

CLAIMING COLONIAL MASCULINITY: SEX AND ROMANCE WITH JAPANESE WOMEN IN CH'AE MANSIK'S COLONIAL FICTION

By KIM SU YUN

This article explores the representation of erotic desire and romance in the works of one of the most influential authors of colonial Korea, Ch'ae Mansik (1902–50), focusing on his short story “Kwadogi” (Transition, 1923) and his novella *Naengdongŏ* (*Frozen Fish*, 1940), which revolve around heterosexual intimacy between Koreans and Japanese. It investigates the intersectionality of race, gender, and sexuality in colonial-period literature, in particular, how Ch'ae fits Korean masculinity into the colonial hierarchy as regards encountering Japanese women in their private spaces. The article suggests that the anxiety of colonized male elites in intimate relationships with colonizer women manifests the tension between making a Japanese woman on the one hand an object of erotic desire and on the other hand a respectable lady. In managing this tension, the colonized male figures attempt to elevate their position in the hierarchy of the Japanese Empire. It also suggests that Ch'ae produces the image of a Japanese woman as both the symbol of Japanese femininity and imperialism—an alternative womanhood that supports both colonized men and the Japanese imperialist project, submissive to both patriarchies. In this way, I argue, the male writers were not colonized

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subjects in crisis, as they have often been described in literary scholarship, but active participants and agents of Japanese and global imperialism.

Keywords: Ch'ae Mansik, romance, colonial intimacy, colonial masculinity, Japanese femininity, Japanese imperialism.

KOREAN-JAPANESE INTERMARRIAGE AND ITS EFFECT

You see, I'm going to take a young lady from the mainland for my wife. My boss said he'd take care of everything—he'll pick out a nice, well-behaved one and fix me up with her. Women from the mainland sure are well.

Me, I wouldn't take a Chosŏn woman if you gave me one.

The old-fashioned ones, even though they're proper, are ignorant, so they can't help me make friends with mainland people. And the modern ones are all full of themselves just because they've had some schooling, so they won't do. So, old-fashioned, modern, doesn't matter—when it comes to Chosŏn women, forget it!

Japanese women are the best. Every one of them is pretty, proper, tender, and even the ones that aren't ignorant are modest. How lovely they are!

A wife from the mainland—that's only for the start. I'll change my name to mainland style, same with house, clothes, food, I'll give my children Japanese names and send them to a Japanese school here.

Japanese schools, they're the thing. Chosŏn schools are dirty—just perfect for turning out rotten kids.

And I'll say goodbye to the Chosŏn language and use only the national language.

Because once I've taken up mainland manners, I will be able to put together a lot of money, just like a mainland man.

— *Ch'ae Mansik*, "My Innocent Uncle" (1938)¹

Ch'ae Mansik's (1902–50) short story "My Innocent Uncle" (Ch'isuk, 1938) makes a daring statement about the desirability of Japanese women. By way of criticizing his uncle, the narrator, a young nephew, empathizes with his uncle's wife, who is going through hardship due to her husband's unemployment, and suddenly declares that he will marry a Japanese woman with the help of his Japanese boss. His views on the conjugal relationship as an important factor for opening doors

¹ Ch'ae Mansik [Ch'ae Mansik], "My Innocent Uncle" [Ch'isuk], *Modern Korean Fiction: an Anthology*, edited by Bruce Fulton and Youngmin Kwon, translated by Bruce Fulton (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005): 95–111. Originally published in *Tonga ilbo*, March 7–14. "Chosŏn" refers to Korea and "mainland" refers to Japan. I made minor revisions to all the cited translations in this article.

to Japanese communities that would lead him to wealth and power mirror the understanding of social hierarchies among the different communities in the colony: colonized, settlers, and colonial bureaucrats. For the nephew, who only has the limited options available to a colonized man, marrying into the Japanese community would be a good choice, as even his uncle with an elite university education—a rare prestige at the time—is incapable of holding a steady job. Intermarriage was also sanctioned by the Japanese authorities as one of their campaign slogans in the late stage of the wartime colonial period, which is the background of the story.

While parroting the colonial ideology of intermarriage and assimilation—such as speaking only the Japanese language, living in a Japanese-style house, having Japanese-style food—the nephew asserts his masculinity by highlighting the femininity of Japanese women, which allows him to keep the upper hand in the patriarchal family order. Japanese women were not only trophies for Korean men, but they also offered an “ideal” femininity that could be an alternative to that of Korean women: “Japanese women are the best. Every one of them is pretty, proper, tender, and even the ones that aren’t ignorant are modest. How lovely they are!” These characteristics attributed to Japanese women are indications of manageability—that is, colonized Korean men can still have patriarchal power over them. The story, however, reveals in the end that the nephew’s imaginative mobility through intermarriage is unrealistic. This also involves a play with the story’s title: although the nephew calls his uncle an “idiot” (*ch’isuk*), the nephew is the idiot in the end. Author Ch’ae tells the readers there is no guarantee that having an ideal Japanese woman can bring the young man the success that Japanese settlers in his colonized nation would enjoy.

This short episode unveils many layers of Korean men’s anxieties about race, gender, and sexuality under the Japanese colonial social order. In “My Innocent Uncle,” a colonized man’s masculinity is threatened despite his prestigious education, and the alternative is to comply with assimilation and intermarriage with a Japanese woman. A colonized man did not have a naturally fixed position or masculinity in the colonial hierarchy, but he had to continuously defend and reclaim his place. The clash of race and gender creates a complicated space of tensions that constantly cross social boundaries of prescribed race and gender notions in the colonies. Ann Laura Stoler articulates in her *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power* that in Dutch-colonized Indonesia, when intimate and sexual relationships between colonizers and colonized proliferated in the colonies, the prescribed race and gender boundaries were challenged, and people in the colonies had to defend their identities in various public and private spaces. The European settlers faced challenges of their racial identity when they lived in

communities of mixed conjugal and sexual arrangements and mixed-blood descendants. In the European settler communities where mixed relationships with indigenous women were prevalent, being categorized as “European” was based not only on skin color “but on tenuously balanced assessments of who was judged to act with reason, affective appropriateness, and a sense of morality.” Further reaching out to the private spheres, Stoler explains “how people conducted their private lives,” for example, “with whom they cohabited, where they lived, what they ate, how they raised their children, what language they chose to speak to servants and family at home” became a factor for determining European “respectability” as colonialists.² The settlers—racially white European people—had to attain and maintain their respectability, through their performance of everyday life, since it did not come naturally to them merely by being a member of the colonizing race.³

British colonialism in India had a similar experience of hybridity and respectability. Durba Ghosh shows that, in the late eighteenth century, preexisting interracial cohabitation between British white men and indigenous Indian women confronted new restrictions imposed on this interracial practice by the East Indian Company and British military. High-level officials were discouraged from keeping Indian female companions, and low-level soldiers and employees of the East Indian Company were encouraged to turn to prostitutes rather than form a long-term cohabitation that could lead to conjugality. Furthermore, prohibitions were imposed on admitting mixed-race subjects to the civil service and to the military, changing the fate of mixed-blood descendants. Once the East Indian Company and its military began to eliminate interracial conjugality in their communities and stopped the hiring of mixed blood people, changes of privileges and racial hierarchies brought anxieties about interracial sexual relationships to the forefront of colonial policies.⁴ The two examples of European colonialism in Southeast Asia and South Asia remind us that the question of “hybridity, both cultural and racial, that destabilized the homogeneities of the colonial social order” was “a crucial element in discussing anxieties about race, sexuality, and family.”⁵

² Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 1–21.

³ Ann Laura Stoler, “Making Empire Respectable: The Politics of Race and Sexual Morality in 20th-century Colonial Cultures,” *American Ethnologist* 16, no. 4 (1989): 634–60. I borrow the term “respectability” from previous colonialism studies that discuss settler communities and their positions in the colony.

