo, which he affectionately calls his “second hometown”; his topics range from housing to food, from clothing to bookshops, from greetings to footwear. But his otherwise pleasantly nostalgic account is, like his other contemporary writings, overshadowed by melancholy. Zhou’s reference to the Japanese writer/essayist Nagai Kafū’s well-known treatise on Japanese woodblock printing (*ukiyoe* 浮世絵), “Ukiyoe no kanshō 浮世絵の鑑賞” (Appreciation of the *Ukiyoe*, 1914), epitomizes Zhou’s aesthetic imagination of Japan and the “East” in the essay.

Nagai Kafū declares in “Ukiyoe no kanshō,” “My appreciation and study of *ukiyoe*, to begin with, are not based on any rigorous aesthetic theory. In case anyone is curious, I just say that I love this particular genre of art, within this particular situation.”⁴²² Kafū’s individualistic — and even solipsistic — engagement with works of this popular art genre from the Edo period, in fact, not only bespeaks his idiosyncratic aestheticist attitudes, which echo those of Zhou Zuoren’s, but also reflects the nature of this genre of art as he comprehends it. In a phrase that Zhou quotes, Kafū writes:

Greek art emerged in the land where Apollo was deified, while the *ukiyoe* was produced by the hands of townspeople as worthless as worms, in rented houses on side streets with little sunshine. Now people claim that the time has changed, but what has changed is only the surface. Once you see through the exterior skin with a rational gaze, [you will see] the spirit of militaristic rule has not changed at all from one hundred years ago. It is not by chance, therefore, that the sorrowful colors of Edo woodblock printing always send intimate whispers that penetrate into the bottom of my heart, without any sense of temporal distance.⁴²³

⁴²² Nagai Kafū, “Ukiyoe no kanshō,” in *Kafū zenshū*, vol.14, p.6-7.

⁴²³ *Ibid.*, vol.14, p.6. Zhou Zuoren’s quote appears in “Tan Riben wenhua shu zhi er 談日本文化書之二” (1936), *ZZSQ*, VII/340-1.

Highly versed in French literature, Nagai Kafū is drawn to Edo woodblock printing as a reaction to his disappointment about the inauthentic, tasteless landscape of the country's modern culture plagued with imitations of the West. "In this situation of the imitation of Western civilization [*seiyō bunmei mohō* 西洋文明模倣] in modern Japan, the tendencies of the general taste of the age — from urban reforms to houses, utensils, gardens, and clothes — make me feel increasingly pessimistic about the fate of Japanese culture." Obsessed with imitating Western civilization and failing to create its own original modern culture, Japan to Kafū appears to be a cultural desert where "[n]ew national music has not emerged yet; new national art has not been produced yet."⁴²⁴ The West, as Kafū perceives it, built its modern culture seamlessly upon the appreciation of "the glory of the nation's past," fueling individual creativity and freedom; in contrast, Japan, whilst violently cutting off its cultural tradition and leaving its past artifacts vulnerable to destruction, oblivion, and isolation, preserves the feudalistic "spirit of militaristic rule." Japanese modernity keeps its traditional artifacts from constituting part of the organic whole named *national culture*. But Kafū, with his negative aesthetic sensibility somehow reminiscent of the Benjaminian melancholy, appreciates works of *ukiyoe* precisely in their state of such isolation and fragmentation. Retreating from the light of "Apollo" as the imagined origin of Western civilization, Kafū wants to listen to the "intimate whispers" that *ukiyoe* works transmit to him from the obscure "rented houses on side streets with little sunshine" in the Edo period.

Contrasted with *ukiyoe* in this essay is seventeenth-century Flemish painting. Nagai Kafū illustrates his unique mode of appreciation of Japanese woodblock printing

⁴²⁴ Nagai Kafū, "Ukiyoe no kanshō," in *Kafū zenshū*, vol.14, p.13.

by comparing it with a poetic engagement with Flemish painting in “Art Flamand,” a poem in the collection *Les Flamandes* (1883) by the Belgian symbolist Émile Verhaeren (1855-1916). Kafū quotes stanzas from “Art Flamand” where the poet praises the abundant representations of female bodies and flesh in Flemish painting, among whom is the poem’s ending:

Dans la splendeur des paysages,
Et des palais, lambrissés d’or,
Dans la pourpre et dans le décor
Somptueux des anciens âges,

Vos femmes suaient la santé,
Rouge de sang, blanche de graisse;
Elles menaient les ruts en laisse
Avec des airs de royauté.

The Belgian poet admires the carnal representation of Flemish painting, without any moralistic or religious principles, for its expression of “health” (la santé) and “airs of supremacy” (airs de royauté). Inspired, the Japanese writer concludes that Flemish painting, for all its fleshy vividness and even obscenity, is an expression of “the true significance of human life.” (*jinsei no shinigi* 人生の真意義) Kafū elaborates, “Wherever the will to life, the yearning for the eternal Idea [*eigō no risō* 永劫の理想], extends itself, therein reside the sensation of grandeur, the beauty of tragedy, and the idea of sublime. Disgrace and lust are both nothing but phenomena of human vitality. What he [Verhaeren] admires is precisely the vigor of extraordinary will.”⁴²⁵

⁴²⁵ Ibid., vol.14, p.10.

Verhaeren's poetic gaze, as it is interpreted by Nagai Kafū, discerns immanent, secular *meaning* of human life — “the true significance of human life” — within materialistic representations of female flesh — “Red of blood, white of fat.” This poetic movement echoes the well-known pages of Hegel's *Aesthetics*, where the philosopher also discusses Flemish painting. In Hegelian aesthetics, Flemish and German painting is uniquely situated at the “last phase of [Hegel's] consideration of painting's history,” and is distinguished in that it has finally achieved complete freedom from “religious feeling” and “the principle of the beauty of antiquity.” Hegel observes, “It is this central [i.e., religious] foundation which is absent now, so that *the range of subjects, hitherto kept in unity, is dispersed, and particular things in their specific individuality and the accidents of their alteration and change are subject to the most varied sorts of treatment and pictorial execution.*”⁴²⁶ In this “dispersed” multitude of “particular things” in Flemish painting — “domestic affairs,” “portraits,” “objects in nature such as landscapes, animals, flowers, etc.,” “peasant life,” “the down-to-earth life of the lower class” — the philosopher then sees a purely immanent, secular meaning expressed for the first time in the history of art:

If we look at the Dutch masters with these eyes, we will no longer suppose that they should have avoided such subjects and portrayed only Greek gods, myths, and fables, or the Madonna, the Crucifixion, martyrs, Popes, saints male or female. What is an ingredient in any work of art is one in painting too: the vision of what man is as man, what the human spirit and character is, what man and *this* man is. The poetical fundamental trait permeating most of the Dutch painters at this period consists of this treatment of man's inner nature and its external and living forms and its modes of appearance, this naive delight and artistic freedom, this freshness and cheerfulness of imagination, and this assured boldness of

⁴²⁶ G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol.1, p.854-5. My italics.

execution. In their paintings we can study and get to know men and human nature.⁴²⁷

From the profoundly secular and even “vulgar” form of art, Hegel, in a negative dialectic way, therefore projects “*Humanus*” as “[art’s] new holy of holies.”⁴²⁸

Nagai Kafū alludes to Verhaeren’s poetry in order to squarely differentiate his singular appreciation of the Edo *ukiyo*e from the Belgian poet’s appraisal of Flemish art. In fact for Kafū — just as for Hegel, too — Flemish painting allegorizes the newly-achieved political situations of the sixteenth-century Netherlands, where the country finally became “a free nation” (*jiyū no kuni* 自由の國) after victorious wars with Spain. *Ukiyo*e, on the contrary, “simply reflects the shrunken minds of the people during the totalitarian ages.”⁴²⁹ Kafū reflects upon himself:

Now that I come to think about who I am, however, I am not a Belgian like Verhaeren. I am a Japanese. I am an Asian [*tōyōjin* 東洋人] whose fates and circumstances are naturally different [from him.] I am someone who is ruled by the institution that regards any carnal feeling toward the opposite sex a greatest vice of society. I am a man who has been told not to try to rival a landlord, or a crying child. I belong to a nation that knows the teaching, “Arguments make your lips chilled.”⁴³⁰ I do not care about the juicy lamb meat, the flavorful wine, or the fleshy beautiful women that excite Verhaeren. Ah! Instead, I love *ukiyo*e. The image of a prostitute, sold by her parents, enduring a decade-long suffering makes me shed tears. The figure of a geisha idly watching water running through a bamboo lattice makes me pleased. The night scene of the waterfront left with lonesome lamps of nighttime noodle sellers makes me tipsy. The cuckoo crying under the moon in a rainy night, the autumn leaves falling in a drizzle, the sounds of a bell fading in the winds that carry flower petals, the snow on the hilly path in

⁴²⁷ Ibid., vol.1, p.887.

⁴²⁸ Ibid., vol.1, p.607.

⁴²⁹ Nagai Kafū, “Ukiyo no kanshō,” in *Kafū zenshū*, vol.14, p.6.

⁴³⁰ The proverb “Mono ieba kuchibiru samushi もの言えば唇寒し,” which originates in a *haiku* by Matsuo Bashō, is an admonishment that warns of excessive talking and arguing.

the evening — these things that are transient, unreliable, hopeless; things that make me lament, in vain, that the world is but a dream. I feel attached to them all; I feel nostalgic about them all.⁴³¹

The contrast that Kafū makes here is anything but ambiguous. On the one hand, we see liberated sexual desire, expressed female sexuality, and substantiality, strength, and vitality, whereas on the other, we have moralistic asceticism, a subjugated prostitute, and transience, unreliability, and hopelessness. “Asia” as opposed to the West — Kafū ultimately seems to demarcate this opposition, which may well be criticized as a typical case of self-orientalization. But in a paradoxical way, in light of Hegelian aesthetics, those individual, fragmentary images in *ukiyoe* printing that Kafū evokes, rather than the organic, harmonious whole that he sees in Verhaeren’s poetry, correspond more to Hegel’s characterization of Flemish painting. Those “transient, unreliable, [and] hopeless” scenes that Kafū affectionately cuts out from *ukiyoe* printing, in fact, are as “dispersed” and “particular” as “down-to-earth,” secular subjects that Hegel lovingly observes in Flemish painting. And just as Hegel discerned the modern secular idea of “what man is as man” in those individualized details of everyday life, so does Kafū assert that it is in this popular, shadowy art of townspeople that “the victory of truly free art (*shinsei jiyū naru geijutsu* 真正自由なる藝術) is achieved.” Kafū claims that those commoner-artists lived in the feudalistic, “totalitarian,” and even inhumane social institutions, but unlike the prestigious Kanō School, a school of Japanese painting patronized by the shogunate governments, they refused to conspire with official moralism or politics.⁴³² In so arguing, Kafū is at his most Hegelian moment. By contrasting *ukiyoe*

⁴³¹ Nagai Kafū, “Ukiyoe no kanshō,” in *Kafū zenshū*, vol.14, p.11.

⁴³² *Ibid.*, vol.14, p.5.

with the Flemish painting poeticized by the Belgian poet, Kafū, therefore, sheds an aesthetic light upon this particular Edo art genre, and he whereby reconstructs, in a negative dialectic manner, an identity of what he desires for so much: Japanese culture.

Citing Nagai Kafū's passage above, where the Japanese writer contrasts his affection for *ukiyo*e with the Belgian poet's appreciation of Flemish painting, Zhou Zuoren, in the retrospective short piece "Huai Dongjing," shows intimate sympathy with Kafū. Zhou refers to a phrase that the sixteenth-century Chinese philosopher Wang Yangming 王陽明 (1472-1529) is said to have told his subordinates when he tried to bury the dead bodies of unknown travelers, "You and I are just like them" (*wu yu er you bi ye* 吾與爾猶彼也), and says,

China and Japan now find themselves in antagonistic positions. But if you set aside their current relationship and observe their intrinsic natures, you see they are both Asians [*dongyangren* 東洋人] whose fates and situations are naturally far different from those of the West. While those fascism-addicted Japanese may think that their happiness has become greater than — or at least equal to — that in the West, and feel regret only at their having not swallowed Asia, artists, instead, are feeling melancholy, reminded of the saying, "Arguments make your lips chilled." This exactly is the melancholy of the Asians [*dongyangren zhi beiai* 東洋人之悲哀]. Hearing this phrase, we, too, cannot but feel bewildered. ... If [music and woodblock printing from the Edo period] do not represent the melancholy of the Chinese [*Zhongguoren zhi beiai* 中國人之悲哀], it is not impossible to say that they imply part of it in them. For what they indicate, as I said, is in the end the melancholy of the Asians.⁴³³

Zhou Zuoren, mediated by Nagai Kafū's art criticism of the Edo *ukiyo*e, observes that in Edo art, even a sentiment of the Chinese people is expressed. Zhou in this essay is inspired by the dichotomous contrast that Kafū draws between Flemish oil painting and Edo woodblock printing — between "the West" and "Asia" —, and coins the term "the

⁴³³ Zhou Zuoren, *ZZSQ*, VII/332.

melancholy of the Asians,” thereby performing a cross-cultural reading of Japanese woodblock printing.

The contrast with Verhaeren’s portrayal enables Kafū to construct his personal, affectionate gaze upon *ukiyo-e*, while Zhou Zuoren, with his consciousness that he inherits a culture “that is in the same lineage as Japan,” similarly establishes his “personal taste” and “obscure feelings” as a critical perspective on Japanese culture. Their aesthetic gazes converge in that they, by way of producing an imagined differentiation from the “West,” legitimize their individualistic attention to minute, fragmentary, and, in Hegel’s language, “dispersed” details of cultural products and practices. By virtue of a certain cultural proximity that he perceives between China and Japan, Zhou is able to graft his aestheticist attitude toward Japanese culture onto Kafū’s intimate observations. Kafū tries to reconstruct an identity of Japanese culture based on a melancholic appreciation of those negative details of *ukiyo-e*. Zhou’s aesthetic imagination is also underpinned by such negative dialectics, but what his “obscure feelings” tell him is that his aesthetic appreciation, in fact, can drift away from the boundaries of what Kafū imagined as Japanese culture, becoming *transcultural*. Zhou is thus led to discovering that “the melancholy of the Chinese” is, at least in part, implied in certain minor details of works of Japanese art. The imagined cultural identity between China and Japan, indicated by “Asia” or the “East,” to be sure, has a historical ground; without the long history of cultural communication between the two countries, Zhou’s singular aestheticist gaze on Japanese culture would not be functional as a cultural critical perspective. Despite such a factual condition, however, the projected identity of “Asia” and the “East” are but a modern aesthetic reconstruction. The sole basis of this imagined regional identity is, in

the end, the Chinese writer's aesthetic judgment that transculturates Kafū's idiosyncratic critical engagement with *ukiyo-e*. As much as Zhou's aesthetic judgment (*qing* 情) is "obscure," and even "secret" and "mysterious" (*you* 幽), the reconstructed cultural identity of "Asia" and the "East" remains fundamentally contingent — contingent upon what Hegel specifically calls "capricious invention."⁴³⁴ It is precisely for this essential plasticity of cultural identity that Zhou is able to expand this imagined "Japanese" identity to "Asian," and then to "Chinese."⁴³⁵

4. "Playfulness" and Imagined Cultural Identity

Sinographic writing (*hanwen*) and Chinese characters (*hanzi*), to which Zhou Zuoren ultimately attributed the identity of Chinese culture in the wartime essays, can serve as a perfect medium for such transnational aesthetic imagination. Ascribing the material condition for the inherent dynamics of Chinese literary tradition to the sinograph, therefore, may result in the unlikely consequence of dislocating that national identity,

⁴³⁴ Hegel argues, "Yet in this self-transcendence art is nevertheless a withdrawal of man into himself, a descent into his own breast, whereby art strips away from itself all fixed restriction to a specific range of content and treatment, and makes *Humanus* its new holy of holies: i.e. the depths and heights of the human heart as such, mankind in its joys and sorrows, its strivings, deeds, and fates. Herewith the artist acquires his subject-matter in himself and is the human spirit actually self-determining and considering, meditating, and expressing the infinity of its feelings and situations: nothing that can be living in the human breast is alien to that spirit any more. This is a subject-matter which does not remain determined artistically in itself and on its own account; on the contrary, the specific character of the topic and its outward formation is left to capricious invention, yet no interest is excluded — for art does not need any longer to represent only what is absolutely at home at one of its specific stages, but everything in which man as such is capable of being at home." G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol.1, p.607.

⁴³⁵ In Zhou Zuoren's aesthetics, this plasticity is precisely what enables this identity to expand to the "human" in general; as Zhou says, "The purpose of our studying, understanding, and talking about Japanese culture is to look for wise men who represent the Japanese nation, and listen to their melancholy of being a human, or being an Asian, just like us." See: Zhou Zuoren, *ZZSQ*, VII/341.

rendering it trans-regional. Hence the structural affinity of Zhou's aestheticized identification of "East Asia" with the imperial cultural ideology by the same name.

However, that Zhou Zuoren's reconstruction of cultural identity is exclusively built upon his subjective aesthetic judgment inevitably has to put the legitimacy and relevance of his discourse into brackets. Both before and after the outbreak of the Second-Sino Japanese War, in fact, Zhou's essays often end with detached and unserious tones, denying any political or moral efficacy of what he is claiming; they in many cases append the disclaimer that his argument is but a personal opinion, remarking that he is no specialist in the subject matter. In other words, there is always already an irreducible *playfulness* in Zhou's cultural criticism, even if it draws upon historical materials.

