

THE POLITICAL AESTHETICS OF ROMANCE:
ROMANTIC LOVE AS AN IDEOLOGICAL APPARATUS IN *KONJIKI YASA* AND *MUJŎNG*

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the texts of Ozaki Koyo's *Konjiki Yasha* (1897-1903) and Yi Kwangsu's *Mujông* (1917) to reveal how the modern idea of "romantic love" was utilized as an ideological apparatus in both Meiji Japan and colonial Korea. In both novels, romantic love is adopted and considered as a way to resist a dominant force, capitalism in *Konjiki Yasha* and colonialism in the case of *Mujông*. However, by deploying the logic of their opponents, the authors shaped a concept of romantic love that became complicit with the spread of the dominant ideologies. Investigating the romantic love portrayed in these novels unfolds useful historical facts regarding how the societies in which these novels were written and consumed were structured and operating. Romantic love as a particular mode of feeling or perception can provide a valuable insight in unpacking the larger economic and political structure.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Nari Yoon was born and raised in Seoul, South Korea and has also spend her childhood in Teheran, Iran and Mumbai, India. She received her Bachelors of Arts in International Studies, *summa cum laude* from Ewha Womans University in 2007 and has briefly worked as an international news researcher at MBC Broadcasting Network in Seoul before going back to school. In 2012, she graduated from Seoul National University Graduate School of International Studies (GSIS) as a valedictorian and had an internship in East Timor before coming to Cornell. From the fall of 2014, she will be starting her PhD in Asian Studies.

To my parents

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Changing my major from International studies, with concentration on political science, to Asian studies, with emphasis on humanities, was a much more dramatic and life-changing experience than I had expected. It was probably one of the most daring decisions I took so far in my short but not too short career as a student. Nothing, undoubtedly nothing, would have been possible without the guidance and support from the two amazing professors I've come to meet at Cornell. Professor Ellie Choi has been my rock and my mentor, and has given me the strength, courage and wisdom to navigate the mysterious world of humanities. I thank you Professor. My deepest gratitude also goes to Professor Naoki Sakai, the most brilliant professor I know, for his patience, insightfulness, and warmest encouragement.

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INTRODUCTION: ROMANTICIZING THE POLITICS AND POLITICIZING THE ROMANTICS

Romantic Love is discursively defined, culturally, historically, and economically contingent. Romantic love, although considered today as the most intimate topic and as rightly confined to a private space, was the very apparatus that subtly penetrated and transformed individuals' private space into the structural units of the colonial public sphere. As Foucault suggests, love and sex were never separate from human history but were discussed, described, and tolerated in different ways at different times in relation to larger social agendas. This paper will explore how a modern idea of romantic love was imagined and applied as a capitalist ideological apparatus in Japan and a colonial apparatus in Korea during late 19th and early 20th century.

It was during the era of modern nation-states and empire building that the discourse on romantic love assumed an immensely influential position in both Japanese and Korean popular culture and politics. Romantic love was viewed and employed as a way to resist a dominant force, capitalism in *Konjiki Yasha* and colonialism in the case of *Mujông*, however, by deploying the logic of their nemeses, the authors shaped a concept of romantic love that became an ideological tool of their enemies. This study will carefully analyze the idea of romantic love through two intellectually and culturally significant novels of the time, the Japanese novel *Konjiki Yasha* and the Korean novel *Mujông*, to illustrate how this inversion was possible. My comparison of these texts will also show how a literary text can be a useful source in navigating cultural and Intellectual history of Meiji Japan and colonial Korea. The main objective of this study is to demonstrate that although both of the two novels set out to assert their resistance against dominant ideologies, but by working within the established social ideas and structures, both novels were not only prisoners but also promoters of dominant ideologies of their time.

Before going into close analysis, I want to point out that there are noticeable similarities between the two novels. First, the two novels hold a symbolic position in their respective countries as one of the most beloved and widely read romantic novel of the time. Both novels were serialized through newspapers and became a sensational hit among the intellectual, political and cultural elites, and also among the growing middle class population. The two novels were shaped by, as well as shaping, the social ethos and moral values that were required at the time.

Second, these novels are based on a story of triangulated love and all the jitters, competitions, and agonies that follow. There is an interesting young male protagonist in each of these novels. The two male protagonists are young men, just beginning to enter a larger society, trying to make a name for themselves. Both of them are out-of-place and well-educated orphans, romantically viable and highly ethical in their own ways. The most conspicuous quality about these two men is that they are preoccupied with romantic love, although at first one gets abandoned, and the other abandons. The two male protagonists are obsessed with their romantic feelings for their partners and with female fidelity, which they attempt to justify on moral grounds, behaving almost as if one has to be morally impeccable in order to be eligible for love. In their course of finding love, one turns into an annoyingly indecisive and the other into a painfully decisive character.

Lastly, the two novels are staged around late 19th to early 20th century when modernity was beginning to shift, agitate and transform their countries. There are obvious cultural and political differences due to their different settings as one is in Meiji Japan and the other is in colonial Korea; however, both are written and consumed during a period when the two countries were mesmerized while being threatened by Western culture, which supposedly invented and

spread “modernity.” The elite of both countries were endeavoring to emulate the West, while also striving to form their own distinctive national literature and culture.

Ozaki Koyo (1868-1903) who wrote *Konjiki Yasha* (1897-1903) was one of the most popular novelists in Meiji Japan. He was educated in Tokyo Imperial University and was considered the founder of a modern school of Japanese fiction. Ozaki once asserted that in *Konjiki Yasha* he wanted to portray a typical woman of “Super Meiji style,”¹ and it seems the novel shows how new Meiji ideals were in conflict with other traditional values. The novel appears to resist the dominance of capitalism and instead advocating for other values such as faithful eternal love, honor and loyalty; however, by accepting and employing the logic of capitalism, the novel became a part of culture that educated the dominance and inevitability of capitalism. Yi Kwangsu (1892-1950), who is the author of *Mujông* (1917), was also considered one of the most influential colonial Korean intellectuals and cultural nationalists at the time. Similarly, Yi wrote *Mujông*, Korea’s first modern novel, to exploit the notion of romantic love as a part of his nationalist project to resist colonialism; however, despite its overtly nationalist intention, by repeating the rhetoric of Japanese supremacy over Korea the novel unwittingly became a part of the grand scheme of colonial domination and control.

Investigating a human emotion, such as romantic love portrayed in these novels, is a worthwhile project as it reveals useful historical facts regarding how the society in which these novels were written and consumed was structured and operating. Romantic love as a particular mode of feeling or perception can impart valuable insight into the historicity of everyday life, and together with analysis of the larger political and economic structure could provide more “synthetic

¹ Ozaki Koyo in *Geibun*, August, 1902, quoted from Akimaya, p. 65.

unity of experience.”² Understanding human emotions can help us figure out individuals’ thought-processes and the causality of their actions; and analyzing the changes in the trigger of an emotion over time can provide valuable information on a changing societal context in which a certain human emotion was felt and a certain human decision took place.³ The “history of sensibilities,” or the various forms and ways in which things were sensed, perceived, experienced, and described in different historical periods, can reveal the “underlying epistemological, moral, and aesthetic framework for comprehending reality”—whether referred to as the “ideology, worldview, habitus, structure of feeling, episteme, mentalité, or paradigm” of the time.⁴ Even without recourse to the empiricist epistemological tradition, which taught that “all human knowledge derives from sense experience,” it is not hard to deduce that the expression of a human emotion—the modes of “seeing, feeling, and organizing sense perception into expressive forms”—is the reflection of the general structure surrounding that person at the time.⁵

Emotional or cultural disposition, or “taste” as Bourdieu would call it, is determined by the habitus (or ideology, worldview, episteme, mentalité, or paradigm of a group that share the same habitus), which is “not only a structuring structure, which organizes practices and the perception of practices, but also a structured structure.”⁶ Here, habitus operates closest to what is commonly called “culture,” and human emotions comprise a critical component that is socially

² Harry D. Harootunian, *History's Disquiet: Modernity, Cultural Practice, and the Question of Everyday Life*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000, p. 4.

³ Lucian Febvre’s “La Sensibilite et l’Histoire; Comment reconstituer la vie affective d’autrefois,” *Annales d’histoire sociale* 3 (1941), pp. 5–20 quoted from Patrick Hutton, “The History of Mentalities: The New Map of Cultural History,” *History and Theory*, 1981, 20:3, p. 243.

⁴ Daniel Wickberg, “What Is the History of Sensibilities? On Cultural Histories, Old and New,” *The American Historical Review*, 112: 3 (June 2007), pp. 662, 664.