⁴ Durba Ghosh, *Sex and the Family in Colonial India: The Making of Empire* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 8–9.

⁵ Ghosh, 14.

In the context of colonial Korea, the policy promoting colonial hybridity was of the nature of a top-down control throughout the colonial period, differing from the European cases, where the authorities and institutions intervened after witnessing massive and visible hybridity in their settler communities. The ideology encouraging hybridity was also different. The Government-General of Korea (GGK) officially promoted intermarriage between Koreans and Japanese toward the end of the colonial period within the wartime mobilization movements organized under the banner of “Japan and Korea as One Unity” (K. *naesŏn ilch’e*, J. *naisen ittai*), starting from the tenure of Governor-General Minami Jirō (August 1936 to May 1942). The promotion of Korean-Japanese intermarriage was in coordination with other campaigns and policies, such as the use of Japanese as the national language, the changing of names to the Japanese style, the practice of the Shinto religion, and the military and labor recruitment and conscription of Korean males, but intermarriage had never been forcefully imposed on Koreans like other campaigns and policies. It was promoted as an ideal image. This image of intermarriage as a type of model assimilation for Koreans, however, existed from the beginning of colonial rule. The GGK’s intermarriage campaign as a top-down policy crystallized the existing idea of making Koreans more like Japanese through marriage and family relationships while reemphasizing the importance of the family unit and hence making Koreans into more loyal and reliable imperial subjects ready for war mobilization.⁶

The GGK’s official promotion of intermarriage did not mean that they fully supported intermarriage. Records in the archives show that the GGK did not invest their full resources into the promotion of intermarriage, given the slowness of the amending laws that allowed Koreans and Japanese to register their marriages in their family registry (*hojŏk*)—a necessary process in both Korea and Japan—, loopholes in the census of intermarried couples, and the lack of counting measures for temporary concubinage or cohabitation. Even government officials and national elites in both Korea and Japan voiced their opposition to intermarriage in the news media from time to time, but these opinions were marginal.⁷ However, at the beginning of the wartime period, from the late 1930s, an awareness of colonial hybridity increased among the authorities, when many

⁶ For the details on the Korean military conscription in the Japanese Empire, see Takashi Fujitani, *Race for Empire: Koreans as Japanese and Japanese as Americans during World War II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), chapter 1 and 2.

⁷ For the development of the discourse on intermarriage during the colonial period, see Su Yun Kim, “Romancing Race and Gender: Intermarriage and the Making of a ‘Modern Subjectivity’ in Colonial Korea, 1910–1945” (Ph.D. diss., University of California San Diego, 2009). For legal changes regarding intermarriage, see Yi Chŏngsŏn, *Tonghwa wa paeje: Ilche ūi tonghwa chŏngch’aek kwa naesŏn kyŏrhon* (Seoul: Yŏksa pip’yŏngsa, 2017).

Korean men voluntarily or involuntarily migrated to Japan and engaged in various sexual arrangements with Japanese women—from legal marriage to temporary cohabitation or occasional prostitution—and media started circulating census charts of intermarriage numbers.⁸

Only a small number of literary works from the colonial period dealt with intimate relationships between Koreans and Japanese, and they were mostly produced in the wartime period. Nevertheless, these texts were authored by the most important and prominent contemporary writers. The fact that celebrated male writers published stories about Korean-Japanese intimacy shows that the intermarriage discourse had a strong impact on society and the imagination of Korean-Japanese relationships. This limited number of literary works offers rich and multilayered portrayals of these writers' understanding of race, gender, and sexuality under the regime of colonialism, imperialism, and global modernity. Recently, discussions of well-known authors have brought new attention to fictions about Korean-Japanese intimate and sexual relationships, written by authors like Yi Hyosök, Yi Kwangsu, Kim Saryang, and Ch'öng Int'aek, to name a few.⁹ These authors explored the conflicts intermarriage caused within Korean families, and they also often integrated references to state-ideology or the propaganda slogans of the Japanese Empire.¹⁰

Ch'ae Mansik (1902–50), one of the most influential modern fiction writers and public intellectuals, produced several fictional works, published and unpublished, that featured Korean male characters romantically and sexually involved with Japanese females. These works stand out as portrayals of the ambivalence of colonial masculinity in face of the equally ambivalent position of

⁸ Several newspapers and magazines from 1939 onward published tables on the number of intermarried couples. The numbers were not high, mostly because they were not captured well, but the visibility of the census tables as scientific evidence to the readers was important in the public discourse. See Su Yun Kim (2009), chapter 1.

⁹ Some examples are Yi Kwangsu's unfinished novels, "Kokoro aifurete koso" (When hearts truly meet, 1940) and "Küdül üi sarang" (Their love, 1941), which focus on family adoption and communal relationships rather than on romantic relationships. Kim Saryang's "Hikari no naka ni" (Into the light, 1939) focuses on a mixed-blood child's predicaments, whereas Ch'öng Int'aek's "Kara" (The shell, 1942) depicts the generational confrontation that arises when Korean parents do not want to accept their Japanese daughter-in-law.

¹⁰ Yi Sanggyöng, "Ilche malgi sosöl e nat'an an 'naesön kyörhon' üi ch'üngwi," in *Ch'inil munhak üi naechök nollü*, eds. Kim Chaeyong, et al. (Seoul: Yöngnak, 2003), 117–52; Vladimir M. Tikhonov, *Modern Korea and Its Others: Perceptions of the Neighbouring Countries and Korean Modernity* (Routledge Advances in Korean Studies, 2016); Nan Bujin [Nam Pujin], *Bungaku no shokuminchisbugi: Kindai Chösen no fukei to kioku* (Tökyö: Seikai Sihosha, 2005). For a discussion of "Into the Light," see Christina Yi, "National Language, Imperialization, and the Gendered Aporia of Empire," *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 24, no. 4 (2016): 813–37.

Japanese women in the Japanese Empire. Ch'ae's short story "Kwadogi" (Transition, 1923) and novella, *Naengdonŏ* (*Frozen Fish*, 1940) in particular focus on romance (K. *yŏnae*, J. *ren'ai*) between Koreans and Japanese. These works dramatize their characters' erotic desire and life in various sexual arrangements as well as the (im)possibility of conjugality, an issue that lies at the heart of their plot. Ch'ae's stories mostly stay away from predictable ideological narratives and, on the surface, focus on the lust and desire between a man and a woman. At the same time, they stress the predicaments of colonial sexuality and possible ways for colonial masculinity to advance its position in the empire. This article investigates how Ch'ae places Korean masculinity into the colonial hierarchy by staging the encounter of male protagonists with Japanese women in their private spaces. It suggests that the anxiety of colonized male elites in intimate relationships with colonizer women manifests the tension between making a Japanese woman on the one hand an object of the erotic gaze and on the other hand a respectable lady. This tension rises because a colonized man cannot plainly objectify a colonizer woman as a sexual toy but instead needs to balance her status by also emphasizing her socially valuable side. In managing this tension, the colonized men attempt to elevate their own position in the hierarchy of the Japanese Empire. My study also suggests that Ch'ae produces an image of Japanese womanhood that serves as the symbol of both Japanese femininity and imperialism—an alternative womanhood that supports both colonized men and Japanese imperialism. In this way, I argue that male writers like Ch'ae were not colonized subjects in crisis, as they have often been described in literary scholarship, but active participants and agents of Japanese and global imperialism.

EROTIC DESIRE AND JAPANESE WOMEN IN "TRANSITION"

Ch'ae Mansik was born in a rural area near Kunsan, a Northern Chŏlla port city that was famous for being a rice distribution center with affluent landlords. After attending a Japanese-style elementary school and studying classical Chinese at a local school (*sŏdang*), Ch'ae attended Waseda University's college preparatory school for less than one year, from 1922 to 1923.¹¹ Due to the Great Kanto Earthquake in 1923, Ch'ae never finished his studies in Tokyo, instead, he completed the story that would become famous as his first attempt at publication, "Transition."¹² His writing career truly started when he rejoined a newspaper and a magazine as a writer and editor in 1930.

