

KIM SŪNG-OK'S LITERARY RESPONSE TO PAK CHŎNG-HŪI'S RE-MAKING OF KOREAN SOCIETY

By STEVEN CAPENER

Kim Sŭng-ok's early literature has been extensively talked about in regard to a number of themes including as a critique of western capitalism. However, there has been almost no analysis of how some of his early fiction can be read as a response to Pak Chŏng-hŭi's attempt to create a modern Korean mass identity through conservatizing and re-Confucianizing the nation by means of a powerful military-style mobilization project. After positing the existence of something called "a world of one's own" in a story titled "Saengmyŏng yŏnsŭp" (Practice for life, 1962) and incorporating a clearly Freudian super-ego vs. Id clash into the plot, Kim Sŭng-ok writes two more stories that can be read as having strong elements of resistance to Pak Chŏng-hŭi's totalizing project: "Yŏksa" (Strongman, 1963) and "Mujin kihaeng" (Record of a journey to Mujin, 1964). In these stories, his protagonists make efforts to resist the totalizing, subsuming effects of the homogenization and mobilization that appear in the texts and that can be traced to such efforts by the Pak regime. This article will analyze these stories for their attempts to resist the domination of a societal super-ego represented by Pak Chŏng-hŭi's patriarchal persona and mass mobilization efforts using state power. A psycho-analytic approach will be used to show how Kim attempted to create an individuated ego that could withstand (or escape) the tyranny of this societal super-ego.

Key words: conservatize, re-Confucianize, military style mobilization, societal super-ego, id, mass identity, resistance

After seizing power in a military coup in May of 1961, Pak Chŏng-hŭi set out to massively restructure Korea society and re-engineer Korean culture. When analyzing this we must distinguish between his objectives and his methods. As to

This work was supported by a research grant from Seoul Women's University.

objectives, it is fairly easy to identify three main ones: economic development, national defense against the North (anti-communism), and perpetuation of his power. In this article, I am interested in the methods he employed to realize his objectives. These methods, designed to bring about a general re-making of the Korean social and cultural landscape, can be summed up as follows: 1) a conservatization of society using reified Confucian ideology; 2) a mass homogenizing effect brought about through the use of Japanese fascist techniques and military style mobilization emphasizing collectivism, sacrifice, and patriotism; and 3) the infusion of hyper-nationalist sentiment using appeals to ethnic purity and homogeneity.

It is clear these methods were being put into effect as soon as Pak had consolidated his power as the head of the Supreme Council for National Reconstruction (1961–63). Such reshaping efforts became more concentrated, coordinated, and efficient as the regime progressed. As the name of the Council implies, Pak was setting out on a mission to reconstruct the nation from top to bottom. Over the next ten years, these efforts would include such projects as the law enacting the establishment of the Republic of Korea Reserve Forces (1961), the National Sports Promotion Act (1962), the Liberal Arts Movement (1968), and the New Community Movement (1969) to name just a few. All of these programs and movements had as primary or secondary goals the nationalist mobilization of the populace with the intent of creating a mass society whose identity was derived from (given by) association with, and participation in, the various groups and movements that were constituting the “new Korean.”

Against this backdrop, Kim Sŭng-ok made his literary debut in 1962 with the novella, “*Saengmyŏng yŏnsŭp*” (Practice for life). Kim entered the French Language and Literature Department of Seoul National University in 1960 just months before the April 19th student uprising that would topple the government of Yi Sŭngman. The fateful coincidence of these two events could not but impact Kim’s writing, and this article will argue that a major theme of Kim’s early literature was that of resistance to the totalizing effect of Pak’s re-making of the Korean social and cultural landscape. It must be said that the “resistance” Kim depicts is sometimes of a passive nature, that is, it is a reluctance to be appropriated into anything, including actual political resistance. This resistance took the form of counterpoising a space for the individual ego to avoid, or indeed attempt to resist, the demands to conform made by the ubiquitous societal super-ego that was formed by Pak’s apparatuses and ideologies of control.

1. THE RE-MAKING OF KOREA AND THE "NEW KOREAN"

One of Pak's biographers, Yi Chongsik, has written about Pak Chŏng-hŭi's admiration for the Meiji Restoration that began in Japan in 1868 and that put the country on a course of rapid transformation from an isolated agrarian state to a world military power within an incredibly short period of time.

Pak started (his reform program) with the ideological foundation of the Meiji Revolution. He characterized it as "emperor-centered ultra-nationalistic patriotism," but Japan's strong ideological foundation enabled it to domesticate (or Japanize) the flood of foreign ideologies and prevent the meddling of foreign forces... .Pak attributed the success of the Meiji Revolution to Japan's solid national identity. Thus, Pak considered the establishment of an ideological foundation the key element to rebuilding Japan, and he made efforts in later years to buttress Korean nationalism. Among the many things that Pak learned from studying Japan, this was probably the most important. (Yi 2012: 154–155)

It was nationalism that formed the bedrock of Pak's national reconstruction program. The term "reconstruction" is significant in that it clearly shows that what Pak intended was a reengineering of society itself. This reengineering was undergirded by a powerful, inward looking ethnic nationalism, but also included the (re-)establishment of a Confucian patriarchy that was hierarchal in nature and morally conservative in tone. What Pak was demanding was that Koreans forego individual identity and immerse themselves in the ethno-body. In this way identity came to be derived first and foremost from the nation.

One of the ways that Pak emphasized the primacy of ethnic identity was to reify Tan'gun as a historical being and the progenitor of the Korean people. Pak started many of his speeches with references to Tan'gun as a historical reality. In fact, the first line of his inaugural address after being elected president in 1963, titled "The Dawn of a New Era," states:

Five thousand years ago our sacred progenitor, *Tangun*, established the national foundation of our blessed land. (Sin 1970: 285)

Aiding in this reengineering of the nation was the militarization of its administration and, by extension, of society itself. The twin pillars of this process were the empowerment of the military and the creation of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency. During the military junta years (1961-63) before Pak was

elected president, his main concern as the Chairman of the Supreme Council of National Reconstruction was tightening control over the nation.