One essay that best illustrates the working of Zhou Zuoren's cultural discourse is "An shan zi 案山子" (Scarecrow), written in 1931.⁴³⁶ In his characteristic casual style, Zhou composes this piece as an occasional writing. The occasion that inspires him to write this essay is his recent reading of Hu Shi's autobiographical account, "Sishi zishu 四十自述" (Writing about Myself at the Age of Forty), serialized in the journal *Xin yue* 新月 (Crescent) in 1931. Zhou pays attention to a passage where Hu Shi discusses his experience of poetry translation, by taking the example of Thomas Campbell's (1777-1844) "Soldier's Dream." Hu Shi confesses the difficulty of word choice for translating a particular term in this poem, "scarecrow," and wavers between "*churen* 芻人" and "*chuling* 芻靈." Alluding to Zheng Xuan's 鄭玄 (127-200) commentary to a Confucian Classic *Liji* 禮記 (Book of Rites), Zhou agrees with Hu Shi's pick "*churen*." But he then

⁴³⁶ Zhou Zuoren, *ZZSQ*, V/775-80.

also discovers a better choice in *Yingwen hangu* 英文漢詁 (Explanation of English in Chinese, 1904), an English-Chinese dictionary and reading manual compiled by Yan Fu 嚴復 (1854-1921): “*xiaya* 嚇鴉” (lit. scare crow). Zhou, however, acknowledges the difficulty of finding an elegant translation in Chinese, and then shifts his focus to Japanese, in which he finds the right choice: “*kakashi* 案山子.”

Zhou Zuoren then develops a lengthy archeological discussion about the Japanese “*kakashi*.” On the one hand, Zhou refers to an entry in the eighteenth-century Japanese encyclopedia *Wakan sansai zue* 和漢三才図会 (Illustrated Encyclopedia of Japan and China, 1712), where the Japanese “*kakashi*” is explained by a quote from the seventh-century Chinese encyclopedia *Yiwen leiju* 藝文類聚 (Categorized Collection of Literary Writing, 624). From here, Zhou goes back to earlier Chinese materials, including *Wu yue chunqiu* 吳越春秋 (Chronicle of the Wu and the Yue, 1st C. CE), which is the source of the *Yiwen leiju* entry, and reflects upon ancient Chinese agricultural culture. Zhou at the same time consults several Japanese books and considers the etymology of the Japanese word “*kakashi*,” and proposes the theory that “*kakashi*” must derive from “*kagashi* 嗅がし” (lit. have someone smell), pointing to the obsolete custom of smoking birds away from crops by burning stuff. Thus meticulously weaving references to more than ten Japanese and Chinese sources, some of which cross-reference each other, Zhou attempts to write a micro ethnography of “scarecrow” in Japan and China, thereby producing a small trans-cultural history.

Zhou Zuoren then closes this essay with a humorous twist: he goes back to Thomas Campbell’s original poem “Soldier’s Dream,” which Hu Shi tried to translate,

but he cannot find the word “scarecrow” in it. Instead, the line he suspects was mistranslated by Hu Shi reads, “By the wolf-scaring faggot that guarded the slain.”⁴³⁷

Exposing Hu Shi’s mistranslation, Zhou writes,

So, there are no traces of the scarecrow. I compared two different small [poetry] collections, but the results were the same. The line from Mr. Campbell’s poem got me interested in ‘*kakashi*,’ but as I look back [at the original] after spending some time making an idle talk, I see the grass man with a straw hat, armed with a bow and an arrow, turning into a pile of fire and smoke. Thus “*kakashi*” finally reveals its original figure, the one that drives [birds] away [with the smoke]. Does this not make me feel another sort of taste?⁴³⁸

As Zhou Zuoren’s lengthy cross-cultural history turns out to be dependent on a mistranslation, its truth-claim becomes entirely suspended. But at the same time, it is exactly within such a hypothetical space of playful discourse, instead of rigorous etymology, that “*kakashi*,” in the end, “reveals its original figure,” as the “faggot.”

Such playfulness in Zhou Zuoren’s aesthetic discourse of cultural identity is by definition irreducible. Contingency hence fundamentally frees imagined cultural identities from ideological institutionalization. The cross-national identity of Japanese and Chinese, and ultimately “East Asian” culture is also a product of such aesthetic imagination, though the trans-regional tradition of East Asian civilization unmistakably informs Zhou’s imagination. In order to illuminate what distinguishes Zhou’s aestheticist discourse from the imperialized formation of cultural identity, which also drew on trans-East Asian civilizational tradition, I want to compare Zhou Zuoren to Watsuji Tetsurō, the Kyōto-school philosopher Zhou admired. Watsuji’s philosophy bespeaks just how the

⁴³⁷ See: Thomas Campbell, *Poems of Thomas Campbell*, p.79.

⁴³⁸ Zhou Zuoren, *ZZSQ*, V/779-80.

aestheticization of national identity may engender imperialist discourse, once it is supplemented by interpretations of East Asian cultural traditions.

Just one year prior to the publication of *Nihon kodai bunka* (Ancient Japanese culture), whose reading of *Kojiki* Zhou Zuoren praised and cited, Watsuji Tetsurō wrote a short political essay titled “Kiken shisō wo haisu 危険思想を排す” (Purging the Dangerous Thought) in 1919. From the same culturalist perspective as Zhou Zuoren adopted to advance the reflections upon the “question of Chinese thought” during the War, which I discussed above, Watsuji Tetsurō reproaches those who are advocating any political and moral agendas with regard to the nation’s identity, calling, for example, for “the defense of national polity [*kokutai* 國體]” or “the promotion of national morality [*kokumin dōtoku* 國民道德].” According to Watsuji, people who believe that Japan’s national polity is in danger, or its national morality is being corrupted in modernity are wrong, or even “dangerous,” since “[i]n our view, there is no danger to our national polity at all.” He instead asserts, “Our national morality is gradually gaining internal depth. If, however, you forcibly regard this entirely healthy situation to be somehow unhealthy, and agitate public feeling, then you will hinder the proper development of our culture, and worse, may get the royal house in trouble.”⁴³⁹

In the same essentialist manner as he used to attribute the heart of Japanese culture to “feeling” (*shinjō* 心情; *kanjō* 感情) in *Nihon kodai bunka*, Watsuji Tetsurō regards the “dignity of the royal house” and the “national polity” based thereon to be prior to any ideology or morality because, as he asserts, it is the “instinct” (*honnō* 本能) of the Japanese to “respect the Emperor.” He writes,

⁴³⁹ Watsuji Tetsurō, *Watsuji Tetsurō zenshū*, vol.3, p.141.

We, the Japanese, have the sense of imperial respect already in the childhood. This is the feeling [*kanjō* 感情] that is particular to us, the Japanese. And no matter what state of morality we live in, we never fail to have ... this pure feeling.

...
As soon as we are born, we are already babies of the Son of Heaven [*tenshi* 天子; i.e., the Emperor]. We are thus innately endowed with the instinct of respecting the Emperor [*sonkō honnō* 尊皇本能], rather than the concept thereof [*sonkō shisō* 尊皇思想]. Today's young people all have [this instinct]. So how dare would one try to teach them the *concept* of respecting the Emperor in the name of preventing dangerous thought? As long as they have the *instinct* of respecting the Emperor, they can never cause harm to the royal house, no matter what thoughts they may uphold. Our national polity is eternally safe and stable.⁴⁴⁰

The philosopher's gesture of total naturalization — the contention that turns the historically forged institution of Japanese imperialism into a natural instinct — is, to be sure, already troubling enough. But what is even more problematic in the context of our discussion is that this rhetoric also speaks to Zhou Zuoren's culturalist discourse in the wartime era, which constructed Chinese cultural identity beyond any ethico-political institutions, and established it purely upon the individual's aesthetic "feeling." Zhou's aestheticized "nation," namely his naturalizing discourse of "archi-Confucianism," in fact, shows a disturbing similarity with Watsuji's philosophized "loyal house."

Watsuji Tetsurō then has to be faced with an *aporia*: as he thus attempts to found an inalienable identity of Japanese culture upon the Japanese people's alleged internal "instinct," then the relevance of that identity to others has to be questioned. Is that "Japaneseness," if you will, only pertinent to those who have that obscure "instinct"? If so, does such a pure formation of nationhood in, if you will, a "private language" even deserve the name of "identity"? And if not, what *does* constitute that identity? These indeed are precisely the questions that Zhou Zuoren's aestheticist discourse also had to

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid., vol.3, pp.144; 150.

wrestle with. Zhou, on the one hand, grappled with this problem by defending his particular aestheticist position, confessing and enduring “sadness and solitude” as an indispensable quality of the cultural critic, whilst on the other, he did so by positively practicing the *playfulness* of his cultural discourse, even at the risk of confining his discourse in an independent and aloof aesthetic domain, in an anticipatory mode that foreshadowed an imagined “modern Chinese culture” to come. In stark contrast, however, the philosopher Watsuji Tetsurō returned to traditional Confucian virtues, which Zhou thoroughly opposed. Watsuji insists,

For those who advocate for national morality, we want to urge them to self-examine in light of the spirit of “The Imperial Rescript on Education” [Kyōiku chokugo 教育勅語]. If you think that our nation possesses a *particular morality* [*tokushu no dōtoku* 特殊の道德] and it is rooted in our respect for the royal house, then, you clearly ignore the spirit of “The Imperial Rescript on Education.” The morality upheld in the “Imperial Rescript” is universally relevant [*fuhenteki ni datō* 普遍的に妥当] and holds true in the past and the present, within and without [the nation] [*kokon chūgai wo tsūzuru* 古今中外を通ずる]. It is never something *particular to* our nation.

...

[The morality spelled out in the “Imperial Rescript” is] not the Way particular to our nation; it is the Way for the human in general as well as for our nation. We have a particular royal house in the world. But it is by realizing such a *non-particular* [i.e., universal] Way that we support the eternal fate of the Emperor that is *particular* [to Japan]. There should not be any more doubts about this.⁴⁴¹

Watsuji Tetsurō refers to a specific text, “The Imperial Rescript on Education,” in order to insist on the “universal relevance” of the “particular” Japanese imperial institution allegedly rooted in the natural “feeling” of the Japanese people. A pinnacle of Japanese fascism, “The Imperial Rescript on Education” was issued in 1890 and functioned as an extralegal “law” that turned the Japanese nation into the Emperor’s subjects (*kōmin* 皇

⁴⁴¹ Ibid., vol.3, p.142-3.

民); this short piece of writing, written in a heavy *kanbun kundoku* style, was recited at all corners of the Empire, including schools, factories, and offices, and was later imposed on the colonies, too.⁴⁴² The core of what this “Rescript” orders national education to cultivate consists of traditional Confucian virtues, including “loyalty” (*chū* 忠), “filial piety” (*kō* 孝), “friendship” (*yū* 友), “harmony” (*wa* 和), and “truthfulness” (*shin* 信). Among them, Watsuji particularly considers a reinterpreted “loyalty” (*chū* 忠) to the “lord” (*kun* 君) and to the “nation” (*kuni* 國) as “the great foundation of morality.”⁴⁴³

Ironical as it may sound, Watsuji Tetsurō claims that it is traditional Confucian virtue that secures the relevance of the Japanese cultural identity that he had imagined in aesthetic terms; it is this trans-regional tradition originating in China that prepared a philosophical avenue for the “particular” Japanese identity to become “universally relevant.” The moral value that Watsuji especially singles out, “loyalty,” is exactly what Zhou Zuoren *dismissed* as a source of modern identity. East Asian cultural tradition, then, plays a twofold role in Watsuji and Zhou. It, as we discussed, on the one hand inspires Zhou to aesthetically envision an imagined transcultural identity that would be pertinent both to the Japanese and the Chinese, as “the same Asians.” But on the other, it enables Watsuji to assert uncritically the universal relevance of Japanese national culture *per se*, which he reconstructs with an aesthetic imagination similar to Zhou’s. Zhou’s discourse

⁴⁴² For a history of “the Imperial Rescript on Education,” see: Soeda Yoshiya, *Kyōiku chokugo no shakaishi: nashonarizumu no sōshutsu to zasetsu*.

⁴⁴³ Watsuji argues, “There have been several discussions as to establishing ‘loyalty’ as the great foundation [*ōmoto* 大本] of morality. ... Then, how can we define this ‘loyalty’? ‘The Imperial Rescript on Education’ offers a clear interpretation. ‘Loyalty’ means that we play our proper roles as a nation, and exercise our love and capacity as a member of the society. There is no room for doubt here. [In modern times,] we cannot personally contact with the sovereign, so this is only what we should do to the Lord [*kun* 君] and to the Nation [*kuni* 國].” Watsuji Tetsurō, *Watsuji Tetsurō zenshū*, vol.3, p.143.

of East Asia, though it verges on Watsuji's imperialist philosophizing, also fundamentally undercuts it. For unlike Watsuji, Zhou refuses to ground his transcultural aesthetic imagination upon any preconceived moral or political concepts, staunchly defending its contingency on the writer's personal aesthetic judgment, a judgement Watsuji's reconstruction of Japanese cultural identity is itself essentially dependent upon before being re-appropriated by the assertion of Confucian virtue. Ultimately, then, Zhou secures the aesthetic domain against an imperialized cultural ideology by upholding the free exercise of creativity within material conditions of (trans)cultural tradition, and the irreducible *playfulness* of his whole critical endeavor, even though that meant to him during the War that he needed to stay away from the nationalist base in the south and remain at home, which, ironically, entailed collaboration.

Conclusion

Zhou Zuoren's aesthetic discourse, therefore, exposes the fact that at the core of the imagined cultural identity of "East Asia" resides the aesthetic, which, in the final analysis, consists of individual aesthetic judgment, sensibilities, and even "obscure feelings" — a plastic and playful domain. Watsuji Tetsurō philosophized that imagined identity by having recourse to old Confucian virtues, bordering on — or even embodying in a most essential form — the imperialized cultural configuration that turned "East Asia" into a cultural symbol for the sake of integrating a regional "state" under the rule of Japanese Emperor. By revealing the imaginary core of this regional identity politics,

Zhou Zuoren's transcultural discourse during the War, which succeeds his eminent critical work during the New Culture Movement, constitutes a deconstructive critique of the imperialization of regional culture, if within a framework that is heterogeneous to nationalism, either in rightist or leftist forms.

Zhou Zuoren's aesthetic reconstruction of an East Asian cultural identity fundamentally undercut the imperialization of regional culture, giving him an idiosyncratic, if controversial, agency for wrestling with Japanese imperialism beyond the nationalist ideology. In the next and final chapter, I will examine the cases of Taiwanese and Korean writers who intertextualized Lu Xun's early short stories in their late-colonial works, projecting, through self-criticism, a transcolonial subjectivity for grappling with cultural imperialization.

Chapter Six

Transnational Allegory

The Intertextualizations of Lu Xun's Short Stories in the Late-Colonial Works of Kim Saryang and Long Yingzong

Introduction: Transcolonial Literary Communication

1. Writing as a Colonial Lu Xun: A Transcolonial Correspondence

2. Lu Xun's Ethico-Aesthetics of Utopian Allegory

3. Kim Saryang: The Politics of Self-Translation

4. Long Yingzong: Critical Realism

Conclusion

Introduction: Transcolonial Literary Communication

In the wake of the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-45), the Japanese Empire restructured its colonial policies for wartime mobilization, planning to turn the colonies into strategic frontlines for further territorial expansion. In order to build a more “unified” imperium as a totalitarian war machine under the sovereign rule of the Emperor, the government implemented in colonial Taiwan and Korea what they called the “*kōminka* 皇民化” policies, or the policies for “transforming [the colonial population] into the Emperor’s subjects.” Besides conscription, those harsh policies devised an array of biopolitical technologies that were intended to “transform” the subjectivity of the colonized: they included the mandatory singing of the Japanese national anthem and raising of the Japanese national flag, compulsory worship at the Shinto shrine, and the

coercive adoption of Japanese-style family names.⁴⁴⁴ Also essential to the “*kōminka*” was the control of language: the colonizer restricted and eventually abolished education in Chinese and Korean, incentivized and enforced the day-to-day speaking of Japanese, and heavily censored publication in the colonial languages.⁴⁴⁵ Language became a privileged means for the colonizer to exercise raw power over the colonized in determining who were to become “the Emperor’s subjects,” and thus to become truly “human.”⁴⁴⁶

These wartime linguistic policies fundamentally transformed conditions for colonial literary production. In Taiwan, following the sweeping ban on the use of Chinese in newspapers and magazines in 1937, Chinese-language literary journals *Taiwan wenyi* 台灣文藝 (Taiwanese Literature) and *Taiwan xinwenxue* 台灣新文學 (Taiwanese New Literature), were closed in the same year. In Korea, the governor-general severely restricted Korean-language publication,⁴⁴⁷ leading to the closing of *Munjang* 문장 (Writing) and *Inmun p’yōngron* 인문평론 (Literary Criticism), prominent literary magazines, in 1941. These discontinued publications were then replaced with officially sanctioned Japanese-language journals: *Bungei Taiwan* 文藝台灣 (Literary Taiwan) and *Taiwan Bungaku* 台灣文學 (Taiwanese Literature) were inaugurated in Taiwan in 1940 and 1941, respectively; and *Kokumin Bungaku* 國民文學 (National Literature) was

⁴⁴⁴ For the wartime “*kōminka*” policies, see: Wu Micha ed., *Diguo li de “difang wenhua”*: *Huangminhua shiqi Taiwan wenhua zhuangkuang*; Miyata Setsuko, *Chōsen minshū to kōminka seisaku*.

⁴⁴⁵ For an excellent overview of the colonial linguistic policies of the Japanese Empire, see: Yasuda Toshiaki, *Teikoku nihon no gengo hensei*.

⁴⁴⁶ For a study of colonial Korean culture and its biopolitical implications, see: Hwang Hodōk, *Pōlle wa cheguk: singminji mal munhak ūi ōnō, saengmyōng chōngch’i, t’ek’ūnolloji*.