¹¹ Waseda's Taiichi kōtōgakuin was equivalent to senior high school.

¹² The original manuscript has traces of censorship by the Japanese authorities and was not

Ch'ae is one of the most widely researched authors in Korean literature, especially as a writer of “realism.”¹³ Literary critics have valued his witty and sarcastic view on the colonial system, modernity, capitalism, and the struggle of colonial intellectuals in the chaotic influx of these new institutions and technologies. His narratives are celebrated as disavowals of colonial reality and as critiques of the colonial system and Korean subjects' lives as defined by colonial rule.¹⁴ They are also known for the authentic use of Ch'olla dialect in his dialogic scenes. He also uses various Japanese words in his dialogues.¹⁵ His works most fitting this description are also his most researched and popular texts, including “Redimeidū insaeng” (Ready Made Life, 1934), T'aep'yongch'ŏnha (*Peace under Heaven*, 1938), and “Ch'isuk” (My Innocent Uncle, 1938). On the other hand, “Transition” and the novella *Frozen Fish* (Naengdongŏ, 1940) are rarely discussed in academic scholarship. In fact, *Frozen Fish* and *Yŏinchŏn'gi* (Biography of a woman, 1944) have been mostly criticized as representative pro-Japanese (*ch'ini*) fictional works.¹⁶ Until the mid-1990s, collaboration history and Japanese-language publications of renowned Korean writers were suppressed from public discussion.¹⁷ Recent studies point out the lack of pro-Japanese enthusiasm in Ch'ae's so-called collaborationist writings and emphasize the relatively small

published during Ch'ae's lifetime. It was first published in the journal *Munhak sasang* [Literary thought] in 1973 over two issues and later collected in *Ch'ae Mansik chŏnjjip* [Complete works of Ch'ae Mansik], vol. 5 (Seoul: Ch'angjaksŏ, 1989). *Ch'ae Mansik ch'ŏnyŏjak: Kwadŏgi* [Ch'ae Mansik's first work, *Transition*], edited by Pang Minho (Seoul: Yeok, 2006), is an annotated reproduction of the original manuscript, including the censorship marks.

¹³ For Ch'ae Mansik's widely accepted role in Korean literary historiography, see Kim Yunsik and Chŏng Houng, *Han'guk sosŏlsa* (Seoul: Munhak tongne, 2000); Chŏng Houng, *Han'guk hyŏndae sosŏlsaron* (Seoul: Saemi, 1996); Kwŏn Yŏngmin, *Han'guk hyŏndaemunhak ūi ibae* (Seoul: T'aehaksa, 2010).

¹⁴ Kwŏn Yŏngmin, *ibid.*, 174.

¹⁵ For example, in “Transition” and *Frozen Fish*, some short phrases spoken by Japanese characters are written in Japanese in between Korean conversations.

¹⁶ Previous studies point out that Ch'ae Mansik's short story “Sanggyŏng panjŏlgi” [Half season of moving to the capital] (1939) was the first work where he added statements supporting Japanese imperialism. See Yu Sŏnghwan, “Naengdongŏ ūi kiho tŭl: 1940 nyŏndae Kyŏngsŏng ūi munhwajŏk kyŏngge,” *Minjok mubaksa yŏn'gu* (2012): 153–87, fn. 5, 182; Yi Kyŏnghun “Kŭndae chuch'e ūi chwajŏl kwa ch'ogŭk,” *Ch'ae Mansik munhak ūi chaeinsik* (Seoul: Somyŏng ch'ulp'ansa, 1999), 145–163; Kim Chaeyong, *Hyŏmnyŏk kwa chŏhang: Ijŏmal sabŏe wa munhwa* (Seoul: Somyŏng, 2004).

¹⁷ There are several reasons for this. One is that scholars avoided the topic because they did not want to label leading Korean writers as “collaborationists.” Presenting more information about these texts increased the risk of heightening their authors' previously unknown history of collaboration.

number of his collaborationist publications.¹⁸ In general, the reason for the low amount of pro-Japanese writings could be attributed to the fact that Ch'ae did not write any full fictional works in Japanese, at least not as far as extant in the archives.¹⁹ However, the resistance/collaboration binary remains prevalent in many recent studies, which are trapped in their attempt to rescue Ch'ae from his collaborationist past.

An analysis of “Transition” from the perspective of the intersection of race and gender has the potential to complicate conventional readings of Ch'ae's work. It can also show the struggle of colonized male elites facing colonial conditions that limit their chances of self-improvement and participation in a modernized lifestyle, as well as the challenges that come from intimate and sexual relationships with Japanese women. After moving to Tokyo, the Korean male characters in the story are open to new opportunities, including encounters with Japanese and Korean women, and find Korean tradition, marriage customs, and family relationships a source of distress. At the core of the narrative is a Korean-Japanese relationship, which epitomizes the tension between the erotic objectification of and creation of respectability in Japanese women. The story perhaps reflects Ch'ae's own biographical experience of living in Tokyo as a student and observing Korean friends in Tokyo in similar situations. Married at an early point in their lives, many Korean male students in Japan had to leave their wives back in Korea in their parental homes, but once in Tokyo they faced the lure of the Japanese metropolis, including casual sexual encounters in *yukwak* (entertainment and prostitution districts) and the acquaintance with New Women, both Korean and Japanese. Furthermore, the representation of Japanese women reflects particular images of Japanese femininity that were widely circulated in the print media in both Korea and Japan but did not necessarily mirror the reality of Japanese women in colonial Korea. On the contrary, the types of Korean femininity that appear in “Transition” are reductive, often representing a one-dimensional “modern” or “old” womanhood and thus catering to the needs of colonial men.

¹⁸ Kim Chiyōng “Chōhang esō hyōmnyōk ūro kanūn yōjōng, kŭ sai ūi kyunyōl: 1940 nyōndae ch'ogi Ch'ae Mansik ūi kŭlssūgi rŭl chungsim ūro” [A path from the resistance to collaboration, and rift on the way: Focusing on Ch'ae Mansik's 1940s writings], *Han'guk hyōndae munhak yōn'gu* 26 (2009): 391–417. According to Kim Chiyōng, most of Ch'ae's “collaborationist” writings are essays, and the above-mentioned two fictional works are the only ones supporting Japanese imperialism. She also argues that several short stories that Ch'ae published between 1940 and 1944 did not have any trace of “pro-Japanese” ideas.

¹⁹ This might be due to his rather short stay in Japan. He once confessed to his fellow writer, Chōng Int'aek, that he was not confident in writing letters in Japanese. Yu Sūnghwan (2012): 176, fn. 60.

“Transition” is mostly about the past and current amorous relationships of the three main male characters: Pong’u, Hyöngsik, and Chöngsu. These Korean men are studying at colleges in Tokyo, and the narrative of their love interests take place in Tokyo and in Korea. The story first introduces Pong’u and his relationship with his wife, her suicide, and then his new love interests. It subsequently moves to Hyöngsik, who encounters a Japanese college student, Munja (J. Fumiko), at his boarding house.²⁰ Pong’u and Hyöngsik move into Chöngsu’s rather spacious boarding house, and Munja joins them. Munja is at the true center of the story after the Pong’u’s episodes end. She is interested in satisfying her licentious desire. She first strives hard to seduce Hyöngsik, but he is rather hesitant to react to her advances. The men around Munja perceive her sexuality as unfamiliar and even mysterious but also as delightful in comparison to their Korean wives. She is “cute” and has a voluptuous, sensual “atmosphere” (209). Hyöngsik likes her physical sexual allure from the start. One night, under the bright moonlight, her breast shows through her thin nightgown, and he feels intolerable sexual desire. But Hyöngsik is married, and he resists having a sexual relationship with her.