The obsession with political control led Pak to not only establish the KCIA but also to entrust many policymaking responsibilities to the intelligence agency. The centrality of the KCIA in the policymaking process meant that South Korean politics were characterized by repressive and punitive measures and South Korean economics by shock therapies. (Kim Hyŏn-a 2001: 86)

In order to facilitate control, Pak pursued a dual strategy of strengthening both the rhetoric of nationalism and the Confucian ideology of loyalty and filial piety (*ch'ungbyo sasang*), while at the same time tightening censorship and control of cultural production.¹ The constitution was amended to state that “Censorship of film and entertainment activities is provided for in order to protect the public morality and social ethics” (Yi 2014: 42).

It is here we can see the conservatization of the nation that, in later years, included the police being responsible for summarily enforcing male hair and female skirt length standards. Public morality and social ethics were matters to be legislated by the polity and enforced by state power.

Pak's military junta government instituted a number of means of control and surveillance of the populace including fingerprinting and the mandatory issuance of Resident Registration cards while the militarization of society was furthered through the institution of the ROK Homeland Reserve Corp and the ROK Civil Defense Corps. Yi Nami describes this totalizing, homogenizing project as follows:

The Resident Registration ID card system was first instituted under Pak's regime; however, it was modelled on the system of control established in Manchuria by the Japanese, and this (ID card) system allowed the authorities to easily monitor all citizens no matter where they may be. That was not the end of it; Pak also recreated the colonial era Manchukuo State in the areas of economics and society as well. Some of these practices were as follows: the school day was highly regimented beginning with the

¹ See, for instance, the discussion of control over the film industry instituted by the military government (1961–63) in Kim Chi-mi's “Pak Chŏng-hŭi sidae ū minjok tamnon kwa Yi Man-hŭi yŏnghwa ū minjok p'yosang” [A study on the discourse of nation in the Pak Chŏng-hŭi era and symbols of the people in the films of Yi Man-hŭi], *Han'guk byŏndae munhak yŏn'gu* 41 (2013): 533–567.

recitation of the National Charter for Education followed by nation building group gymnastics, then students were regimented into military formation where they pledged allegiance to the flag before marching off military style to class. During lunch time the contents of lunches were monitored, hair length was monitored both in and out of school, students and government employees were made to clean schools and offices early in the morning, and Resident Registration cards were issued after taking fingerprints from all fingers on both hands (Yi 2014: 37).

These were all means of creating a mass identity that was embodied by ethnic membership in the Korean nation-state (very clearly delimited to the South Korean nation). Added to this ideological basis, Confucian orthodoxy operated as a type of societal super-ego that demanded behavior consistent with patriarchal and hierarchal norms. The result was a populace that was inured to following the strictures of vertically structured hierarchies and to sublimating individuality to membership in a mass identity. Pak justified such sacrifice of individual rights and identity by emphasizing that people preferred oppression and totalitarianism to hunger and poverty (Yi 2014: 50). According to Sin Ki-uk, "In the name of the nation, national unity, and modernization of the fatherland, the Park regime suppressed all other collective identities and competing voices" (Sin 2006: 107).

This reengineering of society facilitated two essential elements of Pak's reconstruction agenda: social control and mobilization (for defense and economic development). The price Koreans paid for the economic development that resulted from Pak's policies was the formation of a society that had little or no tolerance for difference or individuality. What Pak did was to continue the attack on western individualism and cosmopolitanism started by the literary critic Ch'oe Chae-sŏ during the colonial period. Ch'oe was in the first class of graduates from the English Literature Department of Kyŏngsŏng Imperial University who, after 1940, wrote a number of essays in support of Japan's "holy" war against the West in which he criticized western individualism as the main cause of its spiritual decadence. He blamed France's rapid capitulation to Nazi Germany on the French people's decadent selfishness. Analyzing the cause of France's humiliating defeat at the hands of the Germans, Ch'oe states:

Was it not due to the increasing cosmopolitanism of the French since their revolution in 1790 (*sic*) that they came to neglect national culture? And was that once magnificent culture not trampled under horses' hooves? I think this is a common sense understanding of what happened (Ch'oe 2006: 29).²

² In his book, Ch'oe uses quite a bit of ink in vilifying the notion of cosmopolitanism, something he equates with decadence. What Ch'oe is referring to when he uses the term in reference to

Reading Ch'oe's justifications for Japanese fascism and totalitarianism, one is struck by the many similarities found in Pak Chŏng-hŭi's rhetoric a mere twenty years later.

It was in the midst of this great reengineering of not only the Korean nation but the Korean psyche as well that Kim Sŭng-ok, through his literature, tried to carve out a space for the individual to attempt to retain some autonomy and not be completely subsumed into the rapidly developing mass society that was taking shape before his eyes.

2. KIM SŬNG-OK'S RESPONSE I: "PRACTICE FOR LIFE" AND "STRONGMAN"

Kim entered the French literature department of SNU in 1960 and made his debut in 1962 with "Practice for life." He was one of the first writers to clearly break with the sensibilities of the so-called "post-war" literature. In this literature, individuals served mainly as allegorical or symbolic representations of the nation and the trauma it had suffered. Kim's literature was different in that, from the beginning, it focused on individuals who resist association with conventional modes of aggregation, choosing instead to turn inward in service to personal desires, needs, and fears. The critic Kim Pyŏng-ik has characterized this as follows:

Kim's characters are no longer the types that appeared in literature just after the war, ones that were worn out, self-destructive and desperate. Rather Kim's creations are young, fresh, independent, and in search of something... In other words, his response to 1950s writers who depicted the destruction of the individual as social tragedy resulting from war and poverty was to accept this tragedy as a personal pathos and search for an independent self. From this perspective, his writing opened a new window on the formation of an inner self and on a new individual-oriented

literature is, of course, modernist literature. The first writer to become known as a cosmopolitan was the American Henry James. He was an epicurean who, coming to loath the materialism of American culture, emigrated to England. He searched for a home all his life but without success. Ultimately, he was forced to seek this home within his own psychology. This is the genesis of the so-called psychological novel. Adding to this the psychoanalytic technique of Freud and we have the revolting, pathological literature known as psychological realism produced by Joyce and his clique (Ch'oe 2006: 107). Ch'oe goes on to say that in Germany, cosmopolitan literature is known as "asphalt literature" because it "has no roots." A literature with no roots, he adds, "cannot be healthy" (108).

literature. This was the first attempt in the history of the Korean spirit (*chōngsinsa*) at the subjectivation of consciousness (Kim 2001: 639).