⁴⁴⁷ The leading newspapers *Chosōn ilbo* 朝鮮日報 (Korean Daily) and *Tong’a ilbo* 東亞日報 (East Asian Daily) were shut down in August 1940.

established in Korea in 1941. Japanese, then called the “national language” (Jpn. *kokugo* 國語; Chn. *guoyu* 國語; Kor. *kugŏ* 국어), thus became the principal creative language for most Taiwanese and Korean writers active in the wartime imperium.

While linguistic conditions in the colonies were deeply oppressive, at the same time, an increasing number of colonial authors and works began to be introduced into the mainland Japanese audience. Starting in 1932, several colonial Taiwanese and Korean authors won prestigious literary prizes for their Japanese-language works, providing them with recognition and fame as colonial writers.⁴⁴⁸ Notable Japanese-language literary journals also patronized writers from Taiwan and Korea.⁴⁴⁹ Moreover, intra-imperial translation, particularly from Korean into Japanese, grew dramatically, if briefly, at the turn of the decade.⁴⁵⁰ Japanese literary journals ran special issues dedicated to colonial literature; anthologies of colonial works were compiled and published in the imperial capital, some of them gaining considerable popularity.⁴⁵¹ These cultural-sociological phenomena contributed to the integration of colonial literary production into the literary field of mainland Japan, forming an increasingly monolingual and homogeneous “imperial literary field” that covered the Japanese archipelago, colonial Taiwan, and

⁴⁴⁸ The literary prize functioned as an indispensable device for integrating the colonial literatures into an imperial “East Asian” literary field. For more on this matter, see: Izumi Tsukasa, *Nihon tōchiki Taiwan to teikoku no bungaku: bungaku kenshō ga tsukuru bundan*.

⁴⁴⁹ The two Japanese journals that were most active in introducing colonial literature were *Bungei shuto* (Literary Capital) and *Kaizō* (Reform), in which Kim Saryang and Long Yingzong also published a number of works. See: Izumi Tsukasa, *ibid*.

⁴⁵⁰ See: Hwang Hodōk, “Cheguk Ilbon kwa pōnyōk (ōmnūn) chōngch’i,” p.384.

⁴⁵¹ Anthologies of colonial literature published in this period include: Nishikawa Mitsuru 西川満 ed., *Taiwan bungaku shū* 台湾文学集 (Collection of Taiwanese Literature, 1942); Sin Kōn 신건 tr. & ed., *Chōsen shōsetsu daihyō shū* 朝鮮小説代表集 (Representative Korean Novels, 1940); Chang Hyōkchu et al. ed., *Chōsen bungaku senshū* 朝鮮文学選集 (Collection of Korean Literature, 1940), three volumes; special issue of the journal *Modan Nihon* モダン日本 (Modern Japan) on Korean literature (1939).

colonial Korea, and was ready to extend further into the continent and beyond.⁴⁵² In an attempt at institutionalizing the burgeoning “great East Asian literature” (*dai tōa bungaku* 大東亞文學), Japanese literati collaborated with imperial officials to eventually establish what was dubbed the “Conference of the Writers of Great East Asia” (*dai tōa bungakusha kaigi* 大東亞文學者會議), which met three times in Tokyo and Nanjing between 1942 and 1944, inviting representatives from Japan, Taiwan, Korea, Manchuria, and occupied China.⁴⁵³

The wartime discourse and practice of literature in the Japanese Empire pose particular challenges to literary historians, because of the ambivalent identity of the so-called “East Asian” literature. In theory, imperial literati claimed that the trans-regional cultural tradition in East Asia gave legitimacy to the formation of such a new literature;⁴⁵⁴ but in practice, the idea only bolstered an oppressive cultural “Japanization,” which effectively denied the Taiwanese and the Korean their specific linguistic identities. Researchers have drawn upon the methodologies of postcolonial studies and tackled the construct of this problematic literary field, and they have thus far put focuses primarily on two issues: the colonial “transculturation” of Japanese literature and the agency it produces; and the literary representation of the colonies.⁴⁵⁵ These approaches have made crucial contributions to our understanding of imperialized literature in the region,

⁴⁵² For an overview of the “imperial literary field,” see for instance: Li Wenqing, *Gongrong de xiangxiang: diguo, zhimindi yu da dongya wenxue quan*.

⁴⁵³ For a pioneering and comprehensive study of the Conference of the Writers of Great East Asia, see: Ozaku Hideki, *Kindai Nihon bungaku no shōkon*.

⁴⁵⁴ See: Li Wenqing, *Gongrong de xiangxiang*, p.21-114.

⁴⁵⁵ Among the English-language studies, Karen Thornber, *Empire of Texts in Motion* and Faye Yuan Kleeman, *Under the Imperial Sun* are the representative works of these two directions.

especially how imperial power relations both shaped and were shaped by aesthetic practice, and how writers affirmed the creative positions under the oppressive circumstances. However, one aspect that has not been examined in depth is transcolonial communication. Whereas the existing perspectives have been mainly concerned with the dialectics between the imperial center and the colonial peripheries, seldom have scholars paid attention to the relationship *between the peripheries*.⁴⁵⁶ The existing critical framework posits a creative subjectivity grappling with cultural imperialism within a particular colonial context, primarily a national one, but in so doing, it tends to overlook the trans-regional structure of the imperial ideology, to which the region's cultural tradition provided the rhetoric of legitimacy. A transcolonial comparison might be uniquely functional in critically considering the colonial writers' engagement with cultural imperialism, which abused elements of the very cultural traditions that they themselves had inherited.⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁶ Research has been done on the receptions of Lu Xun in colonial Taiwan and Korea. In the general field of postcolonial studies, transcolonial literary communication has also been under-studied. One notable exception is Spivak, who has coined the term "planetary" as a guiding concept for comparative research on the global south. See Spivak, *Death of a Discipline*. Another remarkable exception is Sugata Bose's work, including *A Hundred Horizons*, where Bose undertakes transcolonial examinations across the Indian Ocean Rim. See also Sugata Bose and Kris Manjappa (eds.), *Cosmopolitan Thought Zones*. To what extent the transcolonial intertextualities that I explore in this chapter are examples of larger patterns of transcolonial and/or transimperial literary communication is to be explored in my future research.

⁴⁵⁷ The Japanese empire is unique among other imperial formations in that it colonized areas with which the suzerain state had shared a long history of cultural interaction. As Thornber argues, "Part of what makes the cultural flows of the Japanese empire unusually fascinating and separates them from those of most European empires is Japan's long engagement with and oftentimes adulation of Chinese and Korean creative products. Unlike Egypt and the Arab world, which had lost significant cultural currency with Europe and the United States long before colonization, and other (post)colonial spaces in Africa, the Americas, and South and Southeast Asia, which before colonization had enjoyed only minimal cultural prestige with Western nations, China was the intellectual center of East Asia from the beginning of the Common Era until the late nineteenth century; literary Chinese remained the lingua franca for Chinese, Japanese, and Korean scholars through the end of the Qing dynasty." (Karen Thornber, *Empire of Texts in Motion*, p.6-7.) Li Wenqing even claims that the Japanese empire "reconstructed the traditional Sinocentric regional order." (Li Wenqing, *Gongrong de xiangxiang*, p.21) Though it is an anachronism to simply regard the Japanese imperial order as a revival of the traditional Sinocentric system, Japanese imperialists in fact considered the trans-regional cultural tradition as an useful resource that they could take advantage of to legitimize the colonial rule.

This chapter examines the intertextualizations of the works of the Chinese writer Lu Xun 魯迅 (1881-1936) in wartime East Asian literature as a window onto the colonial authors' grappling with the imperialized literature from a trans-peripheral perspective. In so doing, it zeroes in on the intertextualizations of Lu Xun's works particularly in the late-colonial works of the Korean writer Kim Saryang 김사랑 (1914–50) and his Taiwanese counterpart Long Yingzong 龍瑛宗 (1911–99).⁴⁵⁸

By consensus the most prominent founding figure of modern Chinese literature, Lu Xun pioneered modern vernacular fiction, in the short story form, in the late 1910s and early 1920s and created a modernist aesthetics that relentlessly criticized the Chinese, particularly Confucian, cultural tradition. As we discussed in Part II with regard to his early criticism, Lu Xun adopted an intensely self-critical style so that he undertook the critique *from within* what he saw as an oppressive and inhuman culture, producing an aesthetics of what I will call *utopian allegory*, through which he called for practice in search of a radical future for the Chinese nation. Lu Xun's self-critical aesthetics, I argue, inspired Kim Saryang's and Long Yingzong's ethico-aesthetic attempts at representing the subaltern colonial subjects within the imperial literary establishment, using, as Lu Xun did, the very language of those who oppressed them. I claim that Kim Saryang and

⁴⁵⁸ Though "intertextualization" can most broadly mean the creation of a literary intertext, i.e., a relationship of one particular literary text to another, I use this term in this chapter in the specific sense of the adaptation of what I will call the "allegorical aesthetics" of Lu Xun's early short stories. To the extent that Lu Xun was a well-received writer in East Asia in the late 1930s and early 1940s, particularly among left-leaning writers, the intertextual instances discussed in this chapter have the elements of "passivity," which indicate general "influence" the colonial writers received from this canonical author. However, more importantly, in that the colonial writers creatively engaged with Lu Xun's works as what I will dub a *transnational allegory*, by discovering similarities between the sociopolitical situations of the post-Republican Revolution China allegorized in Lu Xun's texts and those of the colonial Korean and Taiwanese nations, their intertextualizations must also be regarded as "dynamic." For a general discussion on intertextuality, see for instance: Graham Allen, *Intertextuality*. For the distinction between "passive" and "dynamic" intertextualizations, see: Karen Thornber, *Empire of Texts in Motion*, p. 213-38.

Long Yingzong intertextualized Lu Xun's work as a *transnational allegory* of the sociopolitical circumstances of their respective nations under the increasingly oppressive policies of colonial cultural integration.

1. Writing as a Colonial Lu Xun: A Transcolonial Correspondence

While Lu Xun had been introduced to colonial Korea and Taiwan, as well as to Japan, in the early 1920s as a leading writer of May Fourth vernacular fiction, he continued to be a crucial source of creative inspiration for writers in this region during the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-45) despite the imperial censorship.⁴⁵⁹ Immediately

⁴⁵⁹ Lu Xun was introduced to colonial Taiwan and Korea, oftentimes via Japan, as a representative writer of the May Fourth vernacular literature. In Taiwan, the May Fourth literary revolution is believed to have been first introduced by a 1923 article published in the newspaper *Taiwan minbao* 台灣民報 (Taiwan People's Gazette) entitled "Zhongguo xin wenxue yundong de guoqu xianzai he jianglai 中國新文學運動的過去現在和將來" (The Past, Present, and Future of the Chinese New Literary Movement), where Lu Xun's name is mentioned together with other leaders of the May Fourth literary movement Hu Shi 胡適 (1891-1962) and Chen Duxiu 陳獨秀 (1879-1942). In 1925, the same newspaper carried Lu Xun's "Ya de xiju 鴨的喜劇" (Duck's Comedy, 1921), the first of his works to be published in Taiwan, followed by a number of his short stories carried in this same medium between 1925 and 1930, including "Guxiang 故鄉" (Hometown, 1921), "Kuangren riji 狂人日記" (Diary of a Madman, 1918), and "A Q zhengzhuan 阿 Q 正傳" (The True Story of Ah Q, 1921-22), although the serialization of "A Q zhengzhuan" did not complete. In the 1930s, as literary creation in colonial Taiwan gradually shifted from Chinese to Japanese, writers started to read Lu Xun through Japanese translations. At Lu Xun's death in October 1936, Taiwan xinwenxue 台灣新文學 (Taiwan New Literature) published, under the editorship of the prominent left-wing writer Yang Kui 楊逵 (1886-1985), a special issue dedicated to the Chinese writer (November, 1936). Upon the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937, the Governor-General banned the use of Chinese in publications in Taiwan, and because Lu Xun was tied to the leftist camp, his name mostly vanished from publication during the period of the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-45) until liberation in 1945.

In Korea, Lu Xun's name is believed to have been first mentioned in a 1920 article by Yang Baekhwa 양백화 (1889-1938) entitled "Ho Jök ssi rül chungsimüro han chungguk üi munhak hyöngmyöng 호적씨를 중심으로 한 중국의 문학혁명" (Chinese Literary Revolution around Mr. Hu Shi), which was serialized in the eminent journal *Kaebyoök* 개벽 (Enlightenment). This article is a Korean translation of the Japanese Sinologist Aoki Masaru's 青木正児 (1887-1964) essay "Ko Teki wo chüshin ni uzumaite iru bungaku kakumei 胡適を中心に渦巻いてゐる文学革命" (Literary Revolution Revolving around Hu Shi,

after his death in 1936, Lu Xun began to be canonized in China, particularly in the leftist literary and political camp; Mao Zedong's seminal "Talks" at Yan'an (1942) marked a culmination of the author's legacy as a spiritual leader of the Chinese nation.⁴⁶⁰ But at the same time, Lu Xun also became a literary symbol of utmost importance in Japan and its colonies.⁴⁶¹ It was against this backdrop that Kim Saryang and Long Yingzong intertextualized Lu Xun's well-known early stories such as "Guxiang 故鄉" (Hometown, 1921), "A Q zhengzhuan 阿 Q 正傳" (The True Story of Ah Q, 1921-22), and "Zhufu 祝福" (New Year's Sacrifice, 1924) in their late-1930s and early-40s creative and critical writings. The significance of Lu Xun's literature is best illustrated in a private correspondence that Kim Saryang sent to Long Yingzong in 1941, where the Chinese author's name is mentioned in a crucial way. This rare piece of document deserves citing in its entirety:⁴⁶²

1920). Spearheaded by this article by Yang Baekhwa, Lu Xun was mentioned in several articles introducing the Chinese May Fourth movement during the 1920s, whereas the first of his works to be translated into Korean is believed to have been "Kuangren riji," published in *Kaebiyōk* in 1927. Scholars have located four more Korean translations of Lu Xun's works published in the 1920s and 30s. ("Toufa de gushi 頭髮的故事" [The Story of Hair, tr. 1929]; "A Q zhengzhuan" [tr. 1930]; "Shangshi 傷逝" [Mourning, tr. 1930]; "Guxiang" [tr. 1936]) The authors who published reviews of Lu Xun's works during the 1930s include Chōng Naedong 정래동 (1903-85); the journalist Sin Ōnjun 신언준 (1904-38), whose well-received interview of Lu Xun "No Sin pangmun ki 노신방문기" (A Visit to Lu Xun) was published in the magazine *Sindonga* 신동아 (New East Asia) in 1934; Kim Kwangju 김광주 (1910-73); and the poet Yi Yuksa 이육사 (1904-44), who contributed an homage to Lu Xun ("No Sin ch'udo mun 노신추도문" [Homage to Lu Xun]) to the newspaper *Chosōn ilbo* 朝鮮日報 (Korean Daily) at the author's death in 1936. Under the tightened censorship laws, like in the case of Taiwan, the name of Lu Xun almost disappeared from publication in colonial Korea after 1937. See: Im Myōngsin, "Kankoku kindai seishinshi ni okeru Ro Jin: 'A kyū seiden' no kankokuteki juyō"; Kim Sijun, "No Sin kwa hangukin"; Nakajima Toshirō, ed., *Taiwan shinbungaku to Ro Jin*.

⁴⁶⁰ Mao Zedong, "Zai yan'an wenyi zuotanhui shang de jianghua."

⁴⁶¹ For a general overview of the reception of Lu Xun in other East Asian countries as well as Taiwan and Korea, see: Fujii Shōzō, *Ro Jin jiten*.

⁴⁶² This letter, dated February 8 and written in Japanese, has been discovered by the Japanese researcher Shimomura Sakujirō in Long Yingzong's private archive, and is reproduced in its entirety in: Shimomura Sakujirō, *Bungaku de yomu Taiwan*, p.210-12. Shimomura estimates that the letter was sent in 1941. It is

I was very pleased to have received your letter this morning. I feel particularly delighted to be able to become friends with you, because we both write in the language of the other even though we were born in very distant places. Since I was an elementary school student, I have liked Taiwan; I have paid attention to Taiwan with youthful passion. I still very much would like to go to Taiwan. As you said, Taiwan, the southern, dreamy place, may probably be a place like Greece for us; traveling there is our trip to Rome — I am entertaining such thoughts. Above all, I also have the wish to immerse myself in the sentiments of your nation and familiarize myself with the life there. This summer, for instance, I may visit Karafuto, because I want to see the lives of my compatriots who live there. I heard that many Koreans live in Taiwan, too. I will make sure to pay a visit sometime. Please take time to come to Korea, although I cannot be proud of the Korea right now. Your sharp eye would see everything. My country is also a country of art.

Do you know the Taiwan-born poet Wu Shenhuan (Kunhuang)?⁴⁶³ I happened to meet him at *** [three letters unrecognizable], but I was impressed by his handsome appearance. On my way back to Tianjin from Beijing last year, I encountered him by chance on the platform of Tianjin Station. Writing this just now makes me wonder whether Zhang Wenhuan,⁴⁶⁴ who I believe was writing novels, is still writing — I feel like I read him somewhere. I believe you also have many concerns about literature. Tradition — I do not know what to do about it. I do not know what to do about something that is *** [two letters unrecognizable] to me, the traditional spirit that flows in my bloodstream. In the end, tradition is very important, isn't it? One should not consciously try to reject it: I poignantly feel that I need to faithfully make use of it in order to establish my new writing. You indeed practice the literature of the Taiwanese and you should; I practice the literature of the Korean and I should. This might sound self-evident, but it should be really important. When I read your “Evening Moon” [Yoizuki 宵月], I felt something that was very intimate to me. I shuddered at the thought that the place you live and the place I live are in fact no different in terms of their realities. That piece, of course, is not intended to expose the reality and is written in a perfect matter-of-fact style, but I feel as if I saw your shivering hand in it. This might just be my arbitrary judgment, or sentimentalism... Please forgive me, forgive me.