Their moonlit talks continue for several nights without sexual intercourse, even after Munja openly seduces Hyöngsik, and finally, when she invites him to come under the covers of her futon, they have sex. Even after this event, Hyöngsik still reluctantly accepts her invitations, showing his unease with their arrangement. Munja in return does not seek marriage with Hyöngsik, saying that she would be satisfied just to be his lover out of fear of breaking up his marriage in Korea. After continuing their sexual arrangement for a while, they discuss the future and a possible marriage. Living abroad is an option: in South America, Namyang (Nanyo, the South Sea Islands), or even Africa, where they will not encounter “social discrimination” (224). It is unclear if this discrimination is due to racial difference or due to their non-conjugal relationship, but it is clear that Munja does not intend to break up Hyöngsik’s marriage but will remain a temporary concubine. Their far-fetched imagination of cosmopolitan adventures as a couple only indicates the unfitness of their union in their colonial conditions. Hyöngsik’s encounter with a Japanese woman from the metropole (Munja) reveals the limitations of a colonized man in the empire: she reminds him of his bind with his marriage and family back at home, and breaking the bind may cause backlashes to both of them. Furthermore, living in an exotic far-away place like South America or Africa is a romantic fantasy that cannot be realized.

²⁰ The story refers to her as Munja, the Korean reading of her Japanese name Fumiko. I here follow the author’s reading.

Once Munja moves into the shared boarding house, though, she quickly becomes interested in Chōngsu, an aspiring writer. Munja herself is a literature major, she has animated conversations with him about foreign literature and even shows enthusiasm for his writings. Munja does not feign innocence to Chōngsu. She actively shows her erotic desire for him and is disappointed when he does not make any physical advances toward her. Chōngsu, like Hyōngsik, has a wife in Korea by arranged marriage, but he is not happy about it. Meanwhile, Chōngsu also develops erotic desire for Munja, particularly after he had a peek at her half-naked body one night in the common area of the boarding house. When he realizes that he wants to strip her naked and kiss her (272), he abruptly decides to return to Korea.²¹ Chōngsu stops the relationship before it becomes sexual, and Munja is saved from the reputation of being a lewd woman who has slept with two men in the same house at the same time.

The narrative certainly does not frame all Japanese women as salacious figures. Yōngja (J. Eiko), a neighbor of Chōngsu's, is rather the opposite of Munja in revealing her sexuality, but she is also similar in putting forward her love interest to Korean men. Although the story does not clearly explain it, it implies that Chōngsu previously declined or ignored her multiple confessions of love; Yōngja's older brother, P'yōngya (J. Hirano), visits Chōngsu to ask him to take her in marriage, but Chōngsu maintains that he does not wish to remarry after his imminent divorce.²² Although asexual and passive, with her brother acting as a mediator, Yōngja is similar to Munja: both are up-front about their interest in Korean men. Yōngja's character is another portrayal of an alternative femininity.

"Transition" may never be Ch'ae Mansik's representative work because it was not published during his lifetime and is an incomplete text with censored and missing pages.²³ At times, it appears unpolished, structurally lacking the rigor that his other masterpieces have. Despite its availability in the widely referenced *Ch'ae Mansik chōnjip* (Complete works of Ch'ae Mansik)—the original censored manuscript has also been available for a decade—"Transition" is understudied and deserves further scrutiny for its significance in portraying intimate and sexual relationships of Korean men in the metropole and creating the image of a Japanese woman who is sexual, educated, and supportive of Korean patriarchy all

²¹ The part that Chōngsu shows his lust is censored.

²² P'yōngya (J. Hirano) should be the family name. Yōngja's brother is referred to by his family name, following the Japanese convention.

²³ This story is Ch'ae's first fictional work thus far in the archive. According to the editor of *Chōnjip*, the original manuscript has traces of censorship. Ch'ae had probably submitted the manuscript to a magazine and gone through the censorship process. However, it is not certain if Ch'ae gave up publishing the work due to the censorship or for other reasons.

at the same time. This image can be seen as foundational for the exploration of an alternative femininity in his later works.

MYSTERIOUS JAPANESE WOMAN IN *FROZEN FISH*

Another work by Ch'ae Mansik with Korean male and Japanese female romance as the main focus is *Frozen Fish* (1940). The novella was serialized in the literary journal *Inmun p'yŏngnon* in April and May 1940.²⁴ Korean-language journals continued to be published during the late colonial era, unlike Chinese-language journals in colonial Taiwan, and *Inmun p'yŏngnon* published literary works as well as creative and critical pieces in Korean from October 1939 to April 1941.²⁵ This novella was published at the peak of the wartime period, when the Korean peninsula was going through war mobilization. Ch'ae was still publishing his fiction and some essays during the peak of the war. His writings after 1935, however, witnessed some changes. Although Ch'ae's first attempt at fiction writing took place in 1923, he mostly worked as a journalist and editor in the 1920s and focused on fiction writing from 1930 onward. He briefly paused from publishing in 1935 due to his arrest for his involvement with the leftist artist organization KAPF (Korean Artists Proletarian Federation).²⁶ His imprisonment had an influence on his work: he published a couple of essays and gave lectures that supported the imperialist cause of the war. *Frozen Fish* displays Ch'ae's complex position as a colonial writer at the time of Japanese imperialism.

The novella features a main protagonist, Mun Taeyŏng (Daeyeong), who is a magazine editor and novelist undergoing a writing hiatus. At the center of the novella, however, is a mysterious Japanese lady named Sŭmik'o (J. Sumiko), who is visiting Seoul.²⁷ Like Munja in "Transition," Sŭmik'o has a strong interest in

²⁴ Originally published in *Inmun p'yŏngnon* [Humanities Critique] (April 1940), 100–76, and (May 1940), 138–81. For the Korean language text of *Frozen Fish*, I use *Ch'ae Mansik chŏnjip* [Complete works of Ch'ae Mansik], vol. 5 (Seoul: Ch'angjaksa, 1989), 367–468. For an English translation, see Ch'ae Man-sik, *Frozen Fish*, trans. Myles Ji (2013) (electronic source). I use the English translation for long quotes and add E in front of the page number for reference. All quoted English translations are modified by me. I add K for the Korean language text as well.

²⁵ The Korean language literary journal *Inmun p'yŏngnon* turned into the Korean-Japanese bilingual literary journal *Kungmin munhak* [J. Kokumin bungaku] in 1941. The term "kungmin" [J. *kokumin*] was indicative of the imperialization of Korean writers.

²⁶ Ch'ae is considered as being one of the "fellow travelers" or *tongban chakka*, group of writers who did not join the KAPF movement but were sympathetic to socialism. For a discussion of a broader leftist writing culture, see Sunyoung Park, *The Proletarian Wave: Literature and Leftist Culture in Colonial Korea, 1910–1945*. (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2015).

²⁷ I follow the Korean Romanization of Sumiko. In "Transition," Japanese names were written in

Korean men and culture. Sümik'ŏ has also an amicable character, fitting well in in all Korean everyday life and even assimilating to Korean culture. She is no threat to any Korean conjugal relationship and is in search of intellectual and sexual companionship. Her relationship with the Korean man Taeyöng makes her position rather precarious. She brings herself in the liminal space of being defined as a *keisaeng*—a low-class sexualized female—and simultaneously as a respectable lady, with her educational background and perhaps her imperialist ideals. As a single woman traveling the colony, Sümik'ŏ is perceived as a low-class migrant at times, but after undergoing Koreanization—a racialized process—rather unsuccessfully, she proves herself as a true imperialist at the end by heading to Manchukuo, where the Japanese Empire realized its expansionist project.²⁸ By joining the imperialist project, Sümik'ŏ proves to be “a daughter of the Emperor,” simultaneously gaining respectability as a colonizer woman in the colony.²⁹ By negating through Sümik'ŏ, Taeyöng is a respected colonial elite male, but his position is unpredictable when he is involved with Sümik'ŏ; he therefore tries to prove his masculinity and his higher position through denial and confirmation. The encounter of colonizer and colonized opens unstable possibilities in the colonial hierarchy as they can both cross the usual prescribed racial and gender boundaries.