In this article, I describe the attempts at individuation by Kim's characters' as resistance to the totalizing, homogenizing effects of Pak Chōng-hŭi's regime; however, while expressions of this resistance in "Saengmyōng yōnsŭp" (Practice for life) and "Yōksa" (Strongman) are manifested relatively proactively, in "Record of a Journey to Mujin" it is displayed as a turning inward, an ambivalence to surrounding events, or a cynical passivity. What is clear, however, is that some of his characters are psychologically struggling against the authority of a controlling force that is perceived as limiting the development, autonomy, or expression of their egos.

In this context, it will be useful to refer to Freud's theory of the structure of the unconscious and the development of the ego (everyday self) in relation to the id and the super-ego in explaining some aspects of Kim's literature. Kim admitted in an essay that psycho-analysis would be useful in understanding his very first story about a boy and girl who stay in a room naked at the top of a tower locked in an endless embrace (Kim 1977: 102). In fact, Kim's work has been analyzed from a psycho-analytic perspective a number of times.³ I read the three works included in this essay partly through the prism of Freud's analysis of the relationship between the ego, the id, and the super-ego.

The year after Pak Chōng-hŭi established himself as the ruler of the country and started his reconstruction campaign, Kim wrote about having a "world of one's own" in his debut work.

I think a world of one's own is clearly different than others' worlds and is like an impregnable fortress. I imagine that the air inside that castle is of a light green hue and shimmers and that there is a garden full of blooming roses. But, for some reason, the people I know with "their own worlds" all live in the basements of their fortresses where mold grows and spider webs are being incessantly spun. And I think to their owners, these things are precious possessions (Kim 2001: 19–20).

Here we see the genesis of a theme that would be easily identifiable in Kim's literature over the next several years: the establishment of a private space (usually a room) where the protagonist would attempt to discover (or protect) a sense of

³ See, for example, Kim Tong-hyōn's Ph.D. dissertation, "Kim Sŭng-ok sosŏl ūi tamnon yōn'gu: T'eksŭtŭ ūi chōngsin punsŏk ūl chungsim ūro" [A study on the discourse of Kim Sŭng-ok's fiction: A psycho-analytic approach], Kyung Hee University, 2007.

individual self. In the above case, this “world” is possessed by a Professor Han whom the narrator has come to respect and desires to emulate despite his moral flaws. The narrator makes it clear that the appeal of this professor emanates from his having succeeded in establishing a world of his own. The narrator then goes into a long recollection of his youth where we see the process of his struggle to liberate his own self from a domineering super-ego and establish a world of his own.

The narrator recalls his time as a middle school student living in Yōsu after the Korean War with his older brother, sister, and widowed mother. The father’s absence is filled by the older brother who operates as a strict and demanding super-ego, occupying an attic room where he would stay all day until four p.m. when he would take a walk on the beach, returning to climb the ladder back up into the attic. Every time the narrator sees this he thinks his brother is ascending into the sky.

That place (the attic) was hell and my brother was the demon who protected it. He was constantly planning something, and that something was a war. It looked like he would win, but in the end, he lost, and the opponent who vanquished this exhausted demon who was now spitting up blood was, of course, our mother... (Kim 2001: 25).

The antagonism between mother and son derives from the mother bringing home a succession of lover’s after the father’s death. The older brother, who now serves as the surrogate or symbolic father (or in both Freud’s and Lacan’s terms, the Law and the source of taboo, Kwak 2007: 199), urges his two younger siblings to help him kill her for her transgressions. The household itself is structured much as Freud hypothesized the structure of the psyche: with the super-ego above looking down in judgement on the workings of the ego. Freud directly links the super-ego with the father: “The super-ego arises, as we know, from an identification with the father taken as a model” (Freud 1960: 56). Freud goes on to thusly describe the relationship between the ego and the super-ego:

Although it (the super-ego) is accessible to all later influences, it nevertheless preserves throughout life the character given it by its derivation from the father-complex—namely, the capacity to stand apart from the ego and master it. It is a memorial of the former weakness and dependence of the ego, and the mature ego remains subject to its dominations. As the child was once under a compulsion to obey its parents, so the ego submits to the categorical imperatives of its super-ego (Freud 1960: 48–9).

And so, this surrogate father begins his punishment of the unfettered libido of the mother's id, which has been liberated by the absence of the original father-husband (Law), by first beginning to beat her and then planning to kill her.

The younger brother attempts to liberate himself from this "demon" by establishing a "kingdom" of his own wherein his libido can have free reign away from the chastising eye of the symbolic father. In *Yösu*, the narrator and his sister are attending a Christian revival where they hear an evangelist testify to having cut off his own penis when he was twenty years old. The reason, he says was simply that "god told him too" (Kim 2001: 15). This absolute act of obedience and subservience to the father's law terrifies the narrator and motivates him, together with his sister, to secure several secrets from his mother and brother which constitute a "secret kingdom" within which he searches for "security" and "life" (Kim 2001: 31). Almost nightly, after his sister returns from school, the two of them, careful to avoid detection by "that person in the attic," sneak out. They must negotiate a dark forest and barbwire fence (the last obstacles of the super-ego) before coming to a stone house. They hide in the trees and watch as an Irish missionary comes out and sits on a bench near the trees where he lowers his pants and masturbates. The brother and sister watch while holding hands which quickly become soaked in sweat and then return to their house feeling exhausted.

In our kingdom there was always such sweat and exhaustion. But there was not one trace of sin. On the contrary, while there we always felt secure and could think about life (Kim 2001: 32).

Ultimately, the existence of this "kingdom" alone is not enough to liberate the narrator from the tyranny of the symbolic father, so he and his sister push their brother off a cliff into the sea.