⁵ Wickberg, p. 665.

⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, Trans. by. Richard Nice, Cambridge, Mass., 1984, p. 170;

constructed as well as socially constructing those structures.⁷ Tracing these constructed emotions is important because they function as “landmarks,” indicating the path along which a certain group or society evolves.⁸ In this context, emotions, which often seem natural and instinctive, could be read as a cultural by-product. Thus, exploring, locating, and unpacking the narrative of, and the desire for, romantic love within the discourse of Meiji Japan and Colonial Korea can help us fathom the workings of power, culture, and morality of the two countries.

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⁷ Wickberg, p. 672.

⁸ Hutton, p. 248.

CHAPTER I.

ROMANTIC LOVE AS AN IDEOLOGICAL APPARATUS IN OZAKI KIYOSHI'S *KONJIKI YASHA*

Love and Money

This paper will explore how a modern idea of “romantic love” was used as an ideological apparatus of capitalist governmentality in Meiji Japan. Through examining the text of *Konjiki Yasha* which discusses and revolves around a story of romantic love, this paper aims to write an intellectual history of Japan that shows how romantic love was imagined and utilized during late 19th and early 20th century, the period in which Japan underwent a painful and dramatic transition from a pre-modern state to a modern nation-state under the Meiji government.

It has been often believed that *Konjiki Yasha* was a novel about the already wide spread competition between love and money during the early Meiji period. Many previous studies continue to work with the logic that *Konjiki Yasha* is a novel about the binary opposition between love and money, arguing that the novel resists dominant capitalistic ideology. For instance, Mark Anderson argues that the novel's narrative of *shimpa* (melodrama) functions as a resistance against the Japanese state that adopted and tried to impose modes of governmentality and the logic of capitalist market especially since the Ansei treaties-- as with many other stories that were produced at the time.⁹ He maintains that love and family in the novel symbolize ‘life’ while the logic of capital is on the side of ‘death.’ According to him, in the novel, as soon as the force of ‘life,’ love and family, gets incorporated into the force of ‘death,’ accumulated capital through selfish means

⁹ M. Anderson, p. 122. The Ansei treaties are the legal agreements that Japan signed with the United States, Great Britain, Russia, Netherlands and France in 1858. Following Matthew Perry's second visit to Japan in 1854, there was a strong pressure on Japan to open its trading ports to western powers and as a result Japan signed the treaties that were considered unequal and unfair to many Japanese.

gets sublated. Greed or selfishness is condoned and even transforms into something ethical when it is justified in the language of love and family.¹⁰

Sō Yōng-ch'ae, on the other hand, compares *Konjiki Yasha* and *Mujông* to argue that Ozaki wrote more a universalistic story of capitalism while Yi wrote a more particular story based on Korea's colonial situation. Sō explicitly points out that although both novels disparage modernity, Ozaki's novel also *relishes* while Yi's novel *admires* modernity. Particularly with regards to *Konjiki Yasha* Sō comments that it is rather simplistic to see the main conflict inside *Konjiki Yasha* as the rivalry between love and money, as Ozaki often proclaimed it to be.¹¹ Sō asserts that *Konjiki Yasha* is not about the conflict between love and money but is about an inevitable reality that love is money (and *vice versa*). In a similar vein, Ito also writes that there are ideological contradictions in the novel as it fails to abide by the binary opposition between money and love but rather shows the "all-pervasive and enduring" value of money.¹² Nonetheless, both Sō and Mark Anderson seems to concur that *Konjiki Yasha* applied melodramatic tone to resist to the capitalist governmentality.

This paper however will expand on what Sō and Ito mentions in passing that the oppositional relation between love and money do not hold in the novel to argue that the novel in fact functions as an educational text for new economic ethics that was necessary in Meiji Japan. In a first glance, the novel seems to portray the battle between love and money. Closer reading reveals however that the battle is thought out, formulated, propagated and defended in the imaginary space where the characters breathe, move, reasons, and speaks in the language of

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Sō, p. 221.

¹² Ito, *An Age of Melodrama*, p. 138.

capitalist logic. By abiding by the logic of capitalism itself, the novel unwittingly accepts and promotes capitalism through the toothless language of resistance. The novel also allows a space to reimagine and refigure a new relationship between an individual and his or her nation, and a chance to recreate or redefine discourses on success, work, gender, family, and nation. This paper will show how the text incorporates, as well as get incorporated into, reconciling, condoning and embracing the logic of capital and all the potency and potentiality it possesses for his /her nation as a main lesson for the readers to impart with.

Teaching Capitalistic Logic: Acceptance through Resistance

The main plot of the novel is a love triangle involving Kanichi, an orphan; Miya, a daughter from a modest upbringing; and Tomiyama, a western educated man and a son of a *nouveau riche*. Kanichi and Miya have spent their childhood together and were arranged to be married as Miya's father takes Kanichi under his wings, feeds him, and educates him in the best possible ways. The three main characters meet for the first time at a friend's New Year's party. From all the characters in the novel, the narrator chooses to open up the story by describing Miya's extraordinary beauty and also Tomiyama's wealthy appearance.

As he [Tomiyama] walked past them, through the groups of players to gain his seat, his left side only was turned towards them, but they caught a glimpse of something brilliant on his ring-finger, which dazzled them for a moment and attracted their curiosity. It was a large diamond set in a handsome gold ring, the biggest diamond they had ever seen, and he for his part, seemed quite anxious to let everyone know that he held in his hand the brightest star of heaven. (15)

The narrator comments that everyone in the room could not fail to recognize the beauty, attractiveness and perhaps authority of the diamond and consequently of the presence of its wearer.

The beauty of the diamond ring is powerful enough to be noticed by Miya, the prettiest girl in the room, and possibly one of the most beautiful girls in town.

The narrator portrays Miya as a beautiful young woman whose charm is unrivaled. She is beautiful even in simple clothing, but her beauty is augmented when it is assisted by what wealth could provide.

The lady [Miya] was elegantly dressed in an underskirt of pink silk gauze over which she wore a grey crepe *kimono*, and a green satin *obi* embroidered with gold. Her hair was dressed very high with a long coral pin as ornament, and a gold lacquer comb. Shizuo [a house-assistant], who was ascending the stairs in front of her, could not resist stealing a glance at the beautiful figure, stumbled and fell up the stairs with a great noise. She was not hurt, but dreadfully ashamed of her clumsiness, and afraid she had startled the lady. (149)

The house-assistant admires Miya and thinks to herself “what happy woman she must be...not only beautiful but graced with womanly virtue; and then, to crown it all, wealth (151).” Kanichi’s servant also is in awe with Miya’s beauty that is wrapped in the wealth she acquired through her marriage.

The old woman [a servant] wondered what could have distressed so lovely a lady [Miya], and noted with admiration how fashionably her hair was dressed, how graceful was the slope of her shoulders and the bend of her pretty neck. She must be wealthy, indeed, for was she not dressed in a double robe of the heaviest silk, of a pale and tender green-while the sash, that was fastened high at the back, was of tea-colored brocade. On the other hand, that held her little silk handkerchief, flashed a brilliant gem—a large diamond. (438)

The fact that Miya is not only beautiful but also wealthy adds to her respectability and authority.

The novel has its share of criticism against capitalism and depicts characters that are corrupted by money. For instance, another woman who is in love with Kanichi, Mitsue is held in disregard by the narrator (and Kanichi) as she is described to be in love with money more than she loves her father (100). The novel condemns the greed and self-interest associated with capitalist logic as it reasons that there is no limit to greed when it comes to a person’s desire to accumulate

money (139). It juxtaposes these demonic values with humane and righteous principles such as loyalty, kindness, sympathy and honor (134). Throughout the novel, its narration emphasizes that money ends man's honor (172-173) and that it turns humans into demons (209). It seems almost all characters in the novel acknowledge the inhumane and cruel nature of the usury business and who are in the business at one time or another experience (or at least fear) a condemnation from others or "a punishment from Heaven" (225-227). When Mr. Wanibuchi and his wife were burned to death for retribution, even his son cries that his parents had "paid the penalty for their greed with their lives" and other people in the world would be glad that they were punished (321-329).

On the other hand, characters in the novel defend their cases as they argue that it is not them, but the capitalistic world they live in that is at fault. Though the voice of Kanichi the novel adds that Kanichi "gradually discovered that a man of my [his] character would never get on in the world, I [he] gave up my [his] manliness [honor] when I [he] turned usurer" (186). There is almost a sense of fatality and inevitability in Kanichi's voice implying that Kanichi, a man of good character, could not help but to become a money accumulating "demon," because it was possibly the only way he could survive or thrive in this already capitalistic world. In another passage, the narrator comments that "according to Buddhist belief, he [Kanichi] was now turning into a demon, [but] he was already in the world of Avarice" (209).