Frozen Fish portrays an unsuccessful romance between a Japanese woman and a Korean novelist/journalist against the backdrop of Seoul's various modern spaces, including a publishing house, film studios, cafés, and department stores.³⁰ The relationship between Taeyöng and Sümik'ŏ lasts only for several days. With Sümik'ŏ's mysterious background, the narrative focuses on her femininity and sexuality in a way that is unique in colonial literature. Sümik'ŏ's body is presented through the male gaze in a detailed and lustful way. Sümik'ŏ is introduced in the story through two layers of gaze: the narrator's and the protagonist's. The narrator and protagonist's gazes can be easily read as one person's gaze because they often overlap. The following scene describes Sümik'ŏ sitting in the editorial office of the magazine *Spring and Fall* (*Ch'unch'u*); the narrator pays attention to her allure:

Korean pronunciation but here, a Japanese name appears with Japanese pronunciation.

²⁸ By “racialization,” I mean the process of constructing and defining one's racial identity as a series of universal characteristics ascribed to one race. Sümik'ŏ, for example, is constructed as a Japanese woman, but in her attempt to become Korean, she fails miserably, proving once again that she is fully Japanese. Also see Jin-kyung Lee, “Performative Ethnicities: Class and Culture in 1930s Colonial Korea,” *Seoul Journal of Korean Studies* 19, no. 1 (2006): 91–126.

²⁹ See Helen J. S. Lee, “Dying as a Daughter of the Empire,” *Positions* 21, no. 1 (2013): 73–93.

³⁰ The ending, in which the Japanese woman leaves the Korean male protagonist, is similar to stories by other colonial period writers; see Su Yun Kim, “Racialization and Colonial Space: Inter-marriage in Yi Hyo-sök's Works,” *The Journal of Korean Studies* 18, no. 1 (2013): 29–59.

Her hair flowed down in thick waves from beneath her jaunty beret, and her jet-black fur coat shone lustrously, its wide collar revealing only a small glimpse of the *white* nape of her neck behind her ear. Without even realizing it, *Taeyöng's gaze* came to rest quietly on that spot. Her forehead is high and open, resembling that of a handsome man, and there is a particularly *feminine charm* in the way one's gaze softly melts into the smooth *white skin* of this woman's neck. (*Frozen Fish*, E 5; italics and emphasis are mine.)

The description follows the narrator's gaze as it scans Sümik'o from the top of her hat to her neck and stops at the exposed area of her body. Here, the narrator acknowledges that Taeyöng's gaze is fixed on Sümik'o's neck, thus indicating that it overlaps with his own view: "Without even realizing it, *Taeyöng's gaze* came to rest quietly on that spot." The text accentuates Sümik'o's neck with expressions such as "the white nape of [her] neck," "fair nape of [her] neck," and her "fair neck line" (*koün maktölmī*, K382). The epithets "white" and "fair" are used to exemplify Sümik'o's erotic attractiveness, and they sexualize her body as an object. Taeyöng initially indicates that he is not interested in her, like a well-behaved gentleman. However, the narrator's gaze here also overlaps with Taeyöng's. Both gazes become a single unit and the denial is therefore not convincing.

After this scene of body-browsing, the story shifts to a retrospective of the previous day when they met for the first time. Up to this point, readers do not know why this Japanese woman is sitting in Taeyöng's office. A film producer called Kim Chongho, an acquaintance of Taeyöng's, introduced Sümik'o to him as a woman who had just come from Tokyo and who would appear in Kim's upcoming film, *Weep Not, Youth!* Taeyöng is under the impression that Sümik'o is beautiful enough to be a movie actress but at the same time he imagines that she must be more than just an aspiring actress. He becomes fixated on finding out more about her while he continuously claims not to have any interest in her. Later, he suspects that she is a third-rate actress or someone's mistress (K370), but he is aware that she exudes a certain "rational light," which gives her the attributes of an educated new woman (K372); wearing a lavish fur coat and diamond ring (K371), she even looks "noble" (K372).³¹ This hint of a certain level of elegance and intellect triggers further curiosity in him about her past. In other words, Sümik'o does not seem to fit the category of young Japanese women migrating to Seoul to work in the entertainment and the service industry—such as cafes, bars,

³¹ We can see this contemporary stereotype of a leading actress being a mistress of powerful men in the entertainment companies in the movie *Pando üi pom* 半島の春 (J. Hantō no haru, *Spring in the Korean Peninsula*, dir. Yi Pyöng-il, 1941).

and brothel-type restaurants—or to be a local concubine for Japanese upper-class migrants, at a time when women had limited opportunities for work and travel.³² Taeyōng simply cannot “catch” her identity (K374) with his understanding of the usual Japanese migration pattern.

During Sūmik’o’s second visit to his office, Taeyōng continues to inquisitively gaze at her, attempting to discover her “feminine charm.” Taeyōng’s denial and confirmation of his lust toward Sūmik’o frames her as a skillful seductress and Taeyōng as a sexually unversed but intellectually accomplished scholar. The narrator compares the pair with the story of the famous Chosŏn Dynasty era *kisaeng* (courtesan), Hwang Jini, and the aged scholar Hwadam (Sŏ Kyōngdŏk):

Just as Hwa-dam [Hwadam]’s solemnity could not hold when he saw Hwang Jini [Chini] dancing in her wet body in semi-nudity. And just like that, decades of training were instantly reduced to nothing but the thigh of a country maid washing clothes, no normal, secular man could remain completely indifferent, like a block of wood, to the simple feminine charms of a woman—unless the man is a cripple or hunched and withered with age, or the woman is a heinous monster or a toothless hag. Even if that interest is deep and subtle, it is an inviolable biological destiny.

Dae-yeong [Taeyōng] was barely over thirty and still young. Although he had a family, he was neither a beardless cripple nor an abstemious prude, and so he did not diverge one bit from the standard of “all men.” (E 20–21)

The above passage refers to a famous *yasa* (unofficial history) about the respected scholar, “Hwa-dam” (a.k.a. Sŏ Kyōngdŏk 1489–1546), who was seduced by Hwang Jini’s openly exhibited charms.³³ It implies that, in accordance to the standard applying to “all men,” since Taeyōng is neither “crippled” nor

³² See Song Hyekyōng, “Ilche kangjōnggi chaejo Ilbonin yōsōng ūi wisang kwa singmin chuū” [Japanese women’s status and colonialism during Japanese rule in Korea], *Ilbon sasang*, vol. 33. (2017): 137–161. For the venerability of female Japanese colonial setters, see also Helen J. S. Lee (2013).

³³ For “scholar and beauty” (C. *caizi jiaren* 才子佳人) studies, see Han Ūisung, “Chosŏn hugi chaejagain sosŏl kwallyŏn nonūi ūi pip’anjŏk kŏmt’owa chŏn’gae yangsang e taehan siron” [Critical review and study on the scholar-beauty novel in the late Chosŏn era], *Inmun kwabak yŏn’gu* 38, (2013): 31–52. Another similarity to the “scholar and beauty” genre is that, in the common narrative about Sŏ Kyōngdŏk and Hwang Chini, Sŏ does not succumb to Hwang’s seduction, and Hwang, impressed by his morality, respects him as her literary teacher for the rest of her life. These so-called “unofficial histories” (*yasa*) about historical figures were a very popular genre. Hwang Chini’s story was included in a collection of various *yasa*, *Yŏllyŏsil kisu* [Stories by Yŏllyŏsil] by Yi Kūnggi (1736–1806).