In "Practice for Life," Kim seems to be beginning the project of securing space for the id to confront the delineating power of the symbolic father, a project he furthers in "Strong Man." In "Mujin kihaeng" (Record of a Journey to Mujin), we will encounter what Kwak Sangsun has termed the "maternal super-ego" (Kwak 2007: 214).

In the story "Strong Man," the super-ego appears in the form of a patriarchal grandfather who seems a direct representation of Pak Chöng-hŭi. In this story, the narrator "I" is a university drama major living in a rundown boarding house in the Ch'angsin-dong slums. He is struggling to make ends meet selling the occasional manuscript when a friend suggests that he can arrange boarding for "I" in the home of his relatives. "I" moves to a room in a clean, new, western

style home occupied by a “grandfather,” his wife, their son (a college lecturer), the son’s wife, the lecturer’s younger sister (a high school student) and his infant child. The first part of the story is devoted to a comparison of life in these two vastly different environments.

“I” tells the reader that the Ch’angsin-dong residence is a clapboard house located in a slum near Tongdaemun and is populated by what amount to people who have fallen through the cracks in society: the biggest and best room is occupied by the couple who own the house; the second biggest and the one that does not leak rain water is taken by a prostitute named Yŏngja who has the best income in the house; the next best room is occupied by a fifty-something cripple and his ten year old daughter who, due to malnutrition, looks no larger than a five or six year old; the remaining two rooms are occupied by a half-Chinese day laborer (from a long line of Chinese circus strongmen) in his forties and the narrator.

The narrator “I” tells us that he accepts his friend’s offer to move because of the despair that he feels in Ch’angsin-dong due to his poverty; however, in describing his room there, he implies that there is something in that place that serves as a “world of one’s own” albeit filled with “mold and spider’s webs.” While lying in his bed looking at the wall of his room papered with old newspapers he begins to ruminate on a piece of graffiti scribbled there (in a 1930s’ vernacular) that says “Everyone living in Ch’angsin-dong is a son-of-a-bitch”:

I don’t know how long that graffiti had been there but clearly it had been written by a previous resident of this room. I imagined someone lying there, perhaps on a rainy day, and just stretching out their hand and scribbling it on the wall. No doubt because this room was the kind of room that gave whoever occupied it a sense of self-loathing from the realization that, in this whole wide world, this filthy room was the best they could do, thus making it necessary to write such a thing in order to carry on. Put another way, if someone else hadn’t written that there, I would have. That’s why I love that 1930s’ style expression. I thought it had the solid, trustworthy ring of something one of the great masters would write. I had no choice but to love it because it was the thing that, in this world with its countless rooms, marked this one as distinctly mine (Kim 2001: 59–60).

The narrator says that if this graffiti had not been on the wall he would have put it there himself. The implication is that he has the freedom in that room to let his id express itself. Here, Kim is foreshadowing the loss of freedom to indulge his id

that the narrator will experience as a result of coming under the authority of the law of the western house.

After moving to the western house with its “hospitallike” cleanliness, “I” describes his room upon seeing it anew while waking from a nap. He tells the reader that it is “excessively clean” with no graffiti on the walls; that across from where he lies, his college text books are stacked in an “unorderly” fashion and his guitar is hung on the wall also in an “unorderly” way. He continues his rumination with, “I thought, ‘So, this is my room.’ But my room should have pictures of naked women hung everywhere and had no business being this tidy” (Kim 2001: 60–61). He has brought some of the individuality of his room in the boarding house with him in the form of the “unorderliness” of his possessions, but is clearly already coming under the influence of the house’s superego as seen in the room’s cleanliness and lack of nudity on the walls.

Pak Chŏng-hŭi makes his appearance in this story in the form of the “grandfather” who is the patriarch of the western-style house. He describes the man the family calls “grandfather” as short and wiry-thin, clearly a description of Pak, and this image is reinforced with the addendum that this was the man who had “taken on the responsibility of changing my life attitude” (Kim 2001: 63).

After moving into the new house, “I” is grilled by the “grandfather” about the state of the nation. He tells “I” that the Korean War resulted in the loss of “family traditions” and that what was needed to recover this was a powerful “respect for order” (a not-so-subtle critique of the narrator’s disorderly room/life). He then proceeds to impose that order:

Family traditions. This was a concept that was completely foreign to me, but over the next few days I would come to physically experience what it meant in this house. And the first of this house’s family traditions that wrapped its coils around me was that of “a regimented life before all else.” All rise at 6 a.m. sharp (however, in my case I wasn’t even allowed to get up by myself but was woken by the grandfather who would bring tea to my room, make me drink it and then, after I would hurriedly put on my clothes, face blushing in humiliation, make me go out for a morning walk. It seems even the family’s three-year-old infant was subject to the regulations). Breakfast. Then off to work or school. The grandfather was an executive in some company and so the only ones at home in the daytime were the daughter-in-law, the grandmother, the baby, the nanny, and me (overwhelmed with fatigue). During the day, at ten o’clock I would have to hear the sound of the sewing machines being worked by the daughter-in-law and grandmother, and the sound of music from the radio turned on at noon; at four o’clock I would hear “For Elise” played on the piano. Everyone had to be home by six-thirty for dinner. After dinner, ten minutes were allotted for

small talk. After that, all must retire to their respective rooms to study. Every night, the nanny would put a pot of barley tea on the table in the middle of the living room signaling that it was five or six past eleven. When that sound was heard, all the doors would open and everyone would come out, drink a cup of tea, and then return to their room to sleep with a “good night” (Kim 2001: 64–65).

There is a much to unpack here. Clearly Kim is describing Pak Chŏng-hŭi’s project of instilling military discipline and regimentation on the nation. The running of the sewing machines at ten in the morning by the women of the house is symbolic of both the rapidly turning industrialization that Pak was pursuing and the role of women in this process.⁴ As can be seen, the schedule of the household is designed to maximize productivity with a minimum of unstructured or unsupervised time. In this house (society), “I”’s life is heteronomously determined for him and he is not allowed to deviate from this trajectory that is supposed to be changing his “life attitude.” If we read this allegorically, it is not difficult to see that the intended change is from unproductive, individualistic activities (dictated by the id) toward productive, group related ones (supervised by the super-ego). One evening, the narrator decides to play his guitar in his room. The grandfather appears and scolds him for breaking the routine of the house.