Furthermore when Kanichi's boss, Mr. Wanibuchi, was defending his vocation as a usurer, he asserts infinite greed that is associated with capitalism could actually be beneficial to human progress. According to Mr. Wanibuchi, people confuse hatred with jealousy. For him, as long as the means to attain money are legal, the hatred towards the rich is nothing but jealousy (232).

Before attributing to (or partially blaming) the world for remaining in his usury business, he makes a case for the benefits of people's infinite greed:

If men were content to earn no more than the little necessary for food and drink, the whole state would be ruined! There would be no industries, no progress. Men would retire from business young, their powers unused and wasted. Infinite desire for gain is the very life of a nation. (233)

Sometimes the main narrative seems to be castigating the limitless greed and selfishness that almost inevitably follows with capitalistic endeavors but other times the narrative appears to be supporting the necessity and usefulness of the money making business. Sporadically there was acknowledgement of the almighty power of money even within the narratives that criticize the cruelty in capitalistic logic (321, 391).

In the later part of the novel the author resolves this discrepancy in his narrative voice by providing a solution, which seems like a compromise between the two wavering voices, but is only a strategy to promote inner, deeper, and fundamental acceptance of capitalism through and by means of outward, superficial and partial (minimal) resistance. Through the voice of Kanichi's old friend Josuke Arao, whose friendship Kanichi had cherished and respected, the narrative in the novel declares that there is nothing wrong with making money-- even if it is merely to fill the empty place of love in his life, and even if Arao himself would not be fully convinced by it-- but specifically not through the usury business (391).

What I do object to is an unjust, dishonorable trade. Wealth is not made by covetous accumulation only there are many *ways* of becoming rich besides those of the usurer. I am not advising you to change the *aim* but the *means*! You remember what the Buddhists say about truth-the saying can be applied to many things: 'By different roads, you can see the moon, immeasurably high above it.' (399) (Original Italics)

Arao goes on to pin point that the usury business, not capitalistic endeavors in general, are abominable and are a waste of national talents.

Because there are usurers such as you, many talented men who ought to be of use in the world, are being ruined, defamed, driven from their proper place in society and languishing in prisons. I am grateful to you for your argument, that I should have a care of myself for the sake of the state, and by a similar argument I ask you to give up your unjust trade-for the benefit of society. What are the things that are ruining talented men nowadays? They are profligacy and usury! If you feel sorry for my miserable condition, have a little pity on the men on whom the nation rests her hope, who are being ruined by you and your like. (403)

Outright resistance towards extreme cases, like the cruelty of usury business, serves not to increase readers' ability to resist the power of money but rather to assist them to participate more fully and whole heartedly without remorse. A technique to limit the target of condemnation and criticism to the cases of heartless money lenders, gives others a leeway, and releases others from a sense of guilt. In fact, a melodramatic resistance, as in the case of setting up fire in Mr. Wanibuchi's house, seems almost as a ritualistic and sacrificial move, that was required to give way to more active acceptance and adaptation of materialistic values. It is almost as if the novel developed its thesis by incorporating a part of the antithesis, but inadvertently, including a dose of his antidote meant, or was only possibly by, poisoning this entire novel.

Arao advocates that money is almighty but it cannot buy 'peace and quiet' (391); however, in the later chapters, it is precisely through money that Kanichi is able to obtain his peace and quiet. Kanichi also thinks that the gold demon has no power over the highest love (426); however, it is through the power of money that he is able to protect the supposedly highest love. As many characters in the novel begin to state their case for making money, it seems that the novel's own ideas about capitalism are changing.

Through the anecdote of Kanichi saving the young couple who were on the verge of committing suicide due to their financial debt, the novel reinstates the functionality of money that is useful in not only securing comfort and earning respect, but also saving people's lives and

protecting families. Although Ozaki died before finishing the novel, the novel tentatively ends with Kanichi creating a new family with this young couple he saved through the money he earned as a usurer. The lesson is that this vice can be a source of great virtue. Ironically, in the end the novel reestablishes the fact that protecting love requires a great deal of money. Money is a perfectly acceptable and even ethical method and foundation in building a new family, and it is a perfectly acceptable and ethical solution to any predicament an individual or potential family is in.¹³ Because of his financial power, Kanichi was able to reestablish himself as a protector of true love and he could regain his faith in the existence and moral superiority of true love.

Kanichi's wounded state and victimhood gave him a sense of moral superiority and rationale to justify his greed and pursuit of money. As long as his wound was hurting, he could defend his capitalistic ventures and still put a case for his moral superiority. It is ironic however that Kanichi vehemently accuses Miya for being disloyal, immoral, and avaricious when he himself acquired her as his wealth, commodity, security, and social advancement. Also because Kanichi has money now, he can have the option of helping his old friend, perhaps save his life, and even think about the possibility of taking Miya back again as he can now provide a safe home for them to start a family, without depending on another man.

International Politics behind Romantic Love

Japan's forced entrance into the international capitalist market and its shameful experience of Ansei treaties made Japan critically aware of its vulnerability in world politics. Japan

¹³ Ito, p. 123.

became more self-conscious of its “lateness” in joining the modern capitalist development, and it endeavored to catch up with other powerful western countries. In this process, it adopted liberal ideas as an international social norm and fervently internalized the notions such as sovereign and autonomous individuals, and free competition.¹⁴ Tokyo Imperial University, for one, was established with the aim to educate its elites in western pedagogy so they could be well equipped to compete with their western counterparts.¹⁵ Especially, rational and scientific knowledge and technology was emphasized so as to promote progress and development for modern Japan. Operating under the rule of meritocracy and free competition, this educational institution, among other westernized school systems, devoted in creating rational and autonomous individuals.

The expansion of higher education, together with the introduction of mass education, brought the rise of new middle class and a large number of people in the lower class who desired to join the middle class.¹⁶ Even before the Sino-Japanese War, there was a considerable and widespread aspiration among youth to get rich but after the War there was a more noticeable boom in get-rich-fast fever in Japan.¹⁷ The victory over China fueled the sentiment that Japan needed to be (and could be) as strong as or stronger than nations such as Italy, Spain and Holland, according to several magazines produced at the time.¹⁸ The economic growth stimulated by the war enticed even well-educated youth who had previously considered government positions as the only

¹⁴ Han, *An Imperial Path to Modernity*, p. 13.

¹⁵ Dore, *The Diploma Disease*, pp. 2, 76-77. In the beginning, most of the teaching positions were filled by foreigners at Tokyo Imperial University. Makoto Aso and Ikuo Amano, *Education and Japan's Modernization* (Tokyo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1972), quoted from Han, p. 31.

¹⁶ The rate of school attendance in 1892 was just over half of the school-age population but after the expansion of public education the figure rose to almost 95% by 1905. Through their system, the Meiji education promoted literacy, nationalism and loyalty for the Emperor. See Gordon, p. 18.

¹⁷ See Kinmonth, “Chapter 5, Success!” pp. 153-204.

¹⁸ “Dai-ni no ishin,” *Shonen sekai* [World of Young people] 1:3 (January 15, 1895); “Shosei risshin dan,” *Eisai shinshi*, no. 924 (May 11, 1895), “Gakusei risshin annai,” *Eisai shinshi*, no. 909 (January 26, 1895), pp. 2-3, quoted from Kinmonth, p. 153.

respectable jobs to lucrative business sectors. There was also a growing number of publications explicitly proclaiming militaristic and expansionist visions of Japan and this gave rise to an intense speculative boom in stock market or other financial ventures. Editors of youth magazines would shout “Gold! Gold!”, and “Make money! Make Money!”¹⁹ The atmosphere of postwar Japan was filled with an ethos promoting wealth accumulation and energetic youth following their monetary ambitions. A magazine from the time declared:

Get money; get it by all means, for it alone is power in this generation. Wish you to be patriot? Then get money, for you cannot better serve your country than by getting money for you and it. Be loyal? Then get money, and add wealth to your Master’s land. Be filial to your father and mother? You cannot be so without getting money. Strength of your nation, the fear of your name—all come from money. Morality ever for the sake of money. Honesty is best policy for-getting money.²⁰

The era of Meiji Restoration was indeed an era of epoch-making changes. This was the period when an argument like Sato Nobuhiro’s (1769-1850) theory of *fukoku kyohei* (富国強兵, “enriching the nation and strengthening the military”) was already wide-spread throughout the society.²¹ The role of government in national economic development was assumed and justified in the name of increasing one’s national economic competitiveness in the international economy.²² Free trade and other liberal ideas of the 19th century coincided with worldwide nation-building projects that took place during this period and for many Japanese intellectuals, liberal nationalism was accepted not only as a useful tool but also as an inescapable reality for Japan.