“hunched,” he can respond to Sŭmik’o’s charms, as if she were actively seducing him. Surely, Taeyŏng soon shows his compulsive desire to kiss her lips or touch her hands. The story also presents Sŭmik’o like a *kisaeng*, a sexually available beauty, and Taeyŏng as a seduced scholar, similar to the conventions of the “scholar-beauty novel” genre.³⁴ Moreover, her status as a traveler and foreign woman is emphasized when she is characterized as “outgoing” and lonely among “strangers,” or as an “active wanderer” who puts her body in a foreign land (“t’aji”) (K381). These attributes imply that she is more sexually available than local women, making her more attainable to Taeyŏng (E21). All this contributes to legitimizing Taeyŏng’s sexual gaze and subsequent actions in seeking her companionship.

Sŭmik’o’s mysterious background is explained soon. Her elegant demeanor derives from her experience with socialism and her college education, which give her intellectual credit and put her above the status that Taeyŏng has speculatively given her before. After Sŭmik’o’s second visit to Taeyŏng’s office, Taeyŏng and Sŭmik’o end up in her apartment, and she fully opens up to him about her past life and her reasons for moving to Seoul. She had a socialist lover and eloped to Tokyo, only to return to her family after going through poverty. Afterward, she went to college, but she did not give up her interest in socialism. When her father tried to marry her off with a big dowry, she escaped home again and later became interested in Korea and decided to move to Seoul to pursue a new life.

As this novella was published in the post-KAPF arrest period, the word “socialism” was once censored as “XX” and subsequently replaced with “opium,” an intricate choice of Ch’ae’s when Sŭmik’o tells her story. She says, “Your people referred to XX as opium, right?” (E 46). XX is often used in place of censored words, but writers also voluntarily used it as a replacement for words that could be candidates for censorship.³⁵ By replacing “socialism” with “opium,” the text treats the former as an addictive material. At the same time, it asserts a certain ambiguity about the idea of socialism. For example, the following statement by Sŭmik’o creates an unclear meaning: “Finally, I was an independent opium addict. But being bookish, I was also an opium addict who didn’t take opium” (E62). Sŭmik’o’s interest in socialism and her college education categorize her as a so-called new woman, which Taeyŏng finds respectable. She has a mix of different

³⁴ Ch’ae’s reference to the Hwang Chini story was more likely influenced by Yi T’aejun’s novel *Hwang Chini* (1936, 1938). See Kim Chongho, “Hwangjini sojae sŏsa ūi kwejŏk kwa Yi T’aejun ūi *Hwang Chini*” [The progression of narratives about the life of Hwang Chini and Yi T’aejun’s *Hwang Chini*], *Uri munbak yŏn’gu* 42 (2014): 187–221.

³⁵ For the colonial period censorship on print material, see Kŏmyŏl yŏn’guhoe, *Singminji kŏmyŏl, chedo, teksŭt’ŭ, silch’ŏn* [Colonial censorship, system, text, practice] (Seoul: Somyŏng ch’ulp’an, 2011).

qualities: a sexualized, beautiful body; an interest in socialism; and a potential for domesticity. Her performance of domesticity in her apartment—for instance, making tea and toast or taking off her male visitor's coat—serves as an indicator of her past life with a socialist man and of her awareness of bourgeois ideas of romantic love and courtship that derive from her middle-class family background. These characteristics may be the exact qualities of the new woman in Korea at the time.³⁶

Sŭmik'o's socialist past is the reason for Taeyŏng's respect for her, but her ideological project is also the source of their split. She undergoes a successful transition from a socialist to a Japanese imperial loyalist in the novella. Taeyŏng, on the other hand, remains in Seoul without her and continues to confine his life to his limited conditions. Her socialist past turns into an imperialist project when she moves to Seoul and then further into the Chinese continent—Manchuria. Her move to Seoul marks her “conversion” (K. *chŏnhyang*, J. *tenkō*) from socialism and her merger with the Japanese expansion project. At the end of the story, Sŭmik'o departs for Manchukuo by herself, instead of realizing her original plan to go back to Tokyo—a plan she originally also suggested to Taeyŏng. The final step of Sŭmik'o's successful “conversion” contrasts with the “non-conversion” of Taeyŏng, whom she leaves behind.³⁷

At the same time, Taeyŏng's position as a colonized subject stands out when he spends time with Sŭmik'o. For example, they converse in Japanese, not Korean. The conflict between socialism and imperialism also plays a role in Taeyŏng's experience. He reveals that he was an “opium addict” (i.e. socialist) in the past but does not follow the addiction anymore. Neither does he uphold imperialist ideology. He explains that his unsupportive attitude toward the Japanese Empire made him stop writing novels. But mysteriously, during a long monologue that criticizes the state of contemporary society, he reveals that he fully supports the Japanese “samurai spirit” (that is, the values of the Japanese military), which he claims is based on firm “principle” (E87). This detail has often been read as an evidence for Ch'ae Mansik's collaborationist traits. However, in the story, the Japanese samurai spirit is presented as one of the reasons why Taeyŏng cannot write novels anymore. The Japanese “principle” is a respectable idea but also something that he cannot fully grasp, making him give up the writing of novels

³⁶ The term “new woman” in Korea refers to women educated in western-style schools, who can manage the home in new scientific ways that they learned from school and the media. See the second chapter of Theodore Jun, *The Politics of Gender in Colonial Korea: Education, Labor, and Health, 1910-1945* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2008).

³⁷ See Kim Churi. “Ch'ae Mansik ūi *Naengdongŏ* wa naesŏn yŏnae ūi munje,” *Han'guk munhwa* 51(2010): 349–69.

entirely out of respect for it. Taeyōng also condemns other contemporary writers for writing mediocre works for money alone. He insinuates that these works are collaborationist writings. Ch'ae, as the author, might be defending himself for writing this very piece for financial reasons, a romance story that supports colonial ideologies.

This ambivalent position of imperialist idealism receives further emphasis at the end, when Sūmik'o invites Taeyōng to accompany her to Tokyo. At first, he accepts the invitation and promises to meet her at the Seoul train station. As he watches the clock for the promised hour, however, he hesitates to leave the restaurant where he continues to wine and dine with friends. Moving to Tokyo—the metropole of the Japanese Empire—with Sūmik'o would represent a “conversion” for Taeyōng as well. His “conversion” fails, as he decides to remain in the restaurant. When Taeyōng returns home to his family—a wife and newborn daughter—he names his daughter “Chingsang” (澄祥), using the “澄” character from Sūmik'o's (澄子) name. This final scene elicits divisive readings. It could be interpreted as Taeyōng's simple nostalgia for an ex-lover, but also as his projection of Japanese imperialism. Either way, Sūmik'o remains memorialized in his daughter's name.

Sūmik'o's stay in Korea allows for the possibility of her own assimilation into Korean culture. In stories about Korean–Japanese intimate and sexual relationships, Japanese women in relationships with Korean men often find the Korean language as well as Korean clothing and traditional building structures—for instance, royal palaces—beautiful and elegant. This gesture confirms that their assimilation is possible and reassures the readers that the colonizers can respect Korean “local color.”³⁸ In the end, Japanese women's interest in Korean culture makes them more desirable and attainable to colonized men. Sūmik'o clearly shows cultural interest in the Korean language and customs. For instance, while waiting for Taeyōng to finish his work at his office, she watches the group of office men talking among themselves in Korean.

Sūmik'o watched the way they went back and forth, her eyes filled with curiosity. She couldn't understand a word of what they were saying, *but she looked at them with a concentrated expression that showed that she wanted to comprehend and taste what was going on by the look and feel of it.* When she saw

³⁸ There are some short stories and novel that include a scene where a Japanese female puts on Korean dress either for the Korean male's viewing pleasure or to show her friendship with another Korean female. Some examples include Yi Kwangsu's *Kūdūl ūi sarang* (Their love, 1941), Yi Hyosōk's “Midori no tō” (Green tower, 1940), and *Pōkkong muban* (Endless blue sky, 1940), “Pomot” (Spring dress, 1941), “Azami no Shō” (Story of Azami, 1941).

their heartfelt laughter in the end, she was swept up by it as well and let out a grin. (E28–29; italics and emphasis are mine.)