What do you think about that writer whose name is written something like “茅盾” [Mao Dun]? He might not be such a wonderful writer, but surely seems to be a good one. I like Lu Xun very much. Lu Xun was admirable. You should establish yourself as a Taiwanese Lu Xun. I might be sounding impolite here, but what I only mean is that I hope you create works that bear significance to the

not included in either of the complete works of these authors. I want to thank Professor Ho Duk Hwang of Sungkyunkwan University for calling my attention to this letter. This chapter has been benefitted from his article: Hwang Hodök, “Cheguk ilbon kwa pönyök (ömnün) chöngch'i.”

⁴⁶³ Wu Shenhuan 吳坤煌 (1909-89), a Taiwanese poet/writer.

⁴⁶⁴ Zhang Wenhuan 張文環 (1909-78), a Taiwanese writer.

entire literature as Lu Xun did. I also want to write good works as much as I can, and I am trying to do so step-by-step, without haste. I will write to you again when I have time. Please continue to create fine works. And let us encourage and help each other. I agree with you about your criticism of my story, “Toward Light” [Hikari no naka ni 光の中に]. I wholeheartedly hope that someday I will have the chance to revise that work. It is not my favorite piece. In the end, it is a work intended for the mainland Japanese audience. I clearly understand it. I understand it so clearly that I feel terrified.

The author of this letter, Kim Saryang, was born into a wealthy family in Pyongyang, Korea, in 1914, four years after Japan colonized the peninsula. The young Kim is said to have harbored the idea of studying in Beijing and then moving to the United States, but in 1932, he eventually went to Japan for study.⁴⁶⁵ After finishing high school in Kyūshū, Japan, he was admitted to the elite Tokyo Imperial University in 1936, where he majored in German literature and wrote a graduation thesis on Heinrich Heine, while beginning to write fiction in Japanese; he was also involved in a Tokyo-based Korean drama company, Korean Artistic Theater (*Chōsen geijutsu za* 朝鮮藝術座). Kim Saryang made his debut in the Japanese literary scene when a short story he published in the Tokyo-based literary journal *Bungei shuto* 文藝首都 (Literary Capital) in 1939, “Hikari no naka ni” (Toward Light), was nominated for the prestigious Akutagawa Prize. Following this, Kim wrote a number of short stories and a few novels mostly in Japanese, but a few in Korean, and published them mainly in Japan-based literary journals as well as a few in Korean venues. As his reputation rapidly grew, the writer made some comments that supported imperial cultural politics, particularly the creation of a broader “Japanese” and “Eastern” literary sphere, which, he argued, should certainly include

⁴⁶⁵ In a retrospective anecdote, Kim and his peers are said to have wished to “go to the United States and write novels in English because [they were] so disappointed with Japan.” Quoted in An Usik, *Kin Shiryō: Sono teikō no shōgai*, p.18.

Korean literature. Despite those collaborationist remarks, however, Kim Saryang decided to defect during an official trip to China just a few months before the Japanese defeat in World War II, and made his way to Yan'an. As the war ended right before he reached the Communist base, he returned to Pyongyang and continued writing fiction in Korean. He eventually joined the Army of the North in the Korean War (1950-53) and died on the battlefield in 1950.

Born into a Hakka family, just three years before Kim Saryang, the addressee of this letter Long Yingzong belongs to the generation of colonial Taiwanese writers who were educated mostly in the Japanese language. His early education was in a Chinese-speaking school, but it was closed in 1918 due to the colonial policy. He was consequently transferred to a Japanese-language public school. The young Long is said to have already drawn his teachers' attention for his talent in creative writing. After graduation from a commercial college in Taipei in 1930, Long Yingzong began writing fiction in Japanese while working for a bank as an accountant and a translator between Taiwanese and Japanese, although his Taiwanese was only rudimentary due to his Hakka background. Long Yingzong is said to have been inspired by the news that the Korean writer Chang Hyökchu 장혁주 (1905-97) won a well-known literary competition hosted by the Japanese left-leaning cultural magazine *Kaizō* 改造 (Reform) in 1932, and submitted his debut piece entitled "Papaiya no aru machi パパイヤのある街" (A Village with Papaya Trees) to the same competition in 1937. Winning second place brought him sudden fame as a colonial writer. Thereafter, Long Yingzong produced a number of short stories, all in Japanese, until liberation in 1945, and became a prolific contributor to *Bungei shuto*, in which Kim Saryang first published his Akutagawa Award-nominated

work “Hikari no naka ni” in 1939. Similar to Kim Saryang, Long Yingzong became involved, if to a limited extent, in Japanese imperialist-sanctioned literary activities including the Conference of the Writers of Great East Asia, in whose first meeting he participated as a representative of Taiwan. After the Liberation, he continued his literary career while working in banks, and produced creative works mostly in Japanese but occasionally in Chinese, too; and published a number of critical pieces in Chinese.

We can safely assume that Kim Saryang and Long Yingzong became acquainted with each other as up-and-coming colonial writers in the Japanese-language imperial literary field, especially through their common contributions to the journal *Bungei shuto*. “Yoizuki” (Evening Moon), Long Yingzong’s short story that Kim Saryang praises in the above-quoted letter, also first appeared in this journal in July 1940, less than a year after the publication of Kim Saryang’s “Hikari no naka ni” in the same venue. Kim Saryang’s private letter to Long Yingzong, however, betrays sympathy and appreciation that unequivocally distance the Korean writer from the critical acclaims these writers received in the literary capital. Kim Saryang in fact dubs Japanese, their common creative language, “the language of the other,” and self-critically agrees with Long Yingzong’s disapproval of “Hikari no naka ni.” The story of a boy with the Japanese father and the Korean mother, who accepts his double identity through conversations with his Korean teacher, “Hikari no naka ni” was Kim Saryang’s most well-known debut piece. Kim however admits in this letter that “Hikari no naka ni” was indeed but a work “intended for the mainland Japanese audience” and reveals actual dissatisfaction with it. He even confesses a sense of fear (“I feel terrified”), caused by the irony that his unsatisfactory creation is receiving the greatest appreciation. Kim Saryang’s self-reflective perspective

also enables him to shed a singular light upon Long Yingzong's short story "Evening Moon." In a judgment that he acknowledges might sound "arbitrary" or "sentimental," he imagines the Taiwanese writer's "shivering hand" (*kikei no furueteiru te* 貴兄のふるへてゐる手) within the text apparently written in "a perfect matter-of-fact style" (*kiwamete atarimae fū* 極めて当り前風). Using this metaphorical image, Kim Saryang tries to fathom a suppressed meaning behind the text's literal impression. His reserved yet idiosyncratic reading, thus, performs a transcolonial literary communication that is mediated by the imperial language, but nevertheless can transmit a coded message that might not be accessible to the ordinary readers. Only through such a critical interpretation that is conscious of the otherness of their creative language can Kim Saryang visualize the author's "shivering hand" behind the text, which allegorizes "something that is very intimate to me" — or, the same "realities" of their distant colonial societies — that the Taiwanese writer's understated style, in fact, refuses to "expose."

Kim Saryang, to be sure, underscores the national tradition, which, as he says, "flows in my bloodstream," and suggests that his Taiwanese peer practice "the literature of the Taiwanese," while pledging to create "the literature of the Korean." However, Kim Saryang's interpretation of Long Yingzong's "Yoizuki" foregrounds some fundamental transcolonial correspondence between the two oppressed nations: the "shudder[ing]" realization that "the place you live and the place I live are in fact no different in terms of their realities." Kim Saryang, in this observation, regards the Taiwanese text as an allegory of the realities of his own nation, to the very extent that it tells a story of the Taiwanese reality. Kim Saryang thus reads Long Yingzong's "Yoizuki" as what I would like to call a *transnational allegory*, by which I mean a literary work of a nation that is

read as an allegory of the collective reality of another nation. The generalized figure of “Lu Xun” in Kim Saryang’s singular expression: “Taiwanese Lu Xun” (*Taiwan no Ro Jin* 台湾の魯迅) signifies that Kim Saryang and Long Yingzong intertextualized Lu Xun’s works precisely as such transnational allegories, which attached to them the identity of, if you will, the *colonial Lu Xun*. To Kim, the Chinese author serves as a model for the kind of literary creation that he hopes Long will undertake for the Taiwanese nation. The national literature that Lu Xun created for the Chinese nation thus bears transnational relevance to the colonized nations. “I hope you create works that bear significance to the entire literature as Lu Xun did,” Kim writes. That “significance,” then, must undermine, in a self-critical manner, the imperialized “literature” that Kim Saryang and Long Yingzong upheld and practiced.

2. Lu Xun’s Ethico-Aesthetics of Utopian Allegory

Kim Saryang’s reference to Lu Xun in the letter to Long Yingzong in fact should be contextualized in their contemporary works. In February 1941, the same month as the letter was sent, Kim Saryang published a Korean-language short story entitled “Yuch’ichang esō mannan sanai 留置場에서 만난 사나이” (A Man Whom I Met in a Detention Cell), and one year later, he self-translated this work into Japanese and changed its title to “Kyū hakushaku Q 伯爵” (Count Q, 1942), a clear allusion to Lu Xun’s “A Q zhengzhuan.” Also in several of Kim Saryang’s short stories written from 1940 to 1942, Lu Xun’s early works, especially “A Q zhengzhuan,” were intertextualized.

Long Yingzong, on the other hand, published in October 1940 a comparative criticism of Lu Xun's "Kuangren riji 狂人日記" (Diary of a Madman, 1918) and Gogol's story with the same title,⁴⁶⁶ and intertextualized Lu Xun's "Guxiang" and "A Q zhengzhuan" in the 1937 debut story "Papaiya no aru machi." Also in "Yoizuki," the 1940 story Kim Saryang appraises in his letter, Long Yingzong further intertextualized Lu Xun's "Zhufu" (New Year's Sacrifice).

In these instances, one can readily observe that Lu Xun's "A Q zhengzhuan" is situated at the nexus of the intertextualities. In order to examine how Kim Saryang and Long Yingzong engaged with Lu Xun's works, I would therefore like to first take the example of "A Q zhengzhuan" and discuss an allegorical aesthetics in Lu Xun's early literary creation. To be sure, reading Lu Xun's works as "allegories" is only one way of interpreting them; but in intertextualizing Lu Xun's short stories, as I will illustrate in the following, Kim Saryang and Long Yingzong primarily adapted their allegorical aesthetics. My reading of "A Q zhengzhuan" from this perspective, thus, can be benefitted from critically revisiting Fredric Jameson's well-known interpretation of this text as a "national allegory." My concept of *transnational allegory* derives from a deconstruction of this controversial concept.

Centered upon the famous "sweeping hypothesis" that "[a]ll third-world texts are necessarily ... allegorical, and ... are to be read as what I will call *national allegories*," Jameson insists that Lu Xun's early stories, even though they are literally the stories of private individuals, are an allegory of "the embattled situation of the public [Chinese] culture and society" humiliated by imperialism. "Ah Q is thus, allegorically, China itself,"

⁴⁶⁶ Long Yingzong, "Futatsu no Kyōjin nikki 二つの狂人日記" (Two Diaries of Madmen, October 1940), *Long Yingzong quanji*, vol. 4, p.65-9.

Jameson formulates.⁴⁶⁷ The political literature Jameson teases out in Lu Xun involves a pedagogical function that provides the reader with a representation — or, to use Jameson’s own celebrated concept, a “cognitive mapping”⁴⁶⁸ — of their “positioning” in the totality of the historical world as a *national* subject, which, to him, is *the* privileged agent of struggles against imperialist oppression.

In a well-known critique of Jameson’s article, Aijaz Ahmed has claimed that Jameson “suppress[es] ... the multiplicity of significant difference among and within both the advanced capitalist countries and the imperialized formations,” and unjustifiably puts the “exclusive emphasis on the nationalist ideology” and thus identifies “collectivity” solely with “nation.”⁴⁶⁹ While agreeing with Ahmed’s theoretical disapproval of the classic binary opposition of first and third world, I nevertheless argue that his foregrounding of the “multiplicity” within those social formations risks being as abstract as Jameson’s dichotomy, for Ahmed does not revisit Lu Xun’s *oeuvres*, the interpretation of which informs Jameson’s theorizing. Instead of a sweeping underlining of multiplicity, I propose to attend to the specific working of Lu Xun’s allegorical aesthetics by revisiting his early creation, and its intertextualizations in wartime East Asia to explore a transnational significance of Lu Xun’s utopian allegory. Doing so will entail a criticism of the Jamesonian — or, Hegelian-Marxist — dichotomy of the universalist “first world” civilization and particular “third world” nation-states.

Written in the tumultuous aftermath of the [May Fourth] Republican Revolution (1911), “A Q zhengzhuan” is the story of an outcast in a rural village at the time of the

⁴⁶⁷ Fredric Jameson, “Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism,” pp.69; 74.

⁴⁶⁸ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, p.1-54.

⁴⁶⁹ Aijaz Ahmed, “Jameson’s Rhetoric of Otherness and the ‘National Allegory,’” pp.3; 8; 14-5.

fall of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912). Dubbed “Ah Q,” this homeless man, who resides in a local shrine and makes a living out of occasional day jobs, is a favorite target of mockery and bullying for his fellow villagers. Whenever he is ridiculed and defeated, Ah Q has recourse to what the narrator calls “the method of spiritual victory,” which gives him an illusion of his superiority to other people. Ah Q imagines that he is “in fact” a worthy man in the village by borrowing traditional authority, although the same authority he emulates assigns him to the society’s lowest stratum. When a son of the village’s powerful Zhao family passes a civil service examination, for example, Ah Q asserts that he “belonged to the same clan as Mr. Zhao and by an exact reckoning was three generations senior to the successful candidate,” only to anger Mr. Zhao; when beaten by a man whom he has despised, Ah Q wonders if that happened because “the Emperor has abolished the civil service examinations” and the Zhao family’s prestige has been undermined.⁴⁷⁰ As the 1911 Revolution occurs in the story, Ah Q changes his strategy and attempts to take advantage of the overturned social relations to improve his situation, but he is only faced with the same old authorities, including Mr. Zhao, constituting the supposedly “revolutionary” government. He even fails to join the revolutionary party, but he is eventually falsely accused of conspiring with this group and looting the Zhao family’s home amidst social unrest. At the instruction of a head of the revolutionary forces insisting that “a public example” is needed to restore social order, Ah Q is convicted in a hasty trial and executed.

⁴⁷⁰ Lu Xun, *Lu Xun Quanjī*, vol.1, pp.513; 521. The imperial civil service examinations were abolished in 1905. For quotes from Lu Xun, I referred to the translation by Gladys Yang and Yang Hsien-yi with necessary modifications.

In both the pre- and post-Revolutionary societies, Ah Q remains a superfluous existence; the sociopolitical system that excludes Ah Q sustains itself in spite of the change of polity. Though hoping to rebel against his debased life, Ah Q can only have recourse to the method of “spiritual victory,” which relies on the same oppressive system to inflict an imaginary revenge upon the authorities, suggesting that Ah Q, too, is embedded in the malfunctioning system. “A Q zhengzhuan,” thus, can be read as a satirical allegory of the Chinese society in the wake of the Republican Revolution, seriously stricken by warlordism and counterrevolution, unable to bring about fundamental sociopolitical reforms. However, when we attend to, on the one hand, this story’s unique narrative structure and, on the other, the author’s intensely self-reflective usage of literary language, we can illuminate crucial characteristics specific to what Jameson would call the “allegorical” working of this text.

The narrative of “A Q zhengzhuan,” first and foremost, is distinguished by its *theatrical* structure, which draws the reader into the actions staged within the story. As the narrator tells the episodes of Ah Q and the village people, readers are invited to enjoy watching their inane quarrels and fights and Ah Q’s ludicrous “spiritual victories”; however, once Ah Q is arrested and convicted, they find themselves joining those same villagers in observing from a safe, unsympathetic distance Ah Q’s miserable fate, particularly his unsightly procession to the execution ground. The narrator concludes the story with a satirical “grand finale,” where it is said that the villagers were simply convinced that “Ah Q was bad” because “he had been shot,” and others in the city viewed the execution merely as a boring spectacle since it was carried out by the unexciting

firing squad, not the dramatic decapitation.⁴⁷¹ While enjoying Ah Q's silly deeds and watching his tragic fate, the readers are thus urged to ask themselves if they are any different from those indifferent and uncritical spectators who are stuck in the old sociopolitical system. At the moment of his death, Ah Q finally achieves the self-realization that he is about to be victimized by the inhuman society he inhabits, and his mind emits an existential cry: "Help, help!" However, as the narrator immediately adds, "But Ah Q never uttered these words," the readers are prompted to question if they have really heard Ah Q's inner voice. The society described in "A Q zhengzhuan" is one that is unable to hear his voice, or achieve self-knowledge that it is capitalizing upon the victimization of the subaltern subject; and Lu Xun's satirical narrative makes Ah Q's silent cry for help resound as the admonition that readers, too, might be complicit in such unjust social relations. The narrative thus urges the readers to self-critically reflect upon their actual society, and imagine a new one that could finally give voice to the muted cry of an "Ah Q." In Lu Xun's satirical narrative, therefore, "Ah Q" becomes a pedagogical allegory not only of the Chinese society desperately unable to understand its inhumanity, but also of its silenced, and yet persistent inner voice demanding a true "revolution" that would realize a society with a radically new culture.

For Lu Xun, writing "A Q zhengzhuan" was equally a self-critical task, for it tested the ability of his literary language to properly represent this subaltern existence of Chinese society. The significance of the opening paragraph of the work's "preface" cannot be emphasized enough in this regard:

⁴⁷¹ Ibid., vol.1, p.552.