¹⁹ Kinmonth, p. 157.

²⁰ Uchimura Kanzo, “The Voice of Kishiu,” in *Uchimura Kanzo senshu*, vol. 16, pp. 154-155, quoted from Kinmonth, p. 157.

²¹ Maruyama. *Studies in the Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, p. 346.

²² A century had passed since Adam Smith wrote on the self-regulating function of an “invisible hand” and by this period Japanese intellectuals were also beginning to get influenced by German intellectuals, who were rather skeptical towards a laissez-faire system. See Kenneth B. Pyle, “Advantages of Followership: German Economics and Japanese Bureaucrats,” *Journal of Japanese Studies* I:1 (1974).

In the case of Meiji Japan, the discrepancies between capitalism, which emphasizes the interest of self-motivated and autonomous individuals, and nationalism, which values collective interests over individuals, were resolved with the belief that the Japanese state (with its emperor at the top) was the most benevolent and efficient agency in bringing the greatest happiness and welfare to the Japanese people.²³ Later, Yoshino Sakuzō (1878-1933), one of the leading liberal political thinkers of the Meiji and Taisho period succeeding Tokutomi Sohō (1863-1953),²⁴ for instance, embraced the Hegelian conceptualization of the state and believed the relationship between the state authority and individual freedom could be dialectically resolved.²⁵ He reasoned that state interventions were the key in bringing “strong army and rich nation” and the most efficient allocation of socio-economic resources.²⁶

²³ Han, Chapter 2, pp. 78-82.

²⁴ Tokutomi Sohō is considered as one of the most prominent journalists and spokesmen for the Meiji government. He was also one of the first Japanese intellectuals to have translated and used the word “imperialism” in Japan. He was a strong advocate of liberal democracy but his belief later evolved into liberal imperialism or what is arguably called imperial fascism. For more on his life and political moves see Pierson, John D. *Tokutomi Sohō, 1863-1957, a Journalist for Modern Japan*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980. It is still debatable whether the liberal ideas that were developing in Japan at the time could be labeled as democracy. Andrew Gordon, for instance, calls these ideas at this time, though “ambiguous and contradictory,” the foundation for ‘imperial democracy,’ while others have called it ‘*minponshuji*’ (民主主義, the politics of the people). According to him, what appears to be a sudden leap from imperial democracy, or what is often called Taisho democracy, to imperial fascism in the 1930s was possible through their common element of imperialism. The Meiji era not only brought the rise of capitalism but also the beginning of imperialism. See Andrew Gordon, *Labor and Imperial Democracy in Prewar Japan*, University of California Press, 1991, pp. 2-8.

²⁵ Yoshino Sakuzō, *Heegeru no hōtetsugaku no kiso* (Tokyo Yuhikaku shobō, 1905), reprinted in *Yoshino Sakuzō Senshu (YSS)*, vol. 1. pp. 19-77, quoted from Han, p. 79. This reconciliation between the state and individuals later developed into his idea of *minponshuji* or a ‘New Liberal Project.’ For more analysis on Yoshino’s idea of *minponshuji* see Han, Chapter 5; Bernard S. Silberman, “The Political Theory and Program of Yoshino Sakuzō,” *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 31, No.4 (Dec. 1959); Peter Duus, “Yoshino Sakuzō: The Christian as Political Critic,” *Journal of Japanese Studies*, vol.4, no. 2 (Summer, 1978).

²⁶ Additionally, the conflict between nationalism, an ideology that requires and is founded upon egalitarianism, and capitalism, an economic system that survives and flourishes on class differentiation, was mitigated because nationalism preceded capitalism. Here I am borrowing an argument from Greenfield that nationalism is (often) the driving force behind the growth of capitalism. According to her, the existence of nationalism allows, and justifies numerous individual sacrifices that come with capitalist developments

Japan before the 1850s had no national bank, national treasury, national law, national flag, anthem or holiday. But by 1900, it has created a modern nation of its own, a new national individual subjectivity with the aim to avoid marginalization and subjugation within the international society.²⁷ Its elites argued that they “allowed western penetration [including methods of nation-building] in order to protect the ‘innermost substance of its [their] culture.’”²⁸ Here one could argue that Japanese modernity is centered on this dominant trend in the international political economy. For instance, *Saishinron*, literally meaning 'newest theses' (1862), an essay by Kato Hiroyuk (1836-1916) writes that Japan must follow international norms as it is an “inevitable trend of the times.”²⁹ After the Sino-Japanese War, many Japanese intellectuals believed that the weakness of China was due to its lack of national solidarity and unity. There was a growing consensus among Japanese elites that they had the need and the ability to build a strong and unified Japanese nation.³⁰

Even in the novel, the recognition of the Japanese nation, or Japanese national consciousness is much more explicit than its (unconscious or conscious) embracement of capitalism. For instance, Mr. Wanibuchi argues that earning money can not only be ethical act for an individual but a patriotic act for the nation (233). Here we see a glimmer of an effort to discuss national consciousness. Later, even when Mr. Wanibuchi is destroyed, mercilessly burned to death

because "nationalism implies international competition." Liah Greenfeld, *The Spirit of Capitalism: Nationalism and Economic Growth*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001.

²⁷ Mark Ravina, “State-making in Global Context: Japan in a World of Nation-states,” in Fogel ed. *The Teleology of the Modern Nation-state*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005, p. 88.

²⁸ Ravina, p. 97.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Between the Sino-Japanese War and the Russo-Japanese War, there was also an increase in the publishing industry, which contributed to and was dictated by increased debates on imperialism. See Marius B. Jansen, “Japanese Imperialism: Late Meiji Perspectives,” Ramon H. Myers & Mark R. Peattie eds., *The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895-1945* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984).

by an old woman whose son's reputation is ruined by Mr. Wanibuchi, Mr. Wanibuchi 's commitment to money-making and visions for the nation survive and continue to live on with Kanichi, who became his heir. On other occasions, Kamada, one of Kanichi's old friends from the First High School, contends that world politics is dominated by strength. Kamada advocates the "superiority of force" and says that he sees International Law as "rubbish." He adds "it is only by strength of arms that a nation can protect its national interest and keep its prestige. There is no sovereign over all the nations, who can satisfactorily decide questions of right and wrong. There is only one way of judging, War!" (195).

Consolidating National Consciousness

In a way, this novel is addressed to a potential reader who is recognized and assumed as a member of the same "imagined community" as the author and the characters in the novel. This assumption assists the educational process of capitalistic governmentality as it reverts and connects individual desires to national desires, and *visé versa*. Here romantic love acts as an effective tool that instructs the importance of individual decisions, inner motivations, and passions, in which strong, motivated, committed and unified building blocks of a nation could be made. What the novel reveals or establishes through the discourses surrounding romantic love and its relations with money, is the fact that no one can escape the logic of capitalism. Reaffirmation of this reality promotes in fact an attitude of admittance, adjustment and even collaboration with the modes of capitalist governmentality that is at work within the society.³¹ By discussing the very problem of

³¹ Considering the fact that the author himself was inextricably linked to the print capitalism and the logic of the market-- through mass production, marketing, and circulation—it is not hard to reason that the book itself is already a part of this logic of capitalism.

capitalism, the novel portrays a protagonist who succumbs to the societal pressures to conform to the ideology of capitalism. Here, it is noticeable that the novel strives to mold not just an individual ‘self’ consciousness, but a modern and national consciousness. Kanichi is described as a representative figure in this national consciousness and the conflict and moral dilemma he faces could be construed as highly likely or even ‘typical’ in this society. Kanichi is not just any young man living in this world but he is a young man who belongs to the collective body of people, including the readers, who are Japanese.

Moreover, the author writes with an “ironic intimacy” as if he is already acquainted with his readers and therefore can predict their reactions. The author’s ‘national imagination’ and familiarity with the socio-economic landscape of the characters is assumed and seems obvious his readers, and through pronominal adjectives such as ‘we,’ and ‘our’, this world is (supposedly) bounded by the same logic, experiences, and values. In a novel the author acts as an omnipresent god, who seems to know everything that is going on in this community. He does not shy away from using words such as ‘everyone’ or ‘all people’ to describe the tendency, thought, or habit of this community. The author never explicitly names or calls this community Japan or Japanese but he does not have to as it is assumed to be understood by his readers. The author exhibits his confidence in the existence and unity of this community, regardless of how little if any contact he had with them. He can easily “imagine” the shared moral values of this community without having to know all about its members’ different particularities or backgrounds, and his voice is confident in its manner of addressing its audience as members of this community.