When it comes to the guitar, you sometimes suddenly just get the urge to play. This is a desire of the emotions and not something that should be censured. So, there I was tuning my guitar when my brown paneled door opened and the grandfather came in. He told me that my guitar playing time had been allotted from ten to eleven in morning while the women were operating their sewing machines. This was the first time these grand family traditions had been directly applied to me. However, after that I never once played my guitar during the allotted time. I guess it is enough to say I never felt like it (Kim 2001: 75).

Here we can see Kim Sŭng-ok’s critique of Pak’s engineering of a society that demands full immersion of the individual self into the collective. The

⁴ Interestingly, there are no (to my knowledge) significant studies that read Kim Sŭng-ok’s early works in relation to the Pak regime’s totalitarianism. There are a number of studies, for instance, that perceive “Strong Man” as a critique of western capitalism. The western house in the story is seen almost exclusively as a signifier of “western” modernization based on a capitalism that is counterpoised against “traditional” Korean culture and values. See, for example No Hŭi-jun’s *Kim Sŭng-ok sosŏl ūi kŭndae chuch’e yŏn’gu* (A study on the modern subject in Kim Sŭng-ok’s novels). In analyzing “Strong man,” No characterizes the capitalism represented by the western home as a “monster” (2012: 105).

“emotional” act of playing the guitar is proscribed by authority, an apt allegory for the increasing intolerance of the growing totalitarianism of Pak’s regime at the time this story was written. This is consistent with Pak’s re-Confucianizing of the nation with the aim of establishing himself as a patriarchal figure that had the moral legitimacy to demand obedience from his children (the nation). In discussing how Pak brought citizens into the service of his project, Hwang Pyŏng-ju discusses how the physical body became the property of the nation.

The body of the individual has now been subsumed into the collective “national physique” and must be standardized according to the established norms that have been decided by the nation. In pursuing the nationalist control and regulation of the individual body, the nation has, in fact erected a prison for the body with no way to escape (Hwang 2004: 156).

The narrator of “Strong Man” is being told that he must sublimate his individual self to the regulations of the house, and this includes restrictions on his emotions and even his body. Kim Myŏng-sŏk discusses how this regulation of the individual works in “Strongman.”

The biggest difference between the Ch’angsin-dong house and the western house is the existence or absence of order. But, the order of a “regimented life before all else” that is embodied in the physical environment of the western house is not a representation of modern rationalism but an emphasis of the primacy of an unyielding feudal system based on the authority of the patriarch. The “family traditions” reconstructed by the grandfather are not a recovery of human relations but an abandonment of original human nature. Here, what is being called “family traditions” that are being used to control the sphere of daily life is a premodern authority understood in the context of 1960s Korean political authoritarianism. Pak Chŏng-hŭi’s regime emphasized the ideology of loyalty and filial piety (*ch’ungghyo inyŏm*), and tightly combined these traditional values as they were practiced in the family with a new application in the political context thus creating an ideology intended to rationalize political authoritarianism. In “Strong Man” as well, rather than a rationalism in line with a modern environment, this blind obedience forms the basis of the patriarch grandfather’s maintenance of order (Kim 2004: 120–121).

The western house is the new Korea being constructed under the tutelage of the new patriarch. The “family traditions” are the new authoritarianism that is manifest in the regimentation of the everyday and from which there can be no deviation. Only in this way can the “family” (nation) move forward. “I” sees this

“will to power” in the faces of the family members who have willingly submitted themselves to the doctrine of “a regimented life before all else”:

This family’s coordinated movements, their well-trained attitude that could seal the slightest cracks as soon as they appear, their bright expressions without a hint of darkness that emanated from the confidence that they were creating something... Every day they were running into the future (Kim 2001: 76).

“I”, however, knows that he is neither emotionally nor temperamentally fit for this Brave New World. He understands that the price for the relative prosperity the western house and its residents represent is one he is unwilling to pay. He also clearly sees that the bright expressions of these people obediently marching into the future mask a paucity of real human values. The Ch’angsin-dong boarding house is meant to represent the outcasts of society (“sons-of-bitches”) who are not quite worthy to join the ranks of these newly-minted citizens of the Republic. He realizes, however, that despite the poverty and despair of the Ch’angsin-dong boarding house there is more humanity there than could be found in the western house.⁵ To the narrator, the supposed progress of the residents (citizens) of the western house is, in fact, not progress at all due to what has been sacrificed in the loss of individual choice.

These people’s attitude is that they believe they are marching forward when in fact they are really just marching in place day after day. Wasn’t the life of the people living in the slum, the life that looked so fruitless, richer than life in this place?... I was comparing the lives of the family here (in the western house) to empty shells. And even if they weren’t empty shells, they were going in the wrong direction. I was taken by the thought that their lives were nothing more than a routine (Kim 2001:76).

The implication here is that while those living in the boarding house struggled with poverty, they had more authentic lives by virtue of their outlier status: they are not subject to the authority of the societal super-ego.⁶ Ultimately, the narrator

⁵ As mentioned above, the western house in this story has been seen almost exclusively by Korean critics as a symbol of (western) capitalism. For instance, Chōng Kwa-ri reads the house as “a strange combination of Confucian hierarchy and the individualistic ethics of capitalism...” (Chōng 2001: 703). On the other hand, I see the house as the embodiment of Pak’s compressed modernization and industrialization drive requiring mobilization of the populace.

⁶ The prostitute Yōngja, instead of looking for a different line of work, asks the narrator to go with her to a fortune teller to change her name so that she can change her luck (Kim 2001: 68).

intends to spike the family's nightly barley tea with a stimulant he purchases in a local pharmacy. He feels something akin to "a sense of duty" (77) to make some act of defiance toward the people of the western house. As he is returning to the house he passes the other western style houses that line the affluent boulevard of this neighborhood. He notices that the lights are shining brightly in all the houses, but they are all silent. This sets off a line of thought redolent of Nietzsche's Zarathustra, who comes down from the mountain to free the people of the village from their illusions:

"Seeing this, I was suddenly taken with the notion that I had come to this peaceful village, this unnaturally peaceful village as the devil sent here to liberate these people. This thought made me extremely happy" (Kim 2001: 78).