For several years now I have been meaning to write the true story of Ah Q. But while wanting to write I was in some trepidation too, which goes to show that I am not one of those who achieve glory by writing; for an immortal pen has always been required to record the deeds of an immortal man, the man becoming known to posterity through the writing and the writing known to posterity through the man — until finally it is not clear who is making whom known. But in the end, as though possessed by a ghost, I always came back to the idea of writing the story of Ah Q.⁴⁷²

A rather awkward self-explanation of the author's motivation for writing this story, this paragraph, in fact, is an allusion to a phrase from a canonical commentary, known as the *Zuo* commentary, to a Confucian Classic, *The Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu zuozhuan* 春秋左傳, c. 4th C. BCE). The passage alluded to appears in a conversation about what kind of person would “not perish even after death” (*si er bu xiu* 死而不朽):

大上有立德，其次有立功，其次有立言，雖久不廢，此之謂不朽。⁴⁷³

The greatest are those who establish the virtue, the second greatest are those who establish the achievement, and the third greatest are those who establish the writing: these will not decline even after a long time, and constitute the “imperishable.”

While distancing himself from one of these traditional “three imperishables” (“I am not one of those who achieve glory by writing”), the narrator suggests that the story of Ah Q could not be told with the literary “immortal pen,” which would “record the deeds of an immortal man.” He instead places his writing outside this traditional Confucian literary economy, which the *Zuo* commentary exemplifies, and tries to practice a radically new writing with which to “writ[e] the story of Ah Q.” “Ah Q” is thus an existence that remains totally external to what is representable in the traditional institution of “literature”

⁴⁷² Ibid., vol.1, p. 512.

⁴⁷³ The entry for the twenty-fourth year of the rule of Duke Xiang of Qin.

(*wen* 文); but as such it haunts the narrator's mind just like a ghost, asking for being transmitted. "A Q zhengzhuan" is the narrator's response to this moral imperative.

The new form of writing, then, is called "rapidly perishable writing" (*su xiu zhi wen* 速朽之文), as a counter to the traditional desire for "imperisha[bility]" (*bu xiu* 不朽).

The narrator, however, reveals profound ambiguity as to the status of this new literature.

The immediate question he raises is how to name such a work. Parodying the pivotal Confucian teaching concerning "rectifying the name" (*zhengming* 正名), the narrator tries out different conventional titles to no avail, merely reaching a makeshift solution:

"take out the two letters 'true story' [*zheng zhuan* 正傳] from the stock phrase used in traditional narrative literature: 'enough of this digression, and back to the true story'

[*xianhua xiuti yangui zhengzhuan* 閑話休題言歸正傳]."⁴⁷⁴ While the new biography of

Ah Q does not fit and squarely opposes the traditional literary economy, the work has not been assigned an appropriate place or classification in modern literary practice, either. A

text outside the established genres, thus, "A Q zhengzhuan" by definition cannot

anticipate a clear "implied reader," and likewise the reader cannot have an evident

"horizon of expectations" toward this work. In other words, the circulation of this literary

text is aimed at future readership, whereas the reader, through the actual practice of

interpreting it, is urged to reconsider and renew the existing literary genres. Such

idiosyncrasy is a sign of Lu Xun's modernist aesthetics; but it has to put into question the

proper working of the new aesthetics as a literary medium. Just like a person who

happens to receive a letter without an addressee marked on the envelope, the reader of "A

Q zhengzhuan," as part of interpreting the text, has to question the system of textual

⁴⁷⁴ Lu Xun, *Lu Xun QuANJI*, vol.1, p.513.

circulation through which it has been delivered; the reader can only appreciate this work so long as he is self-reflectively involved in creating a new literary institution called “modern Chinese literature.”

If “A Q zhengzhuan” is to be read as an allegory, therefore, its modernist aesthetics renders the interpretative process a dialectic task — i.e., it must involve the hermeneutic circle in which the framework for interpretation and the interpreted meaning should mutually define each other. If we are to state, following Jameson, “Ah Q is ... allegorically China itself,” then, we must reconsider both the identity of “China” in that statement and our own interpretative process that draws this conclusion. In fact, allegorized in “A Q zhengzhuan” is not a “China” that Jameson — and perhaps we, too, might — vaguely imagines as a nation-state with some stable cultural characteristics,⁴⁷⁵ but it is a society that Lu Xun imagines is undergoing a radical self-critique of its cultural tradition and moving toward engendering a new culture, a “China” in a fundamental self-critical dynamism driven by utopian aspiration. Responding to this utopian allegory, then, leads the reader to an equally self-reflective engagement with their existing culture, and an imagination of the nation’s new cultural identity. I argue, however, that Jameson’s interpretation of “A Q zhengzhuan” as a “national allegory” does not do justice to this practical aspect of Lu Xun’s allegorical aesthetics. Besides the ahistorical characterization of Chinese culture, his reading registers the allegorized “national” subjectivity to the Hegelian dialectics of the master/slave relation, inscribing it in the standard meta-narrative of the struggle between the “first world” civilization and the “third-world” nation-states, one of which is China. But once such a stable meta-narrative

⁴⁷⁵ See in particular: Fredric Jameson, “Third-World Literature,” p.72.

is premised as an interpretative framework, the utopian potential of Lu Xun's allegory has to be tamed. It is not only because the new culture it projects might involve a critique of the modern institution of the nation-state, but also its aspirational imagination implies a revolutionary temporality that could undercut the Hegelian meta-narrative of world history. To fully appreciate the practical aspect of Lu Xun's allegorical aesthetics and understand its meaning by means of a dialectic interpretation, therefore, one must instead "always historicize"⁴⁷⁶ it: we must attend to the afterlives of Lu Xun's work and ask the basic questions: In what linguistic, cultural, and social contexts has it been interpreted and how? What has the self-reflective, revolutionary subjectivity it allegorizes been identified with? What new cultures has it enabled the readers in different historical contexts to imagine? Only by addressing these questions can we reveal the truth-content of Lu Xun's utopian allegory.

In this sense, I propose to understand Lu Xun's allegorical literature by adapting the concept of the "origin" (*Ursprung*) as Walter Benjamin formulates it in his treatise of the German *Trauerspiel*. Benjamin writes:

That which is original is never revealed in the naked and manifest existence of the factual; its rhythm is apparent only to a dual insight. On the one hand it needs to be recognized as a process of restoration and reestablishment, but, on the other hand, and precisely because of this, as something imperfect and incomplete. There takes place in every original phenomenon a determination of the form in which an idea will constantly confront the historical world, until it is revealed fulfilled, in the totality of its history. Origin is not, therefore, discovered by the examination of actual findings, but it is related to their history and their subsequent development.⁴⁷⁷

⁴⁷⁶ Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, p.9.

⁴⁷⁷ Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 45-6.

If Lu Xun's modernist aesthetics, in the particular historical context of post-Republican Revolution China, established a literary form that allegorically expresses an "idea" (*Idee*) of sociopolitical revolution and enlightenment, an "idea" that anticipates a new society built upon a thorough critique of traditional culture and able to do justice to the subjects victimized by it, then, the intertextualizations of Lu Xun in colonial East Asia can be considered as forming part of the "subsequent development" (*Nachgeschichte*) of that literary phenomenon. Kim Saryang and Long Yingzong, in fact, intertextualized Lu Xun's works to create comparable *utopian allegories* that projected new societies for the Korean and Taiwanese nations. Just as Lu Xun's modernist aesthetics involved self-criticism, so did the colonial writers self-reflectively represent the subaltern subjects from within the imperial institution of literature. Whereas Lu Xun's work has been avidly read and canonized in the context of Chinese national literature, its transnational intertextualizations are one of the neglected yet crucial moments of its afterlives. By thus putting Lu Xun's *oeuvre* in constellation with the works of the colonial Korean and Taiwanese writers, I will try to have Lu Xun's utopian allegory reveal its hitherto obscured *transnational* significance, so that an utopian "idea" of revolution and entertainment in East Asian modernity can be contemplated more fully in a totality of its history.

3. Kim Saryang: The Politics of Self-Translation

Just a few months before its shutdown by the imperial authorities in 1941, the leading Korean-language literary journal *Munjang* carried Kim Saryang's short story "Yuch'ichang esō mannan sanai" (A Man Whom I Met in a Detention Cell). The story's protagonist, the son of a high-ranking Korean official in the colonial government, is nicknamed "Count Wang." When Kim self-translated the work into Japanese in the following year, the character's nickname was changed to "Count Q." The story is told by a Japanese-educated Korean newspaper reporter talking to his three Korean friends, who all graduated from the same university in Tokyo as the reporter, on an express train from Pusan to Shinkyō 新京 (the capital of the Manchukuo; today's Changchun). The first-person narrator "I" is among these elite Korean men listening to the reporter's story.

The reporter first meets Count Wang in a detention center in Tokyo, where he is being held because of certain anti-colonial political activities. As soon as the reporter begins to tell the story, the reader hears a detainee speaking to a guard in Japanese with a heavy Korean accent:

「탄나 탄나상」
이렇게 그는 밖으로 尙해 부르기가 일쑤였다.
留置場에 들어간 바름날 나는 이 奇異한 發音에 찍으나 놀래었다.
그것은 바로 마즌편쪽 房으로 부터였으나 아모래도 그 목소리의 임자가 朝鮮
사나이임에 틀림없기 때문이다.
「포쿠데스요. 포쿠 便所, 便所에 가구싶어요」
「王伯爵인가」
「하이 하잇」
그것이 아주 질겁할만치 황송한 목소리이다.

“Saar, saar.”

It was his habit to speak to the outside in this manner.

On the day I entered the detention cell, I was very surprised at this strange pronunciation. It was because the owner of this voice, which came from a cell on the opposite side, must have been a Korean man.

“It’z mee. Mee, bathroom. I want to go to the bathroom.”

“Is that Count Wang?”

“Ye, yess.”

It was a surprisingly ceremonious voice.⁴⁷⁸

The author pays particular attention to reproducing in Korean writing Count Wang’s strongly accented Japanese. Count Wang, for instance, pronounces “*t’anna sang* 탄나상” for “sir,” whose standard Japanese pronunciation is “*dannasan* だんなさん.” The characteristic mispronunciation of the voiced consonants also appears in the phrase “*p’ok’u tesūyo. p’ok’u* 포쿠테스요. 포쿠” for “It’s me. Me,” where the standard pronunciation would be “*boku desuyo. boku* ぼくですよ。ぼく.” On the other hand, the author uses standard Korean here and elsewhere to describe regular Japanese spoken by other characters including the newspaper reporter, who narrates the story. As the storyteller explicitly states, Count Wang’s language was “strange” and had an unmistakable trait of a “Korean man.”

A “pitiful anarchist,” Count Wang has been arrested and detained dozens of times for his bizarre involvements in unlawful activities against the colonial authority. Instead of taking part in direct activism, Count Wang would write a letter to an arrested activist exaggerating the circumstances, only to annoy the police who discover the letter is forged. The police would also find him lying on his back amidst the items of evidence that he collected from his friend’s room when he learned that the friend’s illegal activities are

⁴⁷⁸ Kim Saryang, “Yuch’ichang esō mannan sanai,” in *Munjang* (February 1941), p.290. My underlines.

being investigated. He thus tries to feign involvement in anti-government schemes and confuse the authorities, knowing that he will be pardoned thanks to his powerful collaborationist father.

The reporter spends a year in jail, and shortly after he is released, he encounters Count Wang again on the northbound train from Pusan to Manchuria. The reporter is addressed by Count Wang in heavily accented Japanese in the train car filled with Korean peasants who are migrating to the Manchurian land. Fresh out of prison, the reporter has been trying to suppress his past; as he says to himself, “I won’t think any more. The memory of the past should be buried as it is.” The storyteller’s situation here alludes to what is known as “*tenkō* 転向,” or “conversion,” which designates the widespread renouncement of leftist ideology that occurred among anti-imperialist thinkers and activists due to coercion by the imperial police.⁴⁷⁹ The reporter attempts to assure himself:

I was not in despair; rather I felt the blood and power of new life springing out in my body. Moreover, I saw those farmers who had lost their fields and homes to the water due to hateful damages from the winds and floods and yet were migrating to faraway plains in search of new light, so I pledged to myself that I should have courage and be reborn, and regain new vitality and live strongly.⁴⁸⁰

In 1931, imperial Japan seized what is now northeastern China and founded the puppet state Manchukuo in the following year; Japan then propagandized it as the land of opportunity and multiethnic co-prosperity in an attempt at promoting migration to this new “frontier.” A number of Korean people crossed the northern border and moved to Manchukuo after they lost their lands to Japanese settlers; some Korean intellectuals also

⁴⁷⁹ For the matter of “*tenkō*,” see for instance, Tsurumi Shunsuke, et al., *Tenkō Sairon*.

⁴⁸⁰ Kim Saryang, “Yuch’ichang esō mannan sanai,” p.295-6.

migrated there to avoid the aggravating censorship which prevailed in the peninsula, for creation in Korean was allowed in Manchukuo for the sake of the propagandized ethnic multiplicity of the new imperial province.⁴⁸¹ Against this backdrop, the Korean farmers in the story resettling in this new land encourage the reporter, who has just been forced to give up his original ideological commitment.

But in contrast, Count Wang suffers from deep distress.

“Yes,” he [Count Wang] moaned again in distress. “I am actually being avenged by myself, choked by myself. No wish, no pleasure, no joy, no hope. Ah! I am saved only when I ride this migration train. I can go with them, cry with them.”

“But they have hope. They are not moving there to feel sorrow.”

“I don’t care about that. I just feel pleased because they are moving in the same car in the same direction. And they cry together, scream together. But how about me? I will have to come back alone once these people cross the national border. I feel deep sorrow when I think about that moment.”⁴⁸²

Count Wang sees despair where the newspaper reporter tries to see hope. They hear cries and screams of the migrants, who suffer from the pain of leaving the homeland, resounding like “the roaring heaven and the rumbling earth” when the train leaves a station. Count Wang is “pierced by terrible fear,” but his “dim eyes had the lights of ironic and eerie delight.” He starts to weep aloud and suddenly switches the language and “exclaims in Korean”: “I also want to cry! I want to scream! I like to cry, so I always board this migration train.” Watching this miserable man, the reporter observes, “He must be trapped in that desperate solitude that we, too, fall into sometimes. Yes, that truly is a horrific solitude.” But he continues, “I hoped that he would soon calm down.” While

⁴⁸¹ For the history of the Manchukuo, see for instance: Prasenjit Duara, *Sovereignty and Legitimacy: Manchukuo and the East Asian Modern*.

⁴⁸² Kim Saryang, “Yuch’ichang esō mannan sanai,” p.298.

feeling “compassionate” toward Count Wang, the reporter then convinces himself, “But, of course, when I think coolheadedly, he is such a troublesome fellow. I must say such a person needs to perish. So I told him in an admonishing tone, ‘Stop crying. You look so inappropriate.’” As if deprived of “the last pleasure,” Count Wang protests and falls down on the floor, and becomes silent. When the reporter is about to get off the train, he tries to wake up Count Wang, but he remains unresponsive, lying on the floor. But the reporter is so occupied with having to get off at the right station that he does not care about Count Wang any more. When he finally leaves the train and stands on the platform, he gives a sigh of relief. But whether Count Wang is dead remains unknown.

The reporter expresses regret and a sense of guilt in telling this story of the reencounter with Count Wang on the train:

I actually met this Count Wang once again then. But something terrible happened. It is too late to have regrets. Whenever I think about what happened then, I cannot contain myself, and I feel tormented. I suffer from compunction. Yes, I think I committed a huge sin at the very moment of rebirth, the fresh start of my life.⁴⁸³

The source of the repentance is the relief the reporter felt when he calmed down and left this miserable man. “I don’t know why such a thing happened. My heart is harshly tortured when I think about that moment. I should not have gotten off [the train],” he deplures. As he is thus haunted by the afterimage of Count Wang, not knowing if he is dead or alive, he relates in the text’s coda a few instances where he believes he might have witnessed the shadow of Count Wang after the happening on the train, once in the middle of a flooded river and again during an air-raid drill. To the depressed reporter, then, the first-person “I,” who has been listening to the whole story, makes comments:

⁴⁸³ Ibid., p.295.

Yes, that [person at the air-raid drill] may have been Count Wang. He must be pleased that the war has started. Because right now, the state is just like the migration train: even though there is real suffering, it is carrying the nation and is storming forward in a fixed direction, creating the regime of national unity. He may have gained a goal or direction for his life. That's right, the squad leader of a civil air-defense unit sounds like a good fit for him.

However, to this hopeful utterance, the reporter gives an ambiguous reply, in an uncanny voice: "I wish it were the case... But then after that, again at another time..."⁴⁸⁴ Thus ends the story.

Just like Ah Q in "A Q zhengzhuan," Count Wang is a subaltern subject of society, but is devoid of any agency to rebel against it due to his inevitable complicity with the imperial authorities, with whom his father collaborates. As Ah Q has recourse to the futile method of "spiritual victory" to feign a protest against the dehumanizing society, so can Count Wang only pretend his involvement in anti-colonial activities, without actually taking part in them. Count Wang's miserable screams, cries, and weepings then echo the sorrow and grief of the uprooted Korean farmers aboard the migration train. He can only draw a last bit of consolation from sharing the cry with the wretched colonized subjects on board; the sheer time he spends with them, without any goal as he is even unable to "cross the national border" to Manchuria, reflects their pure and real suffering that cannot be compensated for by any future promised by the state. Trying to be hopeful about his post-"conversion" life, the reporter on the contrary refers to the official propaganda and tries to find "hope" in the farmers' collective northbound move. He thus needs to silence Count Wang's pessimistic cry, just as he has to suppress his past memories from before his imprisonment. But doing so tortures his heart with an indelible regret, and the shadow

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid., p.301.

of Count Wang continues to haunt him. The existence of Count Wang, therefore, can be read as an allegory of the nation that is suffering from oppression under colonialism, lacking an agency to resist the imperial power, and its primordial cry for salvation.