Also, the depiction of simultaneity in a novel through words like ‘we’, ‘here’, and ‘together,’ put together helps the novel to act as a representative mechanism converting real class

or other socio-economic differences into an abstract and imaginary sense of equality, and shared destiny.³² The author's confidence in his understanding of the supposedly shared values of this community gives an illusion of an egalitarian community whose numerous conflicts and dilemmas, which come with modernity, equally affect the lives of its readers of different socio-economic backgrounds and world-views, who together with the author have come up with a consensus in their common value system. The interesting part is that once written and propagated through popular media, these supposedly shared values of this imagined community can get accepted as and become a part of reality. Anderson quotes that "printed materials encouraged silent adherence to causes whose advocates could not be located in any one parish and who addressed an invisible public from afar."³³ Anderson adds "fiction seeps quietly and continuously into reality, creating that remarkable confidence of community in anonymity which is the hallmark of modern nations."³⁴

The early 20th century, when the novel was constructing, and was constructed by, the lessons for liberal capitalist governmentality, was the period of great turbulence. Before the novel was written, actual resistance to liberal (or westernized) norms, values and ideas were also present. During the Bakumatsu period (the final years of the Edo period, circa 1853-1867), there were several peasant uprisings and other movements that viewed the private accumulation of wealth, egalitarianism or the breaking down of social hierarchy as "evil." These movements usually argued

³² T. Nairn in B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 36. Benedict Anderson argues in his book that print capitalism brought about nationalism; however, it is my contention that nationalism predates the spread of (print) capitalism. Capitalism was possible because of nationalism, especially in the case of Meiji Japan, and in many cases the two forces were reinforcing each other.

³³ Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, "Some Conjectures about the Impact of Printing on Western Society and Thought," *Journal of Modern History*, 40:1, March 1968, p. 42, quoted from B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 35. Although the examples Eisenstein cited were on western countries, the same argument could be applied to Meiji Japan.

³⁴ B. Anderson, p.36.

for a return to the "good old days."³⁵ After the novel was written, Meiji Japan also experienced numerous incidents of resistance to the authority so that the period between the Hibiya riot of 1905 to the nation-wide rice riot of 1918 is even called the 'era of popular violence' (民衆騒擾期 *minshū sōjō ki*).³⁶

However, by the late 19th century, a clear demarcation between popular riots in the late Tokugawa period and the Meiji period began to show. The participants of the Meiji riots were much more widespread and "heterogeneous," quite unlike the localized peasant uprisings in the previous decades.³⁷ Also, although the elites of the Meiji had limited control over its population, the riots in this period clearly had a national focus, instigated by their elites.³⁸ The Hibiya riot, for instance, had a dual characteristic that although the rioters were opposed to government policies, their opposition was nationalistic and deeply rooted in their loyalty to the emperor.³⁹ The riots during Meiji era were also much more politicized and nationalized, and although they had a working-class dimension, mostly they were rising not to challenge capitalism or nationalism, or

³⁵ Hashi-moto Mitsuru, "The Social Background of Peasant Uprisings in Tokugawa Japan," in Tetsuo Najita & J. Victor Koschmann eds. *Conflict in Modern Japanese History: The Neglected Tradition*, Princeton University Press, 1982.

³⁶ The Hibiya Riot of 1905 was the major city-wide riot that erupted in protest to the results of the Portsmouth treaty. The Rice Riot of 1918 was a nation-wide resistance against the government in reaction to exorbitant rice prices post WWI. Popular riots during this period resulted in 528 rioters injured and 17 killed, and more than 500 policemen injured. See Andrew Gordon, *Labor and Imperial Democracy in Prewar Japan*, University of California Press, 1991, pp. 26-27.

³⁷ Gordon, Chapter 2.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Shumpei Okamoto, "The Emperor and the Crowd: the Historical Significance of the Hibiya Riot," in Tetsuo Najita & J. Victor Koschmann eds. *Conflict in Modern Japanese History: The Neglected Tradition*, Princeton University Press, 1982.

even to expel liberalism, but to realize the visions of these ideas, introduced by their elites in earlier decades.⁴⁰

The Birth of a Modern Man

In the Meiji society, where previous social stratification was breaking down, radical social transformations were taking place. Social status was no longer inherited, but obtained through capitalist ventures and the accumulation of wealth. Now money could buy authority, respect, charisma, and distinction. Wealth became the new variable that defined and categorized people. This novel, written and consumed as national literature, acts as an educational text for the nation, teaching its people new ethics of socializing and flourishing in this world. It represents as well as redefines and refigures what the modern society is like and how one should conduct oneself in this world. Every character's dispositions, their speeches, outfits, and demeanors, contain and often reveal a moral value judgment and evaluation of the narrator, providing a new moral compass for modern readers. The novel posits, occasionally in a form of criticism, that a man's value is determined by what he has: He *is* what he *has*. A person is valuable as long as he is capable of making money.

As Marx writes in his value-form analysis, capitalism does not merely change people's habit of trading objects; it also displaces previous social formations and completely transforms the way people relate and interact with each other. Now the idea of "equality" dictated by money is

⁴⁰ The liberal contents of these protests began to change with the high cost of imperialism and the Great Depression. For more on the transition from liberal (or imperial) democracy to imperial fascism see Gordon, *Labor and Imperial Democracy of Prewar Japan*, Part III; and Metzler, "The Crisis of Liberalism," in *Lever of Empire: the International Gold Standard and the Crisis of Liberalism*, pp. 197-270.

introduced. By internalizing the dominant value of commodities and exchanging those commodities for surplus, human interactions are calculated according to their value-forms. The manifestation and calculation of economic values in human interactions are normalized and naturalized so that although people often do not fully understand the extent of these calculations or how these calculations enter their psychology, they accept and participate in these relationships.⁴¹

With capitalist value system where status was depended on capital, came a new ethic of hard work and striving as avenues for personal fulfillment. In Japan, Samuel Smiles' bestseller *Self-help* (1876) was gaining considerable popularity among samurais and intellectual elites from the 1870s.⁴² It was arguably one of the most read books at the time, propagating new economic ethics such as diligence, hard work, perseverance, perfectibility, individual initiative, financial independence and strong determination. This American (or British) book, the first of its kind, taught, reflected, and helped shape the reality was teaching, reflecting, and shaping the reality, that individuals are drivers of their own fate. *Self-help* was written with a recognition that money is an important aspect of human life and success in wealth could also be construed as respectability, since success implied (or was seen as the result of) a good work ethic. as one requires such character ethics to be successful in the first place. In this modern world, one's success was no longer determined by inheritance-- rather, inherited money can make a person lazy and deter one's success-- but by a person's determination.⁴³ Other literature produced (and imported from the US) during this time helped define and measure success in terms of monetary value than other social

⁴¹ Karl Marx, "The Value-Form," *Capital*, Volume I, Penguin ed., pp. 179–180.

⁴² Kinmonth, *The Self-made Man in Meiji Japanese Thought*, p. 10.

⁴³ Smile, *Self- Help* (1876), p. 19, quoted from Kinmonth, p. 17

or ethical standards.⁴⁴ Through the education of new economic ethics, one's economic values were easily translated as moral values. If he has no money, he is not only unworthy but also immoral as it is his lack of ethical virtues that brought him to his misfortunes. Working hard was not only recognized, respected, commended as a financially beneficial quality but was also considered morally superior.

Breaking down of previous social hierarchies and stratifications made many people nervous and insecure about their own social standings. People were trying to find ways to maintain, or obtain new methods to increase, their social status, and modern school educational system was considered as one of the surest way to train oneself to find a secure place in the world. The graduates from the imperial universities had exclusive social privileges and were virtually guaranteed respect, promotion and success in all sectors of Japanese society.⁴⁵ The modern educational system was radically different from the traditional one, and modern schools were the harbingers of modern economic ethics.⁴⁶ Even for Kanichi, without his merits and high performances in the First High School, which was considered a path way to high government positions, Miya's family could not have allowed him to be engaged to Miya (33). New ethics these modern schools transmitted was also drastically different from traditional samurai values which emphasized loyalty, and honor. The First High School, one of the most prestigious educational institutions Meiji Japan, did teach Confucian ethics and samurai virtue;⁴⁷ however, what is more

⁴⁴ Kinmonth, pp. 159-165.

⁴⁵ Han, p. 28. See also Henry D. Smith II, *Japan's First Student Radicals* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), pp.7-8.