The narrator goes through with his plan but the stimulant has absolutely no effect on any member of the household (they sleep through it) indicating just how thoroughly the indoctrination of orthodoxy has been effected. "I" tell us that he imagined the family, unable to sleep, squirming in their beds. He adds "I felt that if at that moment I began to loudly play the piano, they would all come running out of their rooms as if they had been saved" (Kim 2001: 79).

The narrator does open the lid of the piano and begins sending its music echoing through the house. But the only one to come out is the grandfather who pulls him away from the piano and drags him back to his room by the wrist. The narrator is surprised and discomfited by his strength, wondering "how he could have such a powerful grip" (2001: 79). Again, to utilize Freud, the super-ego has appeared to chastise the id for its digression, dragging it back to its clean and orderly room. The narrator tells us that as he is being dragged back to his room he is taken with a powerful sense of "loneliness" (2001: 79). He is lonely because his struggle to oppose the power of the house has failed, and yet he is "awake" in his room while all others in the house sleep. Interestingly, this is the extent of the victories that Kim allows his characters.

3. KIM SŬNG-OK'S RESPONSE II: "RECORD OF A JOURNEY TO MUJIN"

If "Strong Man" was a response to Pak Chŏng-hŭi's re-engineering of Korean society by establishing a totalizing orthodoxy through conservatization and regimentation, and by re-Confucianizing a patriarchal structure, "Record of a Journey to Mujin" (1964) points, at least in part, to a refusal to participate in the

ideology of sacrifice for the nation that was particularly evident in the mobilization (particularly military mobilization) of society. If resistance in “Strong Man” is fairly overt and pro-active (spiking the tea), in “Mujin” it takes a more passive form.

In discussing the Pak regime’s cultural politics, Ch’ŏn Chong-hwan says the problem came down to “mobilization versus evading mobilization” (Ch’ŏn 2001: 283). It is in this context that one of the most important sections of “Record of a Journey to Mujin” can be read.

The protagonist of the story, Yun Hŭi-jun, describes walking several hundred *li* back to his hometown of Mujin from Seoul where he is attending college when the Korean War breaks out:

It was when my mother was still alive. Lectures at college had been suspended because of the outbreak of the Korean War, and having missed the last train leaving Seoul I walked the several hundred *li* from Seoul to Mujin on blistered and bleeding feet. I was kept confined in the storage room, so that I evaded everything, forced requisition by the volunteer (North Korean) army and conscription by the National Army, too. When the senior students of the middle school from which I graduated, bandages on all of their rings fingers, marched to the town square where trucks were waiting, singing “If by my death I can save the country...”, and when they boarded those trucks and left for the front, I was squatting in the storage room just listening to the sound of the parade passing the front of the house. When the news came that the battle had moved north and that college lectures had resumed, I was hiding in the storage room in Mujin. It was all because of my widowed mother. When everyone rushed to the battlefield, I was forced by my mother to hide in the storage room where I spent the time masturbating (Kim 2001: 117–118).

Before discussing the implications of this passage regarding Kim Sŭng-ok’s resistance to mobilization, the bandaged fingers of the student soldiers must be mentioned. The bandages on all their fingers are the result of being forced to sign a blood oath to give their lives for the nation. This seems a clear reference to Pak Chŏng-hŭi’s own experience of submitting a blood oath to the Japanese authorities in his appeal to be accepted into the Manchukuo Military Academy some twenty years before. Pak’s first application for the Academy was denied, presumably because he was three years over the age limit for acceptance. He was not one to take no for an answer and so he applied a second time. This time, however, he accompanied his application with a blood oath swearing the he would give his life for the Japanese empire (Yi 2012: 104).

One of the implications of this passage is that the mobilization of these young students is meant to represent Pak's militarized mobilization of the nation where all must be prepared to sacrifice (as he was when he volunteered). While it is certain that members of South (and North) Korean society were forcibly mobilized to fight (unlike Pak who volunteered), it seems clear that the blood oath is meant to point us to Pak Chŏng-hŭi. Cho Hŭi-yŏn has described Pak's rule as a "military style total mobilization regime." He characterizes this regime as follows:

What are the characteristics of a military style total mobilization regime? There are two main ones: the first is that "an all-out struggle is undertaken to achieve a strategic goal using all available resources" and the second is that "organization is structured around a supreme leader whom all below follow obediently while all opposition is eradicated" (Cho 2010: 59).

In discussing the second characteristic of this system, Cho says that such a military style organization would tolerate no criticism or defiance regarding its leader, nor any challenge to the hierarchy; and that when any such obstacle was encountered it was to be immediately wiped out. Therefore, absolute loyalty to the leader was essential. Cho goes on to say that,

Because of these characteristics, any signs of resistance to Pak's regime were considered obstacles to the growth of the ethnic and national collective known as the Republic of Korea and were regarded as something to be immediately wiped out, thus leading to harsh repression (Cho 2010: 59).

While Yun Hŭi-jung has no intention of actively challenging authority (and, in fact later responds to his wife's order to return to Seoul), he also has no intention of signing a blood oath and getting on the truck. His resistance is that of refusing to be (forcibly) mobilized. He tells us that his "confinement" in the storage room was "all because of his widowed mother," that he would have preferred to go to the front. However, it seems very likely that our narrator is unreliable. While reflecting on his life in Mujin and the few times he went back to "escape from some failure in Seoul," he confesses that rather than gaining some new courage or figuring out a new plan, his Mujin self was "always stuck in the storage room." In the storage room, he says, "I masturbated and smoked until my tonsils were swollen to chase away the fantasies and the insomnia" (Kim 2001: 116).