Here, Sumiko “wants” to understand and taste Korean “words” (*mal*), which are foreign to her. Her earnest gesture to grasp the conversation by following the emotions of the office men and Taeyōng pays off in the end when she shares a smile with them. She has the ability to share an emotional community with them without understanding the content of the language.

But while the language is represented as a positive aspect of Korean culture, Korean food almost always elicits negative responses from Japanese characters. Japanese female characters try out Korean food as part of their Koreanization, but this ultimately proves that too much “local color” is unacceptable for Japanese ladies, thus highlighting their hyper-femininity. Examples of the Korean foods that do not match Japanese taste are the usual suspects: garlic, hot spices, and *kimchi*.

In the assimilation process, the colonized are often forced to learn and adopt the colonizer’s culture; sometimes this results in making a “mockery” of the colonizer’s culture and creating its own “colonial mimicry,” in Homi Bhabha’s definition.³⁹ In colonial Korean literature that portrays Korean men and Japanese women in romantic relationships, the Korean men are not the ones who mimic the colonizers’ culture but fail to do so. Rather, it is the Japanese women who attempt to adopt and mimic Korean culture, but they somewhat fail in their attempts as well. In the process, however, these trials and errors produce a “mockery” of Korean culture. Taeyōng offers to take Sūmik’o to a dinner with “Chosōn kimoch’i” (Korean sentiment) and takes her to an upscale Hwasin Department Store restaurant for “Chosōn”-style table d’hôte dishes.⁴⁰ Sūmik’o tries and fails miserably:

On the promise of food so delicious that it would bring tears to one’s eyes, she put a piece of stinking *kkakdugi* into her mouth, bearing the smell.⁴¹ On the first bite, without realizing that she was being pranked . . . Of course, tears welled up in her eyes.

“Hidoiwa! Hidoiwa! (How could you! How could you!)”⁴²

Although she bitterly resented the joke, she couldn’t spit it out immediately because of decorum, and swallowed it. Her whole mouth felt like Siberia,

³⁹ See Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 2004), 121–131.

⁴⁰ *Kimoch’i* (気持ち) is used several times in the story, written in Korean rather than hiragana.

⁴¹ *Kkakdugi* is a type of *kimch’i*, the main ingredient of which is white radish.

⁴² In the original text, her exclamation is typed in Japanese, “ひどいワ” followed by the Korean equivalent in parentheses.

and she suffered for a while without escape, causing the dinner to be merrier. (E 99)

The scene is about Sŭmik'o's suffering produced by a prank, but it also shows Ch'ae's understanding of the colonial perception that *kimchi* and spicy food are "uncivilized" or "unfit" for refined ladies. For example, "Her whole mouth felt like Siberia" implies Ch'ae's mockery of the Korean taste and reiterates the colonial stereotype of the Russian barbaric wilderness. Sŭmik'o's attempt to approach the colonial taste is turned into a joke for Taeyŏng's male friends; "the dinner to be merrier" makes it clear that Taeyŏng and his friends enjoy watching their prank on her. Pranking a Japanese subject brings pleasure to the Korean elite male group, enacting subversion of Japanese domination, perhaps. This episode makes Sŭmik'o a respectable lady, but at the same time, she is under the control of the colonial male elites, including Taeyŏng, who thus proves his higher position in their relationship.

Another example of Sŭmik'o display of interest in Korean culture is her description of Korean elderly men on the street. In their conversation, Taeyŏng takes it as an occasion to show his higher position in their relationship. As Sŭmik'o and Taeyŏng are strolling in Seoul's busy streets, she comments on the "white robes" (*hŭinol*)⁴³ on the street:

"Whenever I saw them in movies, or heard about them in stories, or read about them in books, they always seemed rather romantic, I mean those *white robes*. But why do they worry me so much when I see someone wearing them now?"

She might have been starting up a completely unrelated topic of conversation with the aim of disarming and confusing her interlocutor. "Does seeing someone wearing white robes look disquieting to you as well?"

She asked again.

"I don't share your nostalgia for white robes, Sŭmik'o san . . . Instead, I'd like to give all the people who still go around wearing white robes a good punch!"

"What are you talking about?"

"It doesn't look good for the city to have people sleepwalking on the streets, and it's a hindrance to traffic."

"But they're not the only ones! What about us?"

⁴³ "White robes" only refers to Korean males on the street, describing the white coat in traditional male garments.

“I suppose that’s true!” (E47)⁴⁴

Sŭmik’o points to the white robes, an overcoat generally used by elderly men and a racializing signifier for Korea that represents the backwardness of the country’s tradition. A certain type of dress indicates a certain class, and race is a common trope in imperial discourse. With regard to clothes, Japanese tourist guidebooks, travelogues, and tourist magazines generally lumped all older Korean males—*yangban* (in their outing coats), farmers, or laborers—under the category of “white robe” Koreans.⁴⁵ But Taeyŏng replies that he does not share her “nostalgia” (K 403), a rather sentimental affection towards the Korean past. Taeyŏng, in fact, highlights these men’s slowness and unfitness for the fast lifestyle of the city. Taeyŏng differentiates himself from those in “white robes” (*hŭinot*), since he is wearing a western suit (*yangbok*) like other elite office workers. In fact, Taeyŏng might have never worn a white robe himself in his life, because of his colonial and imperial education and his cosmopolitan white-collar work background. Sŭmik’o still suggests that both are strolling around the city, perhaps with a slowness that is similar to the elderly Korean men. Although Taeyŏng agrees with Sŭmik’o, their affinity with the white robes is completely different—they are flâneurs of a modernized city making comments about the locals. He can easily separate himself from the “uncivilized crowd” when he accompanies Sŭmik’o. With his aesthetic taste, his elite employment, and his association with a Japanese woman, he crosses racial divides and performs as an imperial and cosmopolitan being.

CODA: MEMORIES OF COLONIAL INTIMACY

In *Cold War Ruins*, Lisa Yoneyama reminds us that the representations of Japanese colonialism and World War II are closely connected with domestic memory as well as Cold War or post-Cold War politics, illustrating the selective process of historiography construction. After Japan’s surrender in 1945, the Korean peninsula was subjected to new “colonial” forces with the start of its “liberation” (*haebang*) process: the Soviet Union in the north and the Allied Forces (and the United States) in the south. Again involuntarily, Korea happened to be in the

⁴⁴ I modified translation of *hŭinot* to white robes.

⁴⁵ See Kate McDonald, “White Robes, Black Robes, Horse-Riding Bandits: Stories of the Yalu River Rail Bridge,” Paper presented at the Annual Conference of Association for Asian Studies, Tokyo, Japan, June 20–21, 2015.

middle of the Cold War frame.⁴⁶ The Cold War politics and the outside forces triggering decolonization processes did not see the eradication of Japanese colonial legacies as their top priority. Things being complicated by the Korean War (1950–53), colonial elites continued to thrive in Syngman Rhee’s regime after actively hiding traces of their collaborationist past. The decolonization process brought a stop to colonial wartime *naesŏn ilch’ŏ* policies; for example, converted Japanese-style names were reverted back to the original Korean names. Any evidence of intermarriage was erased from public memory as well.

A short story, “Kapitan Ri” (1962), published after the liberation and the Korean War, illustrates how the colonial elites survived through the changes of power by cooperating with foreign authorities and justifying their past with selective memories.⁴⁷ The main protagonist, Captain Yi, is a medical doctor who manages to be successfully on the side of the Japanese, the Soviets, and the United States and gains social capital by cooperating with each of them from the late Japanese colonial period through the aftermath of the Korean War in South Korea.⁴⁸ When he realizes the United States will be the next dominant presence in South Korea, Dr. Yi arranges for his daughter to learn English from an American official working for US authorities and later sends her to the United States for further studies. In his response to his daughter’s letter from the United States asking for permission to marry an American man, Dr. Yi compares her case with the intermarriage practice in the colonial period:

His thoughts leaped back to all the fuss they had made over Japanese-Korean marriages during the occupation. Then, such things weren’t the makings of *slander and humiliation*. Rather, they were thought quite *natural* by many, if not possibly even *a mark of distinction*. But then, in his daughter’s case . . .