⁴⁶ For an idea of meritocracy in modern Japanese education see Thomas C. Smith, "'Merit' as Ideology in Tokugawa Japan" in *Aspects of Social Change in Modern Japan*, Ronald Dore ed., Princeton University Press, 1967, pp. 71-91; Ronald Dore, *Education in Tokugawa Japan*, Rutledge and Kegan Paul, 1965.

⁴⁷ For debates regarding the definition of samurai class see W. G. Beasley, *The Meiji Restoration*, Stanford University Press, 1972, pp. 22-34.

noticeable about this educational institution was that it was the official public institution that educated and was operating under the law of meritocracy. Based on the notion of equality, all students had the same opportunity to make a name for themselves and climb up an academic, social, and bureaucratic ladder according to ability and hard work. This equalizing and individualizing scale of evaluation was a revolutionary difference from the previous days where one's fate was (pre)determined by one's birth and heritage.

This friction between modern and traditional values can be felt in both *Konjiki Yasha* and *Mujông*. As an orphan, Kanichi, like Hyungsik, represents the discontinuity between tradition and modernity because he has no authority to hold him back, and is not bound by obligations to his class or family.⁴⁸ If he chooses, he could be in charge of his own destiny, without bothering his whole family. This could have affected Kanichi to be more vulnerable to social changes but also to be more accepting of social changes and the new social ethnics that followed.⁴⁹ He could be more prone to notice, welcome and take advantage of new values. Kanichi's upright morality, his mastery of new economic ethics such as honesty, hard-work, diligence, persistence and dedication, earns favors from Wanibuchi, the loan shark, who trusted him almost like a son.⁵⁰ These new ethics eventually help Kanichi to receive Wanibuchi's inheritance after his death in place of his son, who refused to be connected with his father's filthy money.

Marriage, Family and the Nation

⁴⁸ Ito, p. 90.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Kanichi narrates that what he detests losing time as it means losing what he desires the most, money (432).

The love between Kanichi and Miya represents more than an individual's destiny and happiness but also a new vision for the nation's stability, destiny and happiness. Romantic love acted as a guiding principle of modern family and it functioned as a useful ideological tool in educating, and preparing the population: in other words, constructing the building blocks of a modern nation. In pre-modern Japan, a wedding ceremony, or a celebration and a protection of monogamy between a man and women, was not a prevalent social custom before the 1880s. It was only as a project of a modern nation that the sanctity and necessity of the marriage institution was established as a mandatory path way to adulthood or as a healthy member of a society. Before modernization, pre-marital sex was commonplace and the emphasis of female virginity was not visible, especially among the people in the lower class.⁵¹ On the other hand, the elite warrior class were keen on following their own custom of marriage. By marrying their offspring to a family of equal upper class status, the elite samurai class protected their exclusive social privileges that came with their family names.

During the Meiji period, the samurai class propagated (or democratized) their ideals and customs of marriage to the wider public to reconstruct their nation. To eradicate the previous notion of social classification, class distinctions and old social bondages, the new Meiji elite, who were keen on establishing a modern nation-state according to international social norms, labeled marriage and sexual practices of the Edo period as immoral and promiscuous. They then promoted new ethics of marriage and love that emphasized autonomous individual decision. Fukuzawa Yukichi, a liberal ideologist and one of the founders of modern Japan, also promoted new ethics of romantic love and criticized those who valued family backgrounds over personal attachments

⁵¹ Satomi Kanno, *Souhisareru Remairon (A theory on Romantic Love of Modern Japan)* (2001), Son Jiyeon, trans. Seoul: Nonhyung, 2014, p. 49.

in marriages.⁵² Within this framework of “samuraization of marriage,”⁵³ homosexuality had no place and because the legacy of exchanging women to protect and strengthen family lines remained, virginity of women became an issue of great importance.⁵⁴

Even modern romantic love was romantic only as long as it promised a romantic life style for a young couple in love. While men were encouraged to strive for success, women had no such option. In a capitalist society, there were only consumers and consumed, and within this economy women were considered objects to be acquired. Their only respectable path for social advancement recognized by the state and the society for women was marriage, and when women were still considered as a “chattel” for exchange between families, a woman’s beauty was her biggest asset, merit and capability.

In this novel, it seems like Miya considers no other option but to choose a husband in order to heighten her social status. Marriage is the only means that was available to her if she is to achieve self-advancement in a society. Her beauty is what guarantees her love, and she knew what her charm was worth (34, 369). The narrator comments that she was a “valuable possession” for her husband (370) and O’shizu’s stepmother and Mitsue’s parents also tried to sell their daughters

⁵² Satomi, p. 55.

⁵³ *Ibid*, p. 49.

⁵⁴ Even today marriage is often considered as a union between two families not just two individuals. The legacy of pre-modern forms of marriage, meaning using marriage as a method to protect (or promote, in some cases) one’s social status, continues as the benefits that come with marrying a family of good fortune, inheritance or otherwise, continue. The only difference between the old and new marriage custom is that the competitive game of marrying for one’s status became open to the public. Here the conflict between nationalism, an ideology based on egalitarianism, and capitalism, an economic system founded on class distinctions, was resolved by people freely and voluntarily “choosing” to marry a person, or family, of good fortune. Although the ideology of nationalism emphasizes equality to attract people to its system, in reality, to affirm a nation’s imaginative dream, one has to constantly overcome all forms of social discrimination within its structure. Marrying a man or a family of secure social, political, or economic standing provided a way to cope with (or to solidify) the actuality of discrimination.

for money (523). When a woman is considered as a property of a man, the head of the household, it becomes more important for him to confine her to domestic areas and obsess with female fidelity and chastity. A beautiful woman, who will bear beautiful children, is exchanged for money to provide care for home and other material existence of the man's household.

Romantic love, a pathway to marriage, for women it also meant securing a stable life for her (potential) children and herself. A woman's success in seducing a wealthy man for marriage is equivalent of a young man's success in a business world. It is not less important in its meaning and seriousness for women as her chance for personal advancement, filial piety, security and respect depended on it. Marrying well signifies and is a matter of survival and self-fulfillment for many women. Her attractiveness is her asset, and the prettier she is the higher her chances of securing a stronger and more capable male partner.

In a way, it is not just that money is used to gain love, love is a useful means to attain money. While it was new economic ethics--such as hard work, self-motivation, diligence and persistence--that were needed for a man to climb up the social ladder that finally opened for every man; it was new heightened feminine ethics --such as fidelity, maternity, and domesticity-- that were measured against women of virtuous grounds, deciding whether she is good enough to marry.⁵⁵ During this time, when new business opportunities opened up, people (mostly young men) were suddenly able to climb up the social ladder much more quickly. People were no longer borne into money but worked hard to earn money and high social status. One man's fate was determined

⁵⁵ Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987

by his luck and his work (to varying degrees) but a woman's fate was determined by her desirability.

Replacing the old system of social class differentiation, a new value system seep into the world of modern literature. This new system depicted and weighed an individual's quality of mind, particularly that of a woman, as a person's distinctive value.⁵⁶ Modern world, and modern literature it produced, began to say, although superficially, that neither birth nor title accurately described the value of an individual but "only the more subtle nuances of behavior indicated what one really worth."⁵⁷ The reading public, especially the rising middle-class, began to read in the literature that people acquired their worth, character, and identity through the ethics and textures of their minds and actions.⁵⁸

Particularly, the difference between men and women were assumed to be based on their qualities of mind. For instance, men were more equipped to work and be politically and financially independent, while women were more prone and suited to be a care-taker in a domestic sphere. As gender acted as arguably the single most defining character, a quality transcending and subordinating all other social distinctions, differentiating one individual from another, a woman's space became limited to her home.⁵⁹ Strategically, by establishing the domestic and private sphere

⁵⁶ Armstrong, p. 4.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ In the case of modern Britain, the pursuit of 'respectability' became an ideology itself, an effective mechanism dominating and haunting the middle-class and the working-class, who aspired to join the middle-class. This same phenomena was visible in the rise and "samuraization" of the middle-class in Meiji Japan. For more on the British working-class' pursuit of respectability see Peter Bailey, "Will the Real Bill Banks Please Stand Up?" Towards a Role Analysis of Mid-Victorian Working-Class Respectability," *Journal of Social History*, 12 (3), Spring, 1979, p. 336.