Despite his (weak) assertions to the contrary, the narrator loves his storage room self because, for all the darkness associated with his youth, this small "world of his own" afforded him some autonomy. This explains why at the same time the

students are being made to perform a ceremony of loyalty and sacrifice to the nation using their hands (blood oath), he is performing a ceremony of loyalty to his own world also through the agency of his hand (masturbation). It also explains why, on the occasions he would return in later years, he would confine himself to the storage room to smoke, fantasize, and masturbate.

If the societal super-ego who is demanding mobilization is a representation of Pak, Hŭi-jung's wife serves as a maternal super-ego that frustrates his attempts to develop an independent self. Mujin is the place where he can avoid the gaze of this maternal super-ego and indulge his libido. Hŭi-jung is clear about the association between Mujin and the liberation of desire.⁷ Mujin is dark, wet, soft, slow, and shrouded in fog, itself a representation of Hŭi-jung's unconscious; while Seoul is fast, dry, hard (paved) and "nothing but responsibility" (Kim: 128), characteristics of the demands of the super-ego, i.e. mobilization, modernization, and development. The various rooms that Hŭi-jung stays in while in Mujin serve as the locus of the id and stand in contrast to the lack of agency he has when in Seoul (his promotion is being effected in his absence by his father-in-law, another symbolic father). Returning to Mujin allows Hŭi-jung to recover a self where the libido is liberated from suppression by the super-ego.

After taking a long walk by the sea, Hŭi-jung takes the music teacher Ms. Ha In-suk, whom he met at a party,⁸ to the house he has stayed at on his last several visits. They have only met a couple of times and she knows he is married, and yet they sleep together. We can see how Mujin (and its rooms) serve as the locus of Hŭi-jung's id in the following passage:

We arrived at the house we were looking for. Life, it seemed, had passed by that house and the people who lived there, not touching them. **The owners treated me like the me of long ago, and so I became the me of long ago.** I gave the couple the gifts I had brought and they offered us my old room. In that room, I took away her impatience, as if taking away a knife from someone that is about to rush at you and stab you with it. I took her impatience away like it was a knife she was holding. She wasn't a virgin (Kim 2001: 136, emphasis mine).

The house and room are timeless, thus providing an unchanging sanctuary for Hŭi-jung in which to hide from the super-ego. Back in this room that we know

⁷ One of the most striking examples of this is when Hŭi-jung feels sexual desire "boiling up inside" while looking at the corpse of a bar hostess who has killed herself (Kim 2001: 131).

⁸ She is classically trained in voice but is pressured to sing popular songs by men at the drinking parties she attends. The implication here being that her real self is being distorted by societal (and patriarchal) pressure.

Hŭi-jung stayed in while recovering from illness and lost love, he is free of the prohibiting gaze of the super-ego and his libido is liberated. After spending the day with In-suk on the levy by the sea, he falls asleep in his room while murmuring her name. The next morning, Hŭi-jung is awoken by the owner of the house saying a telegram has come from his wife requesting he immediately return to Seoul. The telegram is extremely brief and terse saying only, "Attendance at meeting on the 27th required. Return to Seoul immediately. Yŏng." The super-ego is summoning him back to the world of "responsibility." This actually sends Hŭi-jung into something of a panic ("I put my throbbing forehead on the pillow. My breath was coming in ragged gasps."). He enters into a negotiation with the telegram (super-ego). The telegram tells him that everything he has done in Mujin is because of his preconceived ideas (about himself). He shakes his head. The telegram continues, saying that his actions in Mujin were the result of the freedom that comes with travelling and that he will be able to forget Mujin with time. Again he shakes his head. Then Hŭi-jung begins a "long argument" with the telegram. They finally compromise: the telegram will approve "one last time" of him slowly going crazy in Mujin, of the popular songs that In-suk sings, of the bar hostess's suicide, of betrayal and irresponsibility. In return, he will live within the responsibility that he has been given. So Hŭi-jung has capitulated to the super-ego; however, in a final act of defiance, he turns away from the telegram and writes a letter to In-suk.

I will be brief. I love you. I love you because you are a part of me, a me of the past that I also love. Just as I did everything I could to pull the past me into the sunlight, I will do everything in my power to pull you into the sunlight..." (Kim 2001: 139).

He reads the letter twice, tears it up, and leaves Mujin in shame. By doing so, he has bent to the power of the maternal super-ego and returned to Seoul to take his place in his father-in-law's company.⁹ However, he has also left open the door for a return to Mujin (a door that might have closed had he taken In-suk to Seoul). I believe he does this because he knows he will need to return again to Mujin to continue the quest for a self that can become independent of the compromises and societal expectations that his wife, father-in-law, and Seoul represent.

"Record of a Journey to Mujin" contains a number of themes that include resistance to mobilization and the search/desire for relief from the demands of the societal and maternal super-egos. This work is an extension of "Practice for Life" and "Strong Man" in the sense that it continues the attempt to establish a

⁹ The implications of the powerful father-in-law deciding Hŭi-jung's fate are obvious.

“world of one’s own” from which to resist the totalizing demand for sublimation of the individual self into the mass identity that was being constructed.

CONCLUSION

In both of Kim Sŭng-ok’s works “Strong Man” and “Record of a Journey to Mujin,” his protagonists’ gestures of resistance end in failure (Chŏn 2001: 283). In the former case, it was “I”’s inability to disrupt the regimentation of the house (and “rescue” the residents), and in the latter, it is Yun Hŭi-jung’s failure to gain the independence he has been seeking his entire life (first from his mother and later from his wife). This, however, does not negate the significance of their attempts.

Put in Freudian terms, Pak Chŏng-hŭi’s re-engineering of Korean society by conservatizing, re-Confucianizing, and militarizing it can be seen as establishing himself as the locus of a political, societal, and cultural super-ego that repressed the public id using the legislation of morality, mass mobilization, surveillance, censorship, indoctrination, and violence with the aim of creating a homogenized ego capable of being manipulated and controlled. The invasiveness and ineluctability of this super-ego resulted in the formation of a mass ego that derived its identity from commonly shared markers such as ethnicity, ideology, morality, and patriarchy. Of course, there were any number of subaltern aggregations that posed some form of resistance to this totalizing phenomenon. However, it is also true that this attempt was more successful than not, and its effects are still palpable in contemporary Korean society. Sin Ki-uk makes the point that, “Even today, with democratization and globalization, Koreans have not been able to move beyond notions of blood-based identity” (Sin 2006: 133).