Ah Q's voiceless call "Help, help!" fundamentally echoes Count Wang's suppressed crying. But just as the significance of Ah Q's death had to be ignored by the spectating villagers, so does a listener to Count Wang's story, the unsympathetic first-person "I," deny his possible death, assuring the storyteller that even someone like Count Wang could take part in the state project now that "the war" —i.e., the Second Sino-Japanese War — has started. By being embedded in the inclusive regime of "national unity" — read "imperial unity" — even Count Wang could find "a goal or direction for his life" and be properly represented in the imperial society, the "I" insists. The colonial intellectual's belief in the state-sanctioned future is thus as inveterate an ideology as the attachment of the villagers in "A Q zhengzhan" to the traditional social relations. If readers in 1941 had comfortably listened to the reporter's story, and been somehow relieved by the first-person narrator's comments that console of the storyteller's deep compunction and exorcise Count Wang's ghostly shadows in the ending comparable to the satirical "grand finale" of "A Q zhengzhan," then they would have had to hear Count Wang's silenced cries as a caution against their conspiracy with the imperialist project. For such readers, the reporter's profoundly ambiguous final utterance ("I wish it were the case... But then after that, again at another time...") must have had to sound as a hauntingly powerful call for self-reflection.

Kim Saryang changed the protagonist's name from "Count Wang" to "Count Q" in his Japanese self-translation of this work, thus making the intertextualization of Lu

Xun's "True Story of Ah Q" explicit. The translation was undertaken when the author included the text in his second collection of short stories, published in Tokyo in 1942, entitled *Kokyō* 故郷 (Hometown); it was thus meant to introduce the story to the Japanese-speaking audience. In order to examine this self-translation, we need to put it in the context of the author's several critical essays written roughly at the same time, where he argued for promoting translations of Korean literary works into Japanese. In the era of imperial cultural integration, Kim Saryang, on the one hand, opposed monolingualism and insisted that Korean literature be written in the Korean language.⁴⁸⁵ He also clearly articulated his literary nationalism, by historicizing the development of modern Korean literature "on the soil of the tradition of national literature cultivated over a long period of time."⁴⁸⁶ On the other hand, however, he also suggested that Korean literature become "a proud wing of Japanese literature," just as Irish literature "increases the glory of English literature" by being included in it.⁴⁸⁷ He even asserted that "the true spiritual integration of mainland Japan and Korea can only be achieved through literature."⁴⁸⁸ According to Kim Saryang's criticism, therefore, producing Korean literature in Korean and integrating it into imperial culture were not contradictory to each other and even mutually reinforcing; he argued that intra-imperial translation into Japanese would help realize such a happy marriage of nationalism and imperialism. He recommended that a Governor-General-sponsored "institute for translation" in charge of translating pre-

⁴⁸⁵ Kim argued, "Fundamentally speaking, it is clear that Korean literature can only be established when a Korean writer writes in the Korean language." See: Kim Saryang, "Chōsen bunka tsūshin 朝鮮文化通信" (A Dispatch about Korean Culture, 1940) in Kim Saryang, *Kin Shirō zenshū*, vol.4, p.27.

⁴⁸⁶ Kim Saryang, *Kin Shirō zenshū*, vol.4, p.24-5.

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, vol.4, p.28.

⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, vol.4, p.29.

modern and modern Korean literature into Japanese be established in order to introduce Korean literature to the Japanese audience, and to make them understand “the true reason for which Korean literature must be written in Korean.”⁴⁸⁹ Through such translation, Kim reasoned, the uniqueness of the national literary identity would be recognized in the imperial literary field, while creation in the Korean language would be protected.

Kim Saryang’s discussion of intra-imperial translation must be understood in the context of the increasing introduction of colonial culture to the mainland audience in the late 1930s and early 40s, when translation of Korean literature into Japanese expanded dramatically. The growing interest in colonial culture was centered upon the idea of “local color” (*chihō shoku* 地方色), which represented the particularity of a colonial culture as a sign of *difference* that gave diversity and richness to broader imperial culture. Within this discursive context, the affirmation of a national literary identity could have failed to constitute a fundamental criticism of cultural imperialism, only to bolster the empire’s multiculturalism; intra-imperial translation could function precisely as a mechanism that integrated a colonial literary product into the institution of the broader imperial literature.⁴⁹⁰ Such a cultural integration was fostered in the era of the “*kōminka*,” the production of “the Emperor’s subjects,” for the wartime mobilization, which is referred to by the first-person “I” in the end of the story. Despite the wishful expectation of the “I” that the war must have assigned Count Wang a proper role within “the regime of national [i.e., imperial] unity,” his shadow uncannily lingers after the story ends. If Count Wang’s superfluous subjectivity thus resists incorporation into the imperial totality,

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid., vol.4, p.29-30.

⁴⁹⁰ For more on the matter of colonial representation during the “*kōminka*” era, see for instance: Nakane Takayuki, “*Chōsen*” *hyōshō no bunkashi*.

then, his troubling voice, too, dislocates proper translation into the imperial language, thus defying the author's own advocacy of intra-imperial translation.

Kim Saryang's self-translation, indeed, pays much attention to rendering Count Wang's "strange" voice in Japanese. The following quote is how Kim translated the initial scene in the detention center cited above:

「たん那、たん那さん」と、彼はよく外に向つて呼ぶ。
はひったばかりの日、僕はこのひょうきんな舌廻りに随分と驚いた。
それは、筋向ひあたりの房からであるが、何分その聲の主が朝鮮の男であるに違ひないからだ。
「ぼくですよ、ぼく、便所、便所へ行きたいですよ」
「Q 伯爵か」と看守は眠そうな聲で唸る。
「は、はい」
それがいかにも畏つた軍隊式の聲なのだ。

“Saar, saar.”

He frequently calls the outside in this manner.

On the day I entered the detention cell, I was very surprised at this funny turn of the tongue. It was because the owner of this voice, which came from a cell on the opposite side, must have been a Korean man.

“It’z mee. Mee, bathroom. I want to go to the bathroom.”

“Is that Count Q?” groans the guard in a sleepy voice.

“Ye, yess.”

It was a ceremonious military-style voice.⁴⁹¹

While using standard Japanese to translate the narration as well as the guard's question, Kim Saryang tries to represent Count Q's accented pronunciation in the Japanese translation, too. Kim uses “*tannasan* たん那さん” for “sir” instead of the normal “*dannasan* だん那さん,” and “*poku* ぼく” for “me” instead of the regular “*boku* ぼく.” He thus renders Count Q's characteristic mispronunciation of the Japanese voiced consonants. When we compare the original to the translation, then, we notice that the

⁴⁹¹ Kim Saryang, *Kin Shirō zenshū*, vol.2, p.55-6. My underlines.

protagonist's accented pronunciation is uncannily preserved *as it is* between the two texts, as if it did not need to be translated in the first place. The voice of Count Wang/Count Q thus bypasses the translational economy of the two national languages.

The scene of the storyteller's second encounter with Count Wang on the migration train deserves particular attention in this regard.

「東京의同志！」

이렇게 그는 아무 꺼리낌 없이 닷자로 부르지졌다. 술기운 때문에 以前보다도 더욱 혀가 돌아가지않는 국어를 쓴다.

「응 이게 웬일인가 大體 자네는 그後 無事했는가. 얼굴 빛이 아주 나쁘구만」

「어서 여기라도 좀 앉게나.」

하고 나는 그에게 자리를 내 주려고 일어났다. ...

「아니 나는 여기가 더 좋을세 여기가. 응 그런데 여보게 東京의同志 나는 자 자네가 送局될때 근심하였다네. 아주 크게 걱정을 했었다네. 저것이 처음이 되어 금시에 헤타바루 하지나 않을까하구 응」

「고마울세 그러나 자네 지금 좀 쉬이는데 좋을것같은데」

하며 나는 그를 타일르듯이 조용히 달래였다. 그런즉 그는 두말 안짝으로 유순히 물팩을 모아 세우도 머리를 숙였다. 그리고는 괴로운듯이 呻吟소리를 내기始作한다.

“Comrade of Tokyo!”

He abruptly called me in a loud voice without any considerations of others. Because he was drunk, he spoke in the national language [i.e., Japanese] even more clumsily than the last time.

“Um, hey, what’s going on here? Have you been all right since then? You look so pale.”

“Come on, sit down here,” I said.

And I made room for him. ...

“No don’t worry. I’m fine here. Um, but hey Comrade of Tokyo, I was so worried when you, you were sent to jail. I was hugely concerned. You were sent there for the first time, so I thought you would soon be worn out, um.”

“Thanks. But you’d better have some rest now.”

I said to him quietly as if I were admonishing him. But then he stopped talking, and meekly held his knees and hid his head down. Then he started to groan painfully.⁴⁹²

The language Count Wang uses to talk to the reporter is designated as “the national language,” i.e., Japanese. Kim Saryang describes Count Wang’s “even clumsier” speech of Japanese by using the Korean-alphabet transcription of a Japanese word “*het’abaru* 헤타바루” for “be worn out,” and employing frequent interjections “*ŭng* 응” (“um”). Annoyed by the “loud” Korean-accented Japanese in the train cabin, the reporter, trying to silence this voice, speaks in accurate Japanese, which Kim renders in standard Korean, and he asks Count Wang to “have some rest” in a “quiet” and “admonishing” tone. Suppressed by the correct Japanese, then, Count Wang’s awkward voice can only turn into a painful groan.

Kim Saryang self-translated this passage as follows:

「東京の同志！」と、彼はあたりかまはず大きな声で唸った。酒気のため以前より余計舌の廻らない内地語を使ってみた。私はいささかはらはらした。「え、これはどうしたことだよ。きみ——君はその後元気かい？顔色が悪いぞう！」「まあ、ここにでも落着きよ」と云って、僕は彼に席を譲らうとして立ち上がった。...

「いや、ぼくはここでええ。ここでええんだ。ぼくはよ、東京の話がしてえんだ。よう、東京の同志、ぼくは君、きみ——が送られる時は心配したぞう。大いに心配したぞう。野郎ははじめてだから、きつとへたばるだろうつてな」

「ありがたう、だが君は寝んだ方がよさそうだ」

と、僕は彼をいたはるやうに物静かに云った。と、彼は素直に膝小僧を抱いて頭をうな垂れた。そして苦しうに呻き出した。

“Comrade of Tokyo!” he yelled in a loud voice without any considerations of others. Because he was drunk, he spoke in the mainland language [i.e., Japanese] that was even clumsier than the last time. I got a little nervous. “Hey,

⁴⁹² Kim Saryang, “Yuch’ichang esō mannan sanai,” p.296-7. My underlines.

what’s going on here? You — have you been all right since then? You look so pale!” “Come on, sit down here,” I said, and stood up to make room for him. ...

“No don’t worry. I’m fine here. I’m all right here. I want to talk about Tokyo. Hey Comrade of Tokyo, I was so worried when you — you were sent [to jail]. I was hugely concerned. You were sent there for the first time, so I thought you would soon be worn out.”

“Thanks. But you’d better have some rest now.”

I said to him quietly as if I were consoling him. But then he meekly held his knees and hid his head down. Then he started to groan painfully.⁴⁹³

Much in the same manner as the opening detention center scene, Kim painstakingly reproduces the characteristic Korean accent that mispronounces the Japanese voiced consonants. Count Q says “*tōshita kotodayo* とうしたことだよ” for “What’s going on?” instead of “*dōshita kotodayo* どうしたことだよ”; and “*poku* ぽく” for “I” instead of “*boku* ぼく.” Count Q’s command of the language is also markedly clumsy, clearly more so than in the Korean original: he stammers the second-person pronoun “*kimi* 君/きみ,” which reflects the stuttering “*cha chane* 차 차네” in the original, and ends his phrases with “*zō* ぞう,” which is a deviation from the normal termination “*zo* ぞ.” The Japanese word “*hetabaru* へたばる,” which in the original is transcribed in the Korean alphabets, is used as it is. Against the background of the standard Japanese that the reporter uses both in his utterances and the narration, Count Q’s language stands out as odd as Count Wang’s voice in the Korean original. Kim Saryang also emphasizes the reporter’s uneasiness about Count Q’s bizarre language by appending the phrase “I got a little nervous,” which is not in the original. While Kim, just like the bilingual newspaper reporter in the story, translates himself between the two standard languages, he preserves the distinction between fluency and clumsiness, the normal and the abnormal, both in the

⁴⁹³ Kim Saryang, *Kin Shirō zenshū*, vol.2, p.61-2. My underlines.

original and the translation. Count Q's queer language is not properly translated from a national language to another; instead, it confuses their distinction, and eventually turns into painful groaning that erases linguistic articulations. At stake in Kim's self-translation, therefore, is not only the relationship between the two national languages, but also the opposition between one who is able to adroitly self-translate between the two standard languages, and the other who incompetently mixes them up, blurs their distinctions, and is stuck in-between.

Count Wang/Count Q's language, therefore, must undermine the function Kim Saryang first and foremost expected intra-imperial translation to fulfill: properly represent the Korean national language and literature within the imperial literary field. Count Wang/Count Q's clumsy language fundamentally defies and dislocates the proper *difference* between the two languages, which the translation is to bridge; his pidgin Japanese instead sounds equally "strange" in the contexts of both national languages, thus engendering an uncanny *resemblance* between the original and the translation. His language is, as it were, *too translatable*, rather than untranslatable, to generate a difference that could be capitalized upon. Silenced both in the Korean original and the Japanese translation, then, the voice of Count Wang/Count Q becomes an unarticulated, wordless weeping and screaming, which echo the resounding cry of suffering of the migrating Korean peasants. Just like their voices, the exclamation of Count Wang/Count Q, "I also want to cry! I want to scream! I like to cry, so I always board this migration train," which the storyteller, both in the original and the translation, makes clear is uttered "in Korean" (Kor. *chosŏnmal ro* 朝鮮말로; Jpn. *chōsen-go de* 朝鮮語で), in fact, no longer points to a national language that could be properly translated into the language of

the empire. Instead, it is the primordial voice of the suppressed nation whose translation will have to demand a new ethics of representation, a new culture that could do justice to their suffering.

By nevertheless translating — or rather, *not* translating — Count Wang’s voice, Kim Saryang self-critically resisted the imperial cultural integration that he supported both in theory and practice as a bilingual colonial writer.⁴⁹⁴ Just like the story’s first-person character “I,” who, in the end of the narrative, tries to integrate Count Wang’s problematic existence into the normality of the imperial regime, Kim translated his own work to incorporate it into the corpus of “Korean literature” as it is represented in the imperial literary field. But just as the reporter’s ambiguous final remark, “I wish it were the case... But then after that, again at another time...” hauntingly undercuts the state ideology that the “I” upholds, so do the voices of Count Wang and Count Q, uncannily resembling to each other despite being translated, dislocate the politics of intra-imperial translation. Kim Saryang’s self-translation is reminiscent of a sharply critical view on Korean-Japanese translation that he put forth before the major debut. While articulating the ambition of writing “the reality of Korea faithfully,” the young Kim expressed bewilderment at having to write in Japanese, “the language of the other”:

Just as I am writing these words, I still start to worry about the language. I even try to think that I may rather kill off Japanese from my writing. What if I transpose my mother tongue into a stiff literal translation using *kana* characters? I have written seventy pages but now I am stuck. Give me time until next issue so I can write something.⁴⁹⁵

⁴⁹⁴ Besides his story “Yuch’ichang esō mannan sanai,” Kim Saryang contributed a Japanese translation of Yi Kwangsu’s 이광수 (1892-50) mid-length story “Mumyōng 無明” (Lightless) to the 1939 special issue of the magazine *Modan Nihon* (Modern Japan), dedicated to colonial Korean literature.

⁴⁹⁵ Kim Saryang, *Kin Shirō zenshū*, vol.4, p.53.

While expressing the desire to eliminate Japanese from his writing, Kim Saryang suggests to reinvent it through a “stiff literal translation” of his “mother tongue” into a Japanese that only uses the *kana* characters, i.e., without the Chinese characters, which both the Japanese and Korean writing systems employed then. The result of such a risky experiment would be simply unreadable, but Kim’s modernist passion for deconstructing Japanese writing with the tension between the two languages, without even mediated by the shared Chinese characters, reveals his radical linguistic consciousness that squarely opposes his later support of the imperial literary politics.

The self-translation of “Yuch’ichang esō mannan sanai ,” therefore, must be understood as Kim Saryang’s self-critical attempt at representing a voice of the subordinated nation within the institution of imperial literature, in which he was deeply involved. The Korean writer’s endeavor echoes with “A Q zhengzhuan,” in which Lu Xun sought to write the story of Ah Q by deconstructing the literary institution that he inherited, the one that had never represented such a “perishable” existence as that of Ah Q. In writing the story of Count Wang/Count Q, Kim Saryang thus intertextualized Lu Xun’s “True Story of Ah Q” as a *transnational allegory*: the Chinese text, to the very extent that it is an allegory of the reactionary sociopolitical circumstances of the Chinese nation after the Republican Revolution, becomes in Kim’s intertextualizing gesture an allegory of the plight of the Korean nation under ever-mounting pressure for the imperial integration. To put it differently, Kim Saryang borrowed from “A Q zhengzhuan” the letter “Q” for the protagonist’s name, so that he narrativized “the reality of Korea,” not so much by emphasizing its particularity, as by implying its fundamental resemblance to the Chinese circumstances in the 1920s as they are allegorized in Lu Xun’s story. The sign

“Q,” therefore, allegorically indicates such resembling national predicaments. It indicates exactly the kind of resemblance that Kim Saryang wrote to Long Yingzong that he found between the contemporary realities of the Korean and Taiwanese nations when he read Long’s short story “Yoizuki.”