⁵⁹ In reality, women were not only culturally but also legally banned from participating in a world of politics. The 1889 Law on Assembly and Political Societies and the 1900 Public Order Police Law (Article 5) banned women from participating at all political events. This deprived their rights to vote, join political parties, speak at or even attend rallies. See Gordon, p. 36; and also Sharon Seivers, *Flowers in the Salt*,

as a non-political space, the only haven free from heartless economic competitions and the only safe and legitimate place for women, women became confined to this limited space and their suppression was effectively ignored, condoned and concealed as an issue of private matter.⁶⁰

In the novels, narratives that appeared to be solely concerned with the troubles of courtship or love, in fact, seized the opportunity and power to designate which spheres belonged to men and women, by simply regulating what quality was desirable for a man or a woman. Whether or not a woman possessed these feminine virtues determined her desirability and this in turn allowed male desires to control female behaviors. In *Konjiki Yasha*, Miya is vilified and punished because she was not loyal to Kanichi that she actively chose a life-style she wanted, favoring money over love--although it is not known for sure if her feelings for Kanichi was strong before she left him.

The fact of the matter is however, that she is more demonized because she revealed her undomesticated and unauthorized desire. Craving for money is not a desirable quality for a woman; while it might be condoned or even applauded for men. Also, a woman is not supposed to treat her loyalty or chastity lightly as it signaled the gravest danger to a society structured on the samuraization of family, and this gender differentiation and domestication of women. Modern economic ethics, such as self-initiative, free competition, meritocracy, and autonomous individual--that were championed in the modern society was not a flattering quality on women. Ascribing and allowing modern qualities, including new economic ethics, to be only compatible with men or

Stanford University Press, 1983, Chapter 1 & 2. Armstrong adds that “granting all this, one may conclude that the power of the middle classes had everything to do with that of middle-class love,” Armstrong, p. 8.
⁶⁰ *Ibid.* There were also few brave women who resisted to this repression. For more on the precocious feminist movements of the time see Mikiso Hane, *Reflections on the Way to the Gallows: Rebel Women in Prewar Japan*, University of California Press, 1988.

male qualities, desirable domestic ethics for women perpetuated women's confinement in a domestic sphere and their financial, political, moral and emotional dependence on men. As Foucault writes, the notion of respectability, and in this case desirability, was employed "not to punish less, but to punish better, to punish with an attenuated severity perhaps, but in order to punish with more universality and necessity, to insert the power to punish more deeply into the social body."⁶¹

Throughout the novel, the narrative seems to be arguing that a person must possess modern values, if he or she is to win the battle for romantic love. Here, it is interesting that Miya mostly represents and embodies obsolete traditional values. She cannot do anything without the help of other individuals. She is beautiful but fragile, exquisite but helpless to face the world alone. Her fate is dependent upon who she marries and her social advancement is equated with the man she is in a relationship with. She is trapped in the past and is dependent on others financially, emotionally, and morally. She is frail and submissive, but even her fragility and helplessness is described as beautiful. When she was fighting Kanichi who kept refusing her, the narration portrays that Miya was "like a lily that is bruised" (443). Miya is compared to a flower as an epitome of beauty and fragility. Also, when Shizuo [a house-assistant] saw Miya for the first time she thought Miya was an epitome of traditional values.

Shizuo was overwhelmed at the condescension of the beautiful lady [Miya], and was reminded of a passage in 'The Precepts for Women,' which her father used to read to her. Not even robes of five gorgeous colors should be regarded as the glory of woman, but chastity, obedience, and uprightness. Shizuo felt that this lady would be the realization of this precept, for although so beautifully dressed, she did not seem vain at all, but was kind-hearted and gracious. (150)

⁶¹ Michael Foucault, *Discipline and Punishment*, New York: Vintage Books, 1979, p. 87.

Kanichi's disregard for Miya could also be translated as his disregard for traditional values. She had to die, even if only symbolically or figuratively in a dream (479). A traditional girl inevitably falls apart in the face of modernity. However, unfortunately, Miya is condemned either way. Even if she acquire modern qualities, it will not save her, in fact, it will only taint her. When she is out of her traditional box, she is no longer respectable or desirable. Modernity, and its sphere of economic and political growth, was not for women.

On the other hand, Kanichi's money lending business helps him to repair the conflicts that rise from his status as an educated man with a sense of moral superiority from samurai heritage with no considerable economic and financial capabilities.⁶² Note that by being a protector of a patriarchal family order, he becomes a protector of a domesticated, and the only respectable and legitimate form of, romantic love. Note also that throughout the novel, patriarchal order is hardly ever questioned or challenged. A woman who gained her financial autonomy and is capable of articulating one's desire is portrayed as a person of no morality and respectability.

The novel sets out to assert its resistance to the power of money and the logic of capitalism, but in the very narration of its protest, it reveals that it is not only a prisoner but also a promoter of capitalist governmentality. The novel seems to condemn the world that commodifies even the most elusive and worthy value of all, love, can be quantifiable and purchasable. Underlying the outright resistance and criticism of insatiable greed for money, however, there is an abiding faith in the merit of financial security, moral values in hard and honest work, and the respectability of a self-made man. It thus produced a discourse in which, even as it outwardly challenged the capitalist logic, acknowledged, accepted, and even celebrated the very intellectual, cultural and political, (i.e.

⁶² Ito, p. 129.

economic) premises of capitalist governmentality on which this capitalistic nation-state was constructed. Because resistance corresponds to the very structure of power its resistance seeks to repudiate, the narrative in the novel inescapably falls into the working of capitalism. Despite the occasional moralizing and didactic tone, the novel is still working within the social framework of power and influence of capital. In doing so, the novel produces the awareness and the acknowledgement of power of money, and as a consequence, educates the readers of the new ethics to survive in the modern world.

Conclusion

Ever since the novel's publication, the rivalry between an earnest man and a rich then became a standard trope in modern popular culture. A man who can provide a more comfortable living for a woman competes with a man who avows that his love is more faithful and sincere. More often than not, in literature, a woman in this situation choose pure love over money. Like those novels that were produced later on, on the outset, it seems like this novel's moral teaching is to urge people to resist the temptation of money, however, close reading reveals that the novel is still working within the logic of capitalism and its resistance is only superficial. This feigning resistance is and was a necessary process that eased the adjustment of new capitalistic ethics and adoption of the logic of capital. In fact this resistance of the characters on the surface level makes it easier for the reader to sympathize with the characters and accept the hidden logic of capitalism. The resistance could almost act as a camouflage, to make a smoother penetration into the innermost private lives and thoughts of the readers.

Through the performance of reading and being exposed to new ethics, partially already in place but solidified by the novel, readers could adopt new sensibility, respectability and a feeling of being obliged to adjust to new complex set of ideas and emotions regarding money and capitalistic values. The text provides reasons to be not conflicted or shamed by their monetary ambitions. Readers are free to reject or deny these values; however, due to the subtle and cunning manner of concealing while promoting these values, the possibility of resisting these values becomes less likely. The novel provides one of the ways in which capitalist logics could be safely defined and tolerated, for instance, by limiting the target of vilification, rejection (and real resistance) to evil money lenders, who are considered to be at the extreme end of capitalistic ventures. Even these villains in the novel, in the end, are exonerated, accepted and their achievements even celebrated through their financial contribution. The novel influence its readers to forgive, or at least take advantage of capitalism without remorse, with the help of newly created and redefined ideas of decency, respectability and happiness. The novel makes a heroic narrative of Kanichi, and other narratives describing what money could do, to help shape readers emotions and affinities regarding a certain object, person, setting, or value. By speaking of the attractive power, utility and dominance of money, the novel diverts its readers' social energy from other political and social forms of imaginations, only to imagine money as the only medium that could usher modern man into finding romantic love and his personal, as well as his nation's, happiness, security, and peace.

Here in the novel, perhaps resistance is not employed as a destructive force to reject the dominant structures or to replace the logic of capital; but rather as a constructive strategy to compliment or supplement existing discourses and structures with non-monetary values such as moral and humane principles such as love, loyalty, and honor with the aim to make their imagined

community more inclusive and ethical. Aestheticizing new economic values however makes readers less susceptible to challenge the logic of money and the establishment of new ethics in these discourses. In this regard, the romantic novel was a popular and enticing space to (re)negotiate modernity and to shape new social consciousness. This is why studying the nation through its narrative, its language and rhetoric recorded in the novel is a worthy venture in investigating often veiled yet meaningful cultural and intellectual history of Meiji Japan.

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CHAPTER II.