He read his daughter’s letter over again.

“Can love know any national boundaries?”

A cheap, time-worn platitude. (“Kapitan Ri,” 56. Italics and emphasis are mine.)

Dr. Yi finds the prospect of his daughter’s interracial marriage with an American man as “slander and humiliation” in contrast to Japanese-Korean marriage. He

⁴⁶ Lisa Yoneyama, *Cold War Ruins: Transpacific Critique of American Justice and Japanese War Crimes* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016); Bruce Cummings, *Parallax Visions: Making Sense of American-East Asian Relations at the End of the Century* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999).

⁴⁷ Chŏn Kwang’yong, “Kapitan Ri” (Kkŏppittan Ri), trans. Marshall Phil, *Land of Exile: Contemporary Korean Fiction* (New York: An East Gate Book, 2007), 50–72.

⁴⁸ The title addressing Dr. Yi In’guk as Kapitan Ri is a Russified reading of the word.

remembers Korean-Japanese marriage as rather “natural” and even as a “mark of distinction.” This remark is along the lines of the nephew’s attitude towards Korean-Japanese marriage in “My Innocent Uncle” and also repeats the official GGK guidelines. The past practice of Korean-Japanese marriage is minimized in comparison to postwar intermarriage, which is portrayed as gendered and as humiliating for the Korean patriarch.

The sentiment of humiliation in Korean female-American male intermarriage mainly derived from the visibility of the sexual arrangements for the U.S. military in South Korea from 1945: the United States Army Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK) in 1945–48, the Korean War in 1950–53 which increased the number of US military men, and the maintenance of large US military bases afterward. The sex trade around the US military bases—camp towns and entertainment districts, including the center of Seoul—created a new landscape. The South Korean government sponsored these “special districts” for military prostitution, mimicking the “comfort stations” of the Japanese Empire.⁴⁹ The obviously gendered sexual relationship—Korean females and US military servicemen—was invisible for the broader Korean population and evoked different reactions among Korean male elites than colonial intermarriage campaigns or the Japanese military sexual slavery of Korean women—“comfort women”—which happened at the war fronts, outside the Korean peninsula.

The intimate and sexual arrangements in the Cold War era became the symbol of weak Korean masculinity, leaving Korean men ashamed. For example, a short story, “Obalt’an” (The Stray Bullet, 1959) by Yi Pömsök, and the 1960 film based on it capture nationalist and patriarchal anxieties about Korean men’s involvement in the prostitution of Korean women to the Americans. Myöngsuk, the younger sister of the male protagonist, becomes a “Western princess” (*yanggongju*) to support her cash-strapped family, thus causing agony to the men in her life: her incompetent older brothers and her former lover, who is now crippled from a Korean War injury.⁵⁰ The lament and shame about *yanggongju* dominated Korean literature and film for the following decades, with a continuation of the “service economies” in South Korea.⁵¹

⁴⁹ See the first chapter of Moon, Katherine H. S, *Sex among Allies: Military Prostitution in U.S.-Korea Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

⁵⁰ *Yanggongju* literary means “western princess” and was used as a derogatory term for Korean females having an intimate, often sexual relationship with American military service men. It also includes professional sex workers. Kelly Jeong, *Crisis of Gender and the Nation in Korean Literature and Cinema: Modernity Arrives Again*. (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2011), fn. 43, 97.

⁵¹ Jin-kyung Lee, *Service Economies: Militarism, Sex Work, and Migrant Labor in South Korea* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010); Seungsook Moon, *Militarized Modernity and Gendered Citizenship* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005); Theodore Hughes, *Literature and Film*

In Ch'ae Mansik's later writings, a short story "Transgressor of the Nation" (Minjok ūi choein, 1948–49) offers the author's own memory of his colonial collaborationist past.⁵² It employs a first-person narrator who is a writer and has a collaborationist past like Ch'ae. The word in the Korean title, *choein*, literally means "a guilty person" or "a sinner," reflecting the narrator's remarks about being a betrayer of the Korean nation, owing to his past collaboration with the Japanese colonial authorities. The narrator is frustrated with the resentful gaze of other writers and newspaper reporters, feeling that they regard him with contempt for his wartime activities, which are similar to Ch'ae's own lectures that supported Japan's war effort in 1943. In the end, the narrator's wife advises him to move forward and work toward educating the young generation as his "atonement" (K156).

Although this story is considered an example of a "self-criticism novel" (*chagipip'an sosŏl*) in Korean literary studies, the narrator of the story does not discuss which of his writings in the colonial period supported Japanese imperialism. However, his friend claims that his novels promoted "imperialization" and "Korea and Japan as One Unity" (*hwangkuk sinmin sosŏl* and *naesŏn ilch'e sosŏl*).⁵³ References to actual collaboration in those works remain vague and brief. On top of this limited amount of references, there is no mention of Korean-Japanese romance or sexual relationships at all in Ch'ae's postcolonial writings. Even in his postwar "self-criticism writings," colonial intimacy and sexual arrangements are erased and silenced.

The copious anxieties of colonial masculinity in these stories about romance and sexual desire toward Japanese women is perhaps an unexpected side-effect of

in Cold War South Korea Freedom's Frontier (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

⁵² During the post-liberation moment in Korea when various political factions had conflicts with each other (and later at the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950), there was no consensus in the decolonization process over issues of collaboration and over how to manage the "Special Committee" investigating collaborators. In this context, some writers voluntarily published "confessionals" that reflected on their past collaborationist acts in a fictional format. See Kelly Jeong, *ibid.* Ch'ae's story is considered to be the author's "self-criticism," in its similarity to other stories by writers such as Kim Namch'ŏn and Yi T'aejun. One of Yi T'aejun's famous pieces sketches out the intellectual's complicated condition in the post-liberation era. Yi T'aejun, "Before and after liberation" (Haebang chŏnhu, 1946) in *On the Eve of the Uprising and Other Stories from Colonial Korea* (Cornell University Press, 2010).

⁵³ Chŏng Houg categorizes various writings from before the Korean War to the post-liberation period as "self-criticism novel" (*chagipip'an sosŏl*). These writings involve the authors' discussion not only of their past *ch'inil* (pro-Japanese) activities but also of the details behind their silence about the Total War Mobilization. Adopting Kim Yunsik's analysis, Chŏng separates the "self-criticism novel" into three categories of criticism: self-criticism, nationalist self-criticism, and world-view self-criticism. See Chŏng Houg, *ibid.*, 243–371.

writing about intimate and sexual relationships with the colonizers. Ch'ae Mansik attempts to maintain a superior position for Korean male elites in the colonial hierarchy by crossing denial and affirmation of their colonial status and by playing with the tension between making Japanese women the objects of lustful desire and respectable ladies. In the end, the portrayal of the Japanese woman became an all-encompassing and overdetermined image: alternative to Korean traditional female ideals, sexually active and direct, educated and elite, unbounded by conjugality, supporting imperialism, yet hyper-feminine. She is in support of both Korean male elites and Japanese imperialism, submissive to both patriarchies. In the Cold War period, when Korean women became objectified as sex partners of the soldiers of a new imperial power, writers quickly condemned the women for having sexual arrangements with foreigners, again, revealing national male anxiety. Moreover, their new narratives about Korean-Japanese colonial intimacy manipulated national memories of the colonial sexual arrangements. We cannot deny, however, that male writers were actively seeking ways to elevate colonial masculinity in the empire, by creating female images that supported their own position without disrupting the imperial order.

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KIM SU YUN (suyunkim@hku.hk) *is an assistant professor in Korean Studies
at the University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, China.*

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