4. Long Yingzong: Critical Realism

Long Yingzong, while never having published a creative work in Chinese before the 1945 liberation of Taiwan,⁴⁹⁶ took a position very similar to Kim Saryang with regard to the question of literary identity during the colonial period. On several occasions, Long Yingzong, on the one hand, explained the significance of producing a Taiwanese national literature. He claimed that “colonial literature should not aim at the literary world of mainland Japan, but should be a literature rooted in the land. . . . its fundamental question is to *create a culture of the land we live on and to enhance it.*” But on the other hand, he also contended, “Therefore colonial literature is, just like the literature of mainland Japan, a most healthy literature of the people living their lives; and it is such a beautiful literature that *has a unique appearance and yet can become a wing of the broader national culture, adding diversity to it while being integrated into it.*”⁴⁹⁷ Creating a literature rooted in and unique to the colonial society can thus enrich “the broader national [i.e., imperial] culture.” Just as Kim Saryang tried to defend creation in Korean

⁴⁹⁶ After 1945, Long Yingzong continued creation in Japanese, while publishing a few creative works and a number of critical pieces in Chinese.

⁴⁹⁷ Long Yingzong, “Taiwan bungaku no tenbō 台湾文学の展望” (Prospect of Taiwanese Literature, 1941), in *Long Yingzong quanji*, vol.4, p.86. My italics.

by arguing that it could enrich the broader imperial culture by means of intra-imperial translation, so did Long Yingzong attempt to affirm his identity as a Taiwanese writer by claiming that someone like him, who did not inherit the Japanese cultural tradition, could “create a new Japanese language” that could “add freshness with a different color of hair” to Japanese-language literature.⁴⁹⁸ Through writing “Yuch’ichang esō mannan sanai” and translating it into Japanese, Kim Saryang self-critically defied the imperial cultural integration that he advocated himself. If Lu Xun’s allegorical aesthetics inspired Kim’s self-critical creation, it also motivated Long Yingzong, who ventured to describe the “reality” of the colonial society, with the consciousness that his literary endeavor can do so only as a self-criticism.

Long Yingzong’s debut work “Papaiya no aru machi” (A Village with Papaya Trees) is the story of a young ambitious middle-school graduate named Chen Yousan, who moves to a small rural village to take a job as an assistant accountant at the town hall. Despite his advanced education and diligence, Chen Yousan’s assigned work is boring and the salary meager; he quickly finds himself among the colleagues whose lives are no better than poor indigenous villagers, firmly stuck in the colonial Manichean order. But Chen Yousan nonetheless believes that effort is the only way to break away from his stagnant life, and so devotes himself to hard study in the hope of passing the official examinations. Regarded as belonging to the “new intellectual class,” Chen Yousan at the

⁴⁹⁸ “I dare to think that the writers of the island [Taiwan], because they don’t inherit the old [Japanese] tradition, can create a new Japanese language that is not seen in the tradition, and can add freshness with a different color of hair to Japanese. Then, the writers of the island will produce newness in Japanese writing, and can thereby contribute to Japanese culture.” See: Long Yingzong, “Sōsaku sento suru tomoe 創作せむとする友へ” (For Friends Who Want to Create), in Long Yingzong, *Long Yingzong quanji*, vol.4, p.25.

same time “looks down on” the native people who, to him, “appeared like slavish ugly weeds growing on the dark plane of life without advancement or progress.” Just like his habits of wearing Japanese-style clothes and speaking in Japanese, Chen Yousan’s education, knowledge, and “ardent desire for the ideal and advancement” give him “the sense of self-consolation” that “he is a different existence than the people of the same origin as his.”⁴⁹⁹ As the colonial consciousness continues to drive him to put more effort into study, however, he is met with overwhelming skepticism from his peers. They make the case that his struggles will never pay off under colonial conditions. “You are forgetting the position you occupy,” a friend warns Chen Yousan, who wants to lead a “creative” life.⁵⁰⁰ Chen Yousan then gradually becomes preoccupied with the corrupt idea that “excessive knowledge is always the source of social discontents.”⁵⁰¹ Desperate, he is increasingly lured by the temptation of wine and women, when he meets the sick son of his elder colleague named Lin Xingnan, who tells Chen Yousan:

True knowledge may drag us into deep suffering as it interprets phenomena, but every phenomenon is a manifestation of the law of history and shouldn’t simply be cursed ... Happiness will not be achieved without undergoing suffering and efforts. In order to survive in this gloomy society, all we need to do is to examine the mechanism of history with correct knowledge and live a proper life without becoming vainly trapped by desperation or degradation.

Lin Xingnan’s son, then, tells Chen Yousan about “the deep impression” he has gained from reading Lu Xun’s short story “Guxiang” in a Japanese translation and his hope to read “A Q zhengzhuan,” which he has been unable to purchase; he also admires works by

⁴⁹⁹ Long Yingzong, “Papaiya no aru machi,” in *Long Yingzong quanji*, vol.1, p.15-6.

⁵⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, vol.1, p.33-4.

⁵⁰¹ *Ibid.*, vol.1, p.39.

Gorky, Engels, and Lewis H. Morgan in the same utterance.⁵⁰² Absentmindedly, Chen Yousan however ignores the young man's discourse as "empty words." Soon after, Lin Xingnan's son dies of an illness, leaving a memo; Lin Xingnan himself then goes mad. This news leaves Chen Yousan ever more isolated and desperate at the end of the story.

"Papaiya no aru machi," to be sure, can be read as a realistic portrayal of the struggles of a colonial intellectual pursuing economic and social success under prohibitive social conditions; it is the story of hope and ambition, and their eventual betrayal and failure due to colonial oppression, inequality, and injustice. In fact, prevailing in the many criticisms published after Long Yingzong won a prestigious Kaizō award for this work in 1937 was the idea that it was a *realistic* portrayal of the Taiwanese colonial intellectual and society. One critic pointed out, "To us who know the reality that many young people of this island [Taiwan] are indeed struggling with such a simple intellectual agony, this work is impressive. For it depicts in a realist style the simplicity of their thought as it actually is, and it reveals the reality that shouldn't be obscured."⁵⁰³ Another claimed that the work described "not only the question of the success in life, but also that of national education," and even recommended that the government pay attention to this piece of fiction to improve its policies.⁵⁰⁴ Long Yingzong himself was also quoted in an article: "In a realist way, 'A Village with Papaya Trees' tries to deal

⁵⁰² Ibid., vol.1, p.52.

⁵⁰³ See: Nakayama Yū 中山侑, "Genjitsu no mondai 現実の問題" (The Question of Reality), reprinted in *Long Yingzong quanji*, vol.6, p.139. Nakayama Yū (1905-59) is a Japanese writer who was active in colonial Taiwan.

⁵⁰⁴ An anonymous criticism reprinted in *Long Yingzong quanji*, vol.6, p.138. Some of the criticisms also emphasize that the work is a rich expression of Taiwan's "local color." See: *Long Yingzong quanji*, vol.6, pp.133; 144.

with the portrayal of a middle-school-graduate intellectual of the island, and the social and economic relations in the background.”⁵⁰⁵

That Long Yingzong’s piece is a realistic description of the colonial society, however, misses the point repeatedly emphasized in the narrative itself. The story suggests in a number of instances that the harsh “reality” the protagonist and his peers are forced to endure is but an artificial construct made by a malfunctioning, and indeed *fictional* ideology, one that fosters the belief that only hard work can improve one’s life. Even though such a path has always been closed to the colonized, it is the sole ideology that involves the colonial intellectuals in a modern, creative life; failure to believe it means that they fall behind history and return to stagnation and meaninglessness. The diligent Chen Yousan is firmly stuck in this closure called “colonial reality.” Long Yingzong’s “realistic” description of the dead end the hero faces, indeed, is self-conscious and satirical. For instance, upon starting a new life as an accountant, Chen Yousan rents a cheap room and covers its walls with white wallpapers, “which made the room suddenly look brighter.” On a wall he writes “with thick letters going upwards from left to right” a slogan in a couplet: “What Wouldn’t Be Achievable; If You Devote Your Spirit?” He pairs this inscription with “a portrait of Napoléon, who looked as though he was thinking something, with his hands crossed on the back.” Chen Yousan’s “beautiful dream” of success, moreover, comes from guidebooks on self-cultivation and the biographies of successful people, which “he read in his middle-school days in addition to the textbooks.” The narrator also satirically states, “Chen Yousan in Japanese-style clothes lying on the Taiwanese-style floor made of bamboo that covered the three-yen-a-

⁵⁰⁵ An anonymous criticism reprinted in *Long Yingzong quanji*, vol.6, p.132.

month dirt-floored room of the size of a lumber closet created an extremely ludicrous-looking scene.”⁵⁰⁶ What Long Yingzong’s “realism” reveals with its satirical gaze, then, is not simply the reality of the colonial society; rather, it exposes the fact that it is those books and letters, objects and clothes that *create* that oppressive “reality.” The narrative therefore shows that the “reality” Chen Yousan lives in and endures is as fictional as Long Yingzong’s story is.

The ironical dialectics of reality and fictionality, in fact, is pursued further in Long Yingzong’s 1939 story, entitled “Chō fujin no giga 趙夫人の戯画 (A Caricature of Madame Zhao). The author in this story self-referentially interpolated his very fictional creation into this dialectics. A curious piece of metafiction, this mid-length story is indicative of the author’s troubling self-awareness that his realist writing itself may be complicit with the ideological construct of what colonial “reality” *is*.⁵⁰⁷ Long’s self-critical view on realism explains the implications of the intertextualization of Lu Xun’s two stories “Guxiang” and “A Q zhengzhuan” in “Papaiya no aru machi.” For the protagonist Chen Yousan, what sustain the “reality” of his modern intellectual life are his ambition and creativity to break away from the stagnation and change his life. But his elite consciousness merely provides him with “the sense of self-consolation” that he, as a modern intellectual, “is a different existence than the people of the same origin as his.” To the extent that this hope, just like Ah Q’s “method of spiritual victory,” has recourse to the same progressivist ideology that confines Chen Yousan to the demoralizing

⁵⁰⁶ Long Yingzong, “Papaiya no aru machi,” in *Long Yingzong quanji*, vol.1, p.14-16.

⁵⁰⁷ Long Yingzong, “Chōfujin no giga,” in *Long Yingzong quanji*, vol.1, p.71-119.

colonial “reality” to give him the image of a better future, it can only create a vicious circle: the more Chen hopes, the more he becomes locked in the hopeless situation.

Long Yingzong’s satirizing of this dead end of the protagonist’s life directly speaks to Lu Xun’s short story “Guxiang.” A first-person narrative, “Guxiang” is a story of homecoming. After twenty years of absence, the protagonist returns to his hometown to liquidate the family property. Disillusioned by the desolate landscape, he nevertheless weaves an embellished memory of having played with a friend, the son of a servant whom his landlord family used to hire during the busy month of the New Year. The reencounter, however, was an unpleasant one: despite the protagonist’s wish to awaken innocent childhood memories, he meets the friend who has grown up and now addresses him as “master,” reminding him of their insurmountable status difference. To his further disenchantment, the friend is more interested in the household goods they try to dispose of, and takes away several items to help family finances. Thinking about his niece and his friend’s son, the protagonist, leaving the town, expresses the “hope” in the end of the work, that their next generation will lead “a new life, a life that we have never experienced,” where they will no longer be separated by status barriers. In a self-critical turn, however, the protagonist is immediately struck by the sense of “fright” upon broaching that “hope,” pondering that cherishing such a hope might be no less “idolatry” than his friend’s attachment to the incense burner and candle stand that he took away. In the voice of Lin Xingnan’s son, who alludes to this story, Long Yingzong implies that it is exactly this moment of self-reflection that will not occur to the protagonist Chen Yousan, whose “hope” for success is as powerless an “idol” as the Napoléon portrait on the wall or his Japanese-style outfit.

The words of Lin Xingnan's son, in fact, fall on deaf ears; the absentminded Chen Yousan loses himself in the fictional world of colonial "reality." As the self-critical voice of Lu Xun's protagonist, mediated by Lin Xingnan's son, is not heard in the world of "Papaiya no aru machi," the most memorable phrase in "Guxiang," which the protagonist adds at the end of the piece, is also neglected. Lu Xun's protagonist says to himself, "I think: hope fundamentally is something that cannot be said it exists, or it does not. It is like a road on the land. There is no road on the land in the first place; but when many people walk, then a road appears."⁵⁰⁸ Real "hope" can only reside in actual, collective practice. In Long Yingzong's story, it is Lin Xingnan's dying son who embodies this lesson. Upon his death, Lin Xingnan's son leaves a note for Chen Yousan. Though he initially simply "jammed it in his pocket," Chen Yousan, at the end of the story, takes it out and "smooth[s] out the crumpled paper and read[s]." It has a line: "Though I feel bottomless sorrow now, a beautiful society will arrive someday. I wish to have a long sleep under the cold ground, imagining the land filled with happiness."⁵⁰⁹ By articulating this utopian hope in the already disappeared voice of a deceased character, barely preserved on a piece of crushed paper, Long Yingzong intertextualizes Lu Xun's "A Q zhengzhuan," which Lin Xingnan's son had passionately expressed the hope to read. Just like Ah Q's inner voice "Help, help!", the words of Lin Xingnan's son remain unheard and ignored within the colonial "reality" that Long's fiction portrays. Featuring the silent voice of Lin Xingnan's son, thus, bespeaks the author's self-criticism of the "reality" that his realist fiction is able to describe, just as Lu Xun's call for inventing a new literary

⁵⁰⁸ Lu Xun, "Guxiang," in *Lu Xun quanji*, vol.1, p.510.

⁵⁰⁹ Long Yingzong, "Papaiya no aru machi," in *Long Yingzong quanji*, vol.1, p.57.

form — the “rapidly perishable writing” — in order to transmit the subaltern inner voice is tantamount to a criticism of what is transmittable in the traditional institution of “literature” that he inherited as a Chinese writer. What Long inscribes in the voice of a dead character, therefore, is another kind of hope for the Taiwanese society, a hope that is unachievable within the colonial ideology of progress, and that Long’s Japanese-language fiction is able to represent only through its self-criticism.

Long Yingzong’s “Yoizuki,” which is praised in Kim Saryang’s above-quoted letter, translates the self-criticism inherent in the “realist” narrative of “Papaiya no aru machi” into a problematic relationship between the first-person narrator and the protagonist. Featuring the death of a demoralized colonial intellectual named Peng Yingkun, the short story can be read as a sequel to the author’s debut work. “Yoizuki” begins with the narrator encountering Peng Yingkun’s dejected death. After graduation from middle school, they both taught at the same public school; but Peng Yingkun was more intellectually mature and ambitious, while the narrator was rather reserved and passive. In their school days, Peng Yingkun had published compositions entitled “Byron,” the romantic poet’s critical biography; and “Youth and Effort,” in which Peng Yingkun asserted that “effort” could “overcome whatever difficulties and achieve objectives,” and that the youth should therefore “devote themselves to social development and improvement and aim for their success.”⁵¹⁰ However, just like Chen Yousan in “Papaiya no aru machi,” Peng Yingkun devastates his life “for the reasons I could not understand by any means,”⁵¹¹ as the narrator states. Peng Yingkun increasingly squanders his money

⁵¹⁰ Long Yingzong, “Yoizuki,” in *Long Yingzong quanji*, vol.1, p.143-4.

⁵¹¹ *Ibid.*, vol.1, p.149.

on drinking, thus ruining his health and leaving debts for his family. At Peng Yingkun's deathbed, the narrator regrets that "the intellectual class of the village" needs to die such a miserable death, and even thinks to himself that Peng Yingkun should have tried to lead a more decent life. After his death, the narrator tries to help Peng Yingkun's desperate widow deal with his posthumous affairs; but while doing so, he is suddenly struck by a deep sense of shame:

I told his [Peng Yingkun's] wife from time to time:

"You should stay strong. Don't cry so much."

And I worked in an apparently friendly manner, sending telegrams to his family members, calling acquaintances, and applying for a death certificate.

But when I reflected on my moral behavior, which resembled that of a clown, I was suddenly trapped in strong self-aborrence.

What a hypocrite! I murmured.

Until a moment ago, I was bathing myself in self-satisfaction and good feeling after accomplishing good deeds, but I suddenly felt as though I had been tripped up and had fallen into a swamp.

Yes, I was looking for an outlet for my emotion and a cheep moral impulse, and at last took advantage of Peng Yingkun's death and satisfied my moral vanity.

In the depths of my heart, I did not feel sorry that Peng Yingkun had died. It just so happened that I witnessed his death, and so I satisfied the vanity that was lurking in myself.

Peng's wife should have been grateful; but I was devouring the pleasure of my good conduct as I would devour the pleasure of satisfying a desire.

I felt disgusted and terribly ashamed of myself. An unpleasant, turbid feeling was circulating in me like dirty blood.⁵¹²

The narrator's sudden realization of shame is rooted in his apathy and lethargy, which prevented him from fathoming the mental ordeal that Peng Yingkun had experienced as public school teacher, bound between the youthful idealism and the prohibitive yet inescapable reality. Peng Yingkun, for instance, once accused the school's principal of holding passive attitudes toward education, merely concerned with avoiding

⁵¹² Ibid., vol.1, p.143.

trouble and abandoning “the foundation of education”; but the censure was immediately withdrawn, as Peng Yingkun realized that his life was dependent upon the principal’s realistic management, which maintained the status quo. At that time, the narrator did not join Peng Yingkun in criticizing the principal, but while watching Peng Yingkun’s heated discourse, he shed tears. The narrator thus vaguely felt Peng Yingkun’s struggle was relevant to himself: “I thought he [Peng Yingkun] was miserable. I looked down on him with pity and contempt, but in a strange way, that pity and contempt would soon return to me and flow in my body... I came to realize later that there might have been a similarity between Peng’s sad gaze and that of mine.” But the narrator immediately adds, “With regard to this matter, I still do not clearly understand the relationship even now,” whereby the author emphasizes that the narrator’s self-knowledge was too murky and weak.⁵¹³ Not until Peng Yingkun’s death does he finally start trying to repay the moral debt of having ignored and distanced himself from his friend’s struggle, but now that Peng Yingkun has already passed away, he can only do so by running errands for the friend’s widow, helping liquidate the financial debts incurred by her late husband. The hypocrisy of satisfying his “moral vanity” by such a cheap means and its belatedness torment the narrator. His apparent good intention, then, only results in giving an acceptable form to his friend’s unsightly death, thereby saving him asking the haunting question: Why did Peng Yingkun have to die such a miserable death? His failure to face this question would merely preserve the oppressive reality.