Kim Sŭng-ok’s literary response to the project of control and indoctrination was the attempt to carve out space for the individual libido to find expression: in the western house the libido is represented by the guitar and in the storage room by masturbation. In both instances, the space is a room. Such spaces of expression were essential in order to allow formation of an ego-self that could resist the totalizing pull of the societal mass identity (and lead to the formation of an ideational “world of one’s own”). Despite the apparent failure of Kim’s protagonists to fully achieve their goals, the gestures of resistance, both active and passive, are there, and I wish to believe that they succeeded in giving some readers of the period the courage to attempt to forge an individual self when compromising would have been easier.

Submitted: January 23, 2018
Sent for revision: May 3, 2018
Accepted: May 29, 2018

STEVEN D. CAPENER (sotaebu@yahoo.com) *is an associate professor of literature and translation at Seoul Women's University, Seoul, Korea.*

REFERENCES

Primary sources

- Kim Sŭng-ok. 1977. “Na ūi ch’ot chakp’um” (My first story).” In *Ttŭn sesang e salgie* [Living in a floating world]. Seoul: Chisik sanŏpsa.
- . 2001. “Saengmyŏng yŏnsŭp” [Practice for life]. *Mujin kibaeng: Kim Sŭng-ok munbaksŏn* [Mujin kihaeng: Kim Sŭng-ok’s collected works]. Seoul: Nanam.
- . 2001. “Yŏksa” [Strong man]. *Mujin kibaeng: Kim Sŭng-ok munbaksŏn* [Mujin kihaeng: Kim Sŭng-ok’s collected works]. Seoul: Nanam.
- . 2001. “Mujin Kihaeng” [Record of a journey to Mujin]. *Mujin kibaeng: Kim Sŭng Ok munbaksŏn* [Mujin kihaeng: Kim Sŭng-ok’s collected works]. Seoul: Nanam.

Secondary sources

- Ch’oe Chae-sŏ. 2006. *Chŏnbwan’gi ūi Chosŏn munhak* [Chosŏn literature in the transitional period]. Edited by No Sŏng-nae. Yŏngnam taehakkyo ch’ulp’anbu.
- Cho Hŭi-yŏn. 2010. *Tongwŏndoen kundaehwa: Pak Chŏng-hŭi kaebal tongwŏn ch’uje ūi chŏngch’i saboejŏk ijungsŏng* [Mobilized modernity: The political-social dualism of developmental mobilization of Pak Chŏng-hŭi’s regime]. Seoul: Humanitasŭ.
- Chŏng Kwa-ri. 2001. “Yuhok kŭrigo kongp’o” [Temptation and fear]. *Mujin kibaeng: Kim Sŭng-ok munbaksŏn* [Mujin kihaeng: Kim Sŭng-ok’s collected works]. Seoul: Nanam.
- Ch’ŏn Chŏng-hwan. 2011. “Kyoyang ūi chaegusŏng, taejung ūi chaegusŏng” [Reconstruction of culture, reconstruction of the general public]. *Han’guk hyŏngdae munhak yŏn’gu* 35: 281–315.
- Freud, Sigmund. 1960. *The Ego and the Id*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Hwang Pyŏng-ju. 2004. “Pak Chŏng-hŭi sidae ch’ukku wa minjok chuŭi: Kukka chuŭijŏk tongwŏn kwa kungmin hyŏngsŏng” [Football and nationalism under Pak Chŏng-hŭi: Mobilization and the formation of the citizen]. *Tangdae pip’yŏng* 35: 145–187.
- Kim Pyŏng-ik. 2001. “Sidae wa sam: 60 nyŏndae p’ungsok pyŏnhwa” [The era and life: Changes in 1960’s customs]. In *Mujin kibaeng: Kim Sŭng-ok munbaksŏn* [Mujin kihaeng: Kim Sŭng-ok’s collected works]. Seoul: Nanam.
- Kim, Hyŏng-A. 2011. “State Building: The Military Junta’s Path to Modernity through Administrative Reforms.” In *The Pak Chŏng-hŭi Era: The Transformation of South Korea*, edited by Byŏng-Kook Kim and Ezra Vogel. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

- Kim Chi-mi. 2013. "Pak Chŏng-hŭi sidae ūi minjok tamnon kwa Yi Man-hŭi yŏnghwa ūi minjok p'yosang" [A study on the discourse of nation in the Pak Chŏng-hŭi era]. *Han'guk hyŏndae munhak yŏn'gu* 41, No. 1: 533–567.
- Kim Myŏng-sŏk. 2004. *Kim Sŭng-ok munhak ūi kamsusŏng kwa ilsangsŏng* [Sensibility and the everydayness in the literature of Kim Sŭng-ok]. Seoul: P'urŭn sasang.
- Kwak Sang-sun. 2007. "Kim Sŭng-ok ūi 'Saengmyŏng yŏnsŭp' yŏn'gu" [A study on Kim Sŭng-ok's "Practice for Life"]. *Kukche ōmun* 39, No. 4: 195–219.
- Lee, Chongsik. 2012. *Park Chung-Hee: From Poverty to Power*, Palos Verdes, California: The KHU Press.
- No Hŭi-jun. 2012. *Kim Sŭng-ok sosŏl ūi kŭndae chub'e yŏn'gu* [A study on the modern subject in Kim Sŭng-ok's novels]. Seoul: Kukhak charyŏwŏn.
- Sin, Ki-uk. 2006. *Ethnic Nationalism in Korea: Genealogy, Politics, and Legacy*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.
- Sin, Pŏm-sik, ed. 1970. *Major Speeches by Korea's Pak Chŏng-hŭi*. Seoul: Hollym Corporation.
- Yi Na-mi. 2011. "Pak Chŏng-hŭi chŏnggwŏn kwa Han'guk posu chuŭi ūi t'oebo," [Pak Chŏng-hŭi's regime and the regression of Korean conservatism]. *Yŏksa pip'yŏng* 95: 36–67.