The regretful narrator in “Yoizuki” unmistakably echoes the newspaper reporter in Kim Saryang’s “Yuch’ichang esō mannan sanai ,” who, while relating the story,

⁵¹³ Ibid., vol.1, p.146-7.

repents of his apathetic treatment of Count Wang. While feeling sorry, these narrators both distance themselves from the downcast protagonists; though remorseful about their indifferent attitudes toward them, they equally lack the critical self-knowledge that these subaltern existences, in fact, reflect their own true images, and are the true allegories of the situations of their own dehumanized nations, the allegories of the “realities” that Kim Saryang wrote in his letter to Long Yingzong are “no different” in Korea and Taiwan. That these stories are told by distanced narrators illuminates the colonial authors’ self-critical consciousness that they are relating the stories of those subaltern subjects from within the very system of representation that maintains the colonial societies’ status quos precisely by suppressing their voices.

The self-critical writing of “Yoizuki” also intertextualizes Lu Xun’s short story “Zhufu” (New Year’s Sacrifice). In “Zhufu,” Lu Xun tells the story of a dejected widow named Xianglin sao, who commits suicide in the beginning of the account, in the voice of a remorseful yet uncompassionate narrator. A respected intellectual, the narrator is haunted by the suspicion that Xianglin sao might have committed suicide because he had assured this desperate widow, as a means of consolation, that human spirits would exist in the afterlife. But he immediately tries to alleviate the sense of responsibility with the ambivalence of the last sentence he told her, “I am not sure”; and begins the storytelling only when he is convinced that the death of such a “futile existence” as Xianglin sao was “just as well”:

Whether spirits existed or not I did not know; but in this world of ours the end of a futile existence, the removal of someone whom others are tired of seeing, was just as well both for them and for the individual concerned. Occupied with these reflections, I listened quietly to the hissing of the snow outside, until little by little I felt more relaxed.

But the fragments of her [Xianglin sao's] life that I had seen or heard about before combined now to form a whole.⁵¹⁴

As the following narrative shows, it is precisely the traditional family and society that regard the widowed woman as “a futile existence” whom “others are tired of seeing” that cause the misery of Xianglin sao's late life. In telling the story of Xianglin sao, the narrator positions himself within this unjust “world of ours”; by featuring such a voice as is complicit with the dehumanizing social institutions to be attacked, Lu Xun suggests that there is no secure and unsullied place for the storyteller. If “Zhufu” is to be read as the author's condemnation of traditional social relations, he does so from within the unjust society: the story of a subaltern can only be told when the storyteller accepts his involvement in the society whose injustice he attempts to reveal and remove, and lives with the sense of guilt that this complicity causes. Justice must be served to the dead widow by means of the society's self-criticism and self-renewal, not by virtue of certain external values. In this self-critical process, the author must be involved himself. The cold and silence that surround the world of “Zhufu,” which begins and ends with the images of the hissing snow, create a sense of distance that allows this necessary self-reflection.

The ending of “Yoizuki” is a precise intertextualization of the narrative framework of “Zhufu”:

I saw yellow lights in the windows of other houses, but the windows of Peng's widow sunk in deep darkness.
I then turned back.
Without my knowing, the round evening moon had risen above the village.

⁵¹⁴ Lu Xun, “Zhufu,” in *Lu Xun quanji.*, vol.2, p.158-9.

I realized that my pale compassion with this neighbor was as cold and forlorn as this evening moon.

My feet did not move any more when I thought that I had to bring the bad news [that the debts failed to be liquidated] to the grieving widow.

The leaves of the pomelo tree were casting shadows on the mud wall. The pale moonlight and leaf shadows were tirelessly moving in the breeze that started to blow at that very moment.⁵¹⁵

The failed attempt at liquidating the deceased friend's financial debts is symbolic of the narrator's unpaid moral debt. By thus ending the story with the image of the narrator "turn[ing] back" from the friend's widow, facing the cold, forlorn "evening moon," Long Yingzong creates, like Lu Xun in "Zhufu," an allegory of the nation in a self-critical mode, with the self-awareness that the nation suffers from the injustice of the very society in which the author participates himself. The nation's allegory is created by this narrator who decides to write despite his inevitable complicity. The aesthetics of allegory, for both Long Yingzong and Lu Xun, and for Kim Saryang, too, is just such an ethical act.

Conclusion

In his letter to Long Yingzong, Kim Saryang wrote that "Yoizuki" seemed as though written in "a perfect matter-of-fact style." If Kim Saryang's observation points to the detached tone of the story's narration, then the "shivering hand" that he visualizes behind this understated text must metaphorize Long Yingzong's ethical decision as a Japanese-language colonial writer to tell a story about Peng Yingkun, while his literary

⁵¹⁵ Long Yingzong, "Yoizuki," in *Long Yingzong quanji*, vol.1, p.162.

endeavor was inextricably folded into the unjust social relations that victimize subjects like this wretched protagonist. Such a self-critical decision also underlies the narrative of Kim Saryang's "Yuch'ichang esō mannan sanai" and its self-translation.

The allegorical aesthetics of Lu Xun's short stories in the early 1920s provided these colonial writers with a model for the literary form that weaves such intensely self-critical narratives. Lu Xun's self-reflective writing derives from the haunting consciousness that he, as a writer on the threshold between tradition and modernity, succeeded the cultural tradition, from the rigorous critique of which he believed a new Chinese culture should be born. To Kim Saryang and Long Yingzong, the cultures that were being increasingly "integrated" into the imperial sphere appeared as oppressive, unjust, and inhuman as what Lu Xun had regarded his country's cultural tradition to be; the devastated colonial protagonists in their stories represent their nations' silenced voices that they were driven to rescue from the imperialized culture, just as Lu Xun's subaltern characters, epitomized in the figure of Ah Q, embody the existences whose inner voices Lu Xun had been compelled to save from the corrupt cultural tradition. Writing as *colonial Lu Xun*, to revisit the unique formula in Kim Saryang's transcolonial correspondence to Long Yingzong, means to create, as a self-criticism, utopian allegories of nations in fundamental cultural transformation, one that will finally allow those repressed voices to be heard. While Lu Xun created a literary form in which this primordial aspiration for "revolution" expressed itself in the context of a tumultuous post-Republican Revolution China, Kim Saryang and Long Yingzong, in intertextualizing this form in their works, recreated resembling forms in which this fundamental historical project strove to realize itself against the backdrop of the increasingly harsh Japanese

imperial rule in the era of the Second Sino-Japanese War. Lu Xun, in constellation with the Korean and Taiwanese colonial writes, is an “origin,” in the Benjaminian sense, of an utopian “idea” with which East Asian modernities were incessantly obsessed, the “idea” that engagement with modern Civilization, not so much through a simple introduction of the Western (or Japanese imperial) institutions, but through the sustained self-reflective criticism of their traditional cultural institutions, will engender a radically new culture.

My examination of the intertextualizations of Lu Xun’s short stories in the late-colonial works of Kim Saryang and Long Yingzong has illuminated a hitherto under-discussed *transcolonial* dimension of the intra-imperial literary communication. For those colonial writers who grappled with the imperial cultural integration, which the imperialists fostered by abusively resurrecting the memories of the trans-regional cultural tradition, particularly its Confucian variation, and forging a so-called “Great East Asian” cultural identity, Lu Xun’s modernist texts, which had precisely been built upon a painstaking and self-reflective criticism of the Chinese cultural tradition, were read as *transnational allegories*. Existing not only as an “origin” in the modern Chinese literary history, but also in a transnational history of modern literature in East Asia, Lu Xun’s work offers us a deeper historical perspective from which we can rewrite a literary history of modern East Asia.

General Conclusion

At the turn of the twenty-first century, the civilizational discourse inspires many aspects of the Chinese humanities: critical, literary, cinematic, and popular cultural practices frequently evoke the epic imagery of the rebirth of the universalist Chinese civilization. Concurrently, the regional civilizational tradition in East Asia also inspires contemporary Japanese, Korean, and Taiwanese critics, artists, and other cultural figures who increasingly articulate their creative practices within “East Asian,” rather than national, contexts. These phenomena are further echoed by overseas Chinese intellectuals who coin new critical concepts — such as “cultural China” and “Sinophone”⁵¹⁶ — to reimagine their Chinese identities beyond the boundaries of a particular nation. This defining pattern of contemporary Chinese and East Asian cultures bespeaks a hitherto under-discussed dimension of cultural modernities in East Asia: *civilizational imagination*. From this contemporary perspective, researchers are urged to revisit and reexamine the century-long history of modern East Asian cultures not as national processes, but rather, as a civilizational history.

In this dissertation, I have attempted, in examining modern literatures in China, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan in the late-nineteenth to the early-twentieth centuries, to highlight mutually-interrelated contexts within which those literatures were practiced, ones that involved not only Western civilization and national traditions, but also these

⁵¹⁶ See: Tu Weiming, “Cultural China: The Periphery as the Center”; Shumei Shi, *Visuality and Identity: Sinophone Articulations across the Pacific*; David Der-wei Wang and Jing Tsu eds., *Global Chinese Literature: Critical Essays*; Shu-mei Shih, et al. eds. *Sinophone Studies: A Critical Reader*; E. K. Tan, *Rethinking Chineseness: Translational Sinophone Identities in the Nanyang Literary World*.

countries' tightly interrelated cultural traditions. Rather than confining literary texts of modern East Asia to each national context as conventional approaches do, I have considered them from a trans-regional comparative perspective, thereby arguing that East Asian writers, while avidly transculturating Western discourse, extensively engaged with the trans-regional tradition of East Asian letters in heterogeneous ways in their production of modern literature. I claim that afterlives of the region's civilizational tradition constitute a critical, though thus far under-studied, agency in the creation of literary modernities in East Asia.

In Chapter One, I examined Liang Qichao's interrupted translation of Shiba Shirō's political novel *Kajin no kigū*, and considered how the region's transnational cultural tradition engendered their translational relationship, and their mutually-representing imaginations of national subjectivity as moral and aesthetic exemplarity. Chapter Two explored how such imagination was practiced in Sin Ch'aeho's literary biographies and further pursued in his fantastic story. While deconstructing the authority of sinocentric historiography by radically reinterpreting it, Sin nevertheless drew upon the regional universality of the cultural tradition to envision a universal significance of Korean national subjectivity as exemplarity. In Chapters Three and Four, I focused on Lu Xun, Yi Kwangsu, and Natsume Sōseki, three of the founding fathers of modern literature in China, Korea, and Japan, respectively. These modernist writers, on the flip side of founding their literary endeavor upon Western aesthetics, suppressed the transnational tradition of East Asian letters. Despite this, these writers, in their creative and critical works, evoked memories of these countries' intertwined cultural traditions in projecting, through self-criticism, imaginations of new morality, thereby envisaging new

cultures as a critique of modern civilization. Chapter Five was an examination of Zhou Zuoren's controversial work in semicolonial China during the 1930s and 40s. In Zhou, the aesthetic construction of cultural identity, owing to the tightly interrelated cultural traditions of China and Japan, crossed political national boundaries, creating a regional cultural imagination. By staunchly practicing his radical aesthetics, Zhou's wartime discourse undercut conditions for cultural imperialization. Finally in Chapter Six, I explored late-colonial Korean and Taiwanese literature by focusing on the intertextualizations of Lu Xun's early short stories in the works of Kim Saryang and Long Yingzong. Lu Xun's modernist endeavor that sought to self-critically overcome the universalist tradition of Chinese civilization inspired Kim Saryang and Long Yingzong to envision, equally as self-criticism, new cultures for their nations with transcolonial imaginations, thereby undermining cultural imperialization.

One may question: Since modern literature in East Asia has already been institutionalized as national endeavors and integrated into "the world republic of letters" as such, what is the point of revisiting its engagement with the already dead trans-regional cultural tradition? I argue that such an approach is crucial, because, as I have demonstrated in this dissertation, East Asian writers continued to engage extensively with the regional civilizational tradition in their creation of modern literature. This perspective calls upon us to reexamine the overdetermined constructs of literary and cultural identities in East Asia beyond classical national frameworks. Beyond East Asia, moreover, exploring the workings of such regional civilizational traditions in the production of modern literatures in other parts of the globe must be integral to our understanding of diverse formations of literary and cultural identities in the modern world.

Comparing the cases of East Asia and other regions of the world, then, might contribute to writing a new history of world literature, with a new historicity. Through its revisiting of the modern afterlives of the regional cultural tradition in East Asian letters, this dissertation hopes to make a contribution to this new direction of literary studies in general.

In more particular ways, this dissertation hopes to contribute, from a critical perspective of comparative literature, to the recent “return” of civilizational imagination in the contemporary East Asian humanities. In China, thinkers are recently eagerly reexamining an array of critical concepts based on ideas in traditional sociopolitical thought as potential intellectual resources for critiquing modern civilization. Those ideas include “*xin tianxia zhuyi* 新天下主義” (the new discourse of all-under-heaven),⁵¹⁷ “*chaogong tixi* 朝貢體系” (tributary system),⁵¹⁸ “*tong santong* 通三統” (unification of the three orthodoxies),⁵¹⁹ and “*wangba* 王霸” (kingly hegemony).⁵²⁰ One may pair these explorations with the remarkable revival of Confucianism in Chinese popular culture in the recent decades.⁵²¹ Broadly in the region, intellectuals are discussing particularly in the

⁵¹⁷ The debates over the contemporary relevance of the concept of “*tianxia*” were initiated by the publication of Zhao Tingyang’s *Tianxia tixi: Shijie zhidu zhexue daolun*, in 2005, and since then thinkers including Xu Jilin 許紀霖, Gan Chunsong 干春松, and Ge Zhaoguang 葛兆光 have published on this topic. For a critique of these recent debates, see: Takahiro Nakajima, “Chinese Universality in and after Tang Junyi.”

⁵¹⁸ Wang Hui, “Yazhou xiangxiang de zhengzhi 亞洲想像的政治,” in *Qu zhengzhi hua de zhengzhi*.

⁵¹⁹ Gan Yang, *Tong san tong*. The three orthodoxies mean the Confucian, Maoist, and Deng Xiaoping orthodoxies.

⁵²⁰ Yan Xuetong and Xu Jin, *Wangba tianxia sixiang ji qidi*.

⁵²¹ The opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics, codirected by the filmmaker Zhang Yimou 張藝謀, highlighted the Confucian ideal of “*he* 和” (harmony); the biopic of Confucius *Kongzi* 孔子 (Confucius, dir. Hu Mei 胡玫, 2010) became a box office hit. While branches of Confucian Academy (*Kongzi xueyuan* 孔子學院) are being established all over the world, Confucian temples throughout the country are restoring

past ten years critical potentials of the category and concept of “East Asia” in grappling with the globalizing world.⁵²² The contemporary East Asian discourses of civilization echo intellectual endeavors worldwide at reconstituting certain universal values beyond postmodern relativism; works by Charles Taylor,⁵²³ the late Jacques Derrida,⁵²⁴ Jean-Luc Nancy,⁵²⁵ and Tariq Ramadan,⁵²⁶ for example, belong to this international trend. The East Asian humanities are wrestling with the critical questions of how resources of the region’s civilizational tradition can contribute to this global discussion on universal human value, and help promote humanistic interventions into the civilizational problems that we all face today — from the planetary environment and global capitalism, to the abuse of technology and apparently intractable regional conflicts.

The trans-East Asian comparative approach allows us to consider cultural modernities in East Asia in historically-conditioned mutual relationship, rather than as individual national processes; examining cultural practices in modern East Asia through this approach may provide us with necessary concepts and methodological insights for

archaic rituals, and Yu Dan’s 于丹 televised series of lectures on Confucian thought gained sensational popularity.

⁵²² See, for example: Sun Ge, *Ajia wo kataru koto no jirenma: chi no kyōdō kūkan wo motomete*; Paek Yōngsō, *Haeksim hyōnjang esō Tong Asia rül tasi mutta: kongsaeng sahoe rül wihan silch’ōn kwaje*; Ch’oe Wōnsik, *Cheguk ihu ūi Tong Asia*; Ch’oe Wōnsik, *Munhak ūi kwihwan: Ch’oe Wōnsik p’yōngnonjip*; Kuan-Hsing Chen, *Asia as Method: Toward Deimperialization*.

⁵²³ Charles Taylor considers the meaning of being Catholic in Western modernity. See: Charles Taylor, *A Catholic Modernity?* See also: Robert Bellah, *Shūkyō to gurōbaru shimin shakai: Robāto Berā tonō taiwa*.

⁵²⁴ Jacques Derrida, referring to Heidegger, introduces the ambiguous concept of “a God” (with an indefinite article) to support certain universal values for realizing a “universal democracy.” See: Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*.

⁵²⁵ Jean-Luc Nancy affirms relevance of Christianity in the contemporary world by deconstructing aspects of this religion. See: Jean-Luc Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure: The Deconstruction of Christianity*.

⁵²⁶ Tariq Ramadan calls for a “radical reform” of Islamic thought as a means to contribute its intellectual resources to resolving challenges of the contemporary world. See: Tariq Ramadan, *Radical Reform: Islamic Ethics and Liberation*.

making critical contribution to contemporary civilizational imagination in East Asia beyond national frameworks, which are what, above all, this imagination first and foremost critiques.

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