ROMANTIC LOVE AS A COLONIAL APPARATUS IN YI KWANGSU'S *MUJÔNG*

Romanticizing Colonial Korea

This paper will explore how a modern idea of “romantic love” was used as an ideological apparatus of nation-building, and consequently empire-building, in colonial Korea. Romantic love, although often considered today as an intimate topic rightly confined to a private space, was the very apparatus that subtly penetrated and transformed individuals’ private space into the structural units of the colonial public sphere. As Foucault suggests, love and sex were never separate from human history but were discussed, described, and tolerated in different ways at different times in relation to larger social agendas.⁶³ It was during the era of modern nation-states and empire building that the discourse on romantic love assumed an immensely influential position in Korean popular culture and politics. Yi Kwangsu (1892–1950), as one of the most dominant colonial Korean intellectuals and cultural nationalists at the time,⁶⁴ tried to apply the notion of romantic love in his novel *Mujông* (*The Heartless*, 1917) for his nationalist project; however, despite his overtly nationalistic intention, by repeating the rhetoric of Japanese supremacy over Korea, the novel became an intricate part of the grand scheme of colonial domination and control.

By examining the text in its context as it defines, structures, and teaches romantic love, this paper aims to write a cultural as well as intellectual history of colonial Korea of the late 1910s and

⁶³ Michael Foucault. *History of Sexuality*. New York: Vintage Books. 1980.

⁶⁴ Gi-Wook Shin & Michael Robinson. *Colonial Modernity in Korea*. Harvard University Asia Center, 1999; Michael Robinson. *Cultural Nationalism in Colonial Korea, 1920–1925*. Seattle, University of Washington Press, 1988.

early 1920s, the period in which Korea underwent a painful yet dramatic transition from a pre-modern state to a modern nation under Japanese colonization. The impact the book had on Korean intellectual leaders and the growing Korean middle-class was indeed considerable and this makes *Mujông* a valuable cultural and intellectual text for investigation. Previous studies have debated over the politics of nationalist agendas in Yi Kwangsu's novels, and how Yi tried to propagate the idea of modern romantic love for his nationalist projects.⁶⁵ However, this study will specifically examine the links between romantic love in Yi's novel and Yi's unwitting involvement, participation, and facilitation of Japanese colonial domination, which inevitably made his nationalist project, *Mujông*, into a collaborative part of larger imperialist projects. Yi's romantic novel was unmistakably a cultural project for national liberation. However, because of a variety of historical forces, the novel got incorporated into the larger current of colonial domination. These forces included not only Yi's Japanese education and internalization of methods of control, but also the intergradation of national subject building into colonial subject building, the bourgeois monopolization of cultural production in colonial Korea, and the dialectical relationship between resistance and subjugation.

Locating Romantic Love in Colonial Korea

The word "romantic love (戀愛)" first appeared in Korean literature in 1912 in the work

⁶⁵ For example, Sŏ, Yŏng-ch'ae. *Sarang Ŭi Munpŏp (Grammar of Love) : Yi Kwang-Su, Yŏm Sang-Sŏp, Yi Sang*. Sŏul: Minŭmsa, 2004; *Ach'ŏm Ŭi Yŏngungjuŭi: Ch'oe Nam-Sŏn Kwa Yi Kwang-Su (The Heroism of Flattery)*. Sŏul-si: Somyŏng Ch'ulp'an, 2011; Yi Kwangsu, trans. by Jooyeon Rhee, "What is Literature? (Munhak iran hao)", in *Azalea: Journal of Korean Literature and Culture*, 4 (2011), pp. 293–313; Hwang, Jong-yon, "The Emergence of Aesthetic Ideology in Modern Korean Literary Criticism: An Essay on Yi Kwangsu," *Korea Journal* 39:4 (Winter 1995), pp. 5–35.; Michael Shin, "Interior landscapes: Yi Kwangsu's *Mujông* and the origins of modern literature." In Gi Wook Shin and Michael Robinson, eds., *Colonial Modernity in Korea*. MA: Harvard University.1999.

of Cho Jung Hwan, a Korean intellectual who was influenced by Japanese novels like Ozaki Kiyō's *Konjiki Yasha (The Gold Demon)* (1897).⁶⁶ The term was highly popular in Japan, beginning in the late 19th century, allegedly initiated by Iwamoto Yoshiharu, who also popularized its usage. The story of a love triangle involving a modern girl and a traditional woman fighting over the same man was a typical plot in Japanese melodramas in the early 20th century. Subsequently, romantic love came to be a concept that denotes a particular affectionate relationship between a man and a woman, as distinct from love between friends or family members for Japanese, and, later, Korean men and women. It was against this backdrop that Yi Kwangsu, one of the most influential intellectuals of colonial Korea, wrote the first modern Korean novel, his best-known and most beloved romantic novel *Mujông* in 1917, right before the March 1st Movement. Especially considering the fact that three-quarters of the female population was still illiterate until 1930, the popularity of the book, the idea of romantic love, and its manifestation in many other novels that followed was an impressive cultural phenomenon.⁶⁷

Kwon writes that the late 1910s and 20s, when *Mujông* was written and widely read, can be called “the age of romantic love and this was also the age of reconstruction,” the social transformation and modernization movement that swept throughout Asia.⁶⁸ Romantic love, working under the dominant world-scale tide of the reconstruction movement, was considered a pathway towards individual happiness and personal fulfillment. In a way, the ideology of romantic love was a popular variation of the reconstruction ideology of the 1920s.⁶⁹ Many third-world

⁶⁶ Kwon, *Yõnae ũi sidae (The Age of Romantic Love)*, Sõul-si: Hyõ nsil Munhwa Yõn'gu, 2003, p. 12.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Kwon, “preface.” Haiyan Lee also writes that the age of romantic love was also the age of reconstruction in modern China and other places in South East Asia. See Haiyan Lee, *Revolution of the Heart: Genealogy of Love in China (1900–1950)*, Stanford University, 2007.

⁶⁹ Kwon, “preface.”

countries and their elites at the time believed they needed to “reconstruct” their entire population to achieve modernization, and modern romantic love was one of the projects that was a conducive and integral part of modernization. In this sense, the personal happiness and development associated with romantic love were directly linked to national happiness, development, and progress.

Yi was one of the cultural nationalists, or gradualists, who believed that his colonized nation must modernize by working “within the system,” to achieve considerable development and strength before seeking independence, and, on this basis, was later stigmatized as one of the most notorious Japanese collaborators of his day. Yi, like many of the best and brightest of his time, went to Tokyo to get a modern education, and soon became a leading member of the *yuhaksaeng* (international students) group in Japan. It was his time in Japan that shaped him into a cultural nationalist, advocating for the power of culture and the need to use culture to reconstruct the public. Yi believed it was important for Korea to have a national literature of its own to communicate with the people, to edify and transform them, and to form a unity and strength to resist.⁷⁰ Like other intellectuals of other nations, Yi claimed that having a national literature written in a vernacular language was a basic ingredient for nation-hood.⁷¹ In addition, he thought that the discovery of one’s interiority, or inner-self (*sok saram*), the rite of passage that leads to the true attainment of romantic love, was crucial in recognizing one’s nation-hood.⁷²

⁷⁰ Yi Kwangsu, trans. by Jooyeon Rhee, “What is Literature? (*Munhak iran hao*)”, in *Azalea: Journal of Korean Literature and Culture*, 4 (2011), pp. 293–313; Hwang, Jong-yon, “The Emergence of Aesthetic Ideology in Modern Korean Literary Criticism: An Essay on Yi Kwangsu,” *Korea Journal* 39:4 (Winter 1995), pp. 5–35.

⁷¹ Benedict Anderson, “Origin of National Consciousness,” in *Imagined Community*, p. 37

⁷² Shin, *Colonial Modernity in Korea*. p. 284.

National Subjectivity and the Discovery of Interiority

In the eyes of young conservative intellectuals of colonial Korea such as Yi, for a modern concept of romantic love to be valid the union has to be between one man and one woman. This simple union created and defined new family units of a nation, a new national obsession with heterosexual monogamy. Within a modern national structure, romantic love was idolized by progressive young elites, and as a result popular media portrayed romantic love as a pathway to personal happiness. And as an advocate of this trend, Yi Kwangsu's *Mujông* depicts romantic love as a pathway towards individual as well as national happiness. The main plot is about the triangular relationship between Yi Hyongsik, a modernized male elite; Pak Yongchae, a *kisaeng* (female entertainer); and Kim Sonhyong, a Western-educated modern woman. As with many other romantic novels, the strong appeal of this romantic story was a mysterious search and unavoidable competition it entailed. The ultimate question in a romantic story is, who will be 'the one'? Whom will Hyongsik choose to be his wife? Accordingly the characters' journey to find romance was filled with intense emotions. On his way to meet who could be the love of his life, the novel narrates Hyongsik's indescribable happiness:

Hyongsik felt that something was different from when he had entered Elder Kim's house just a while ago. He sensed in the heavens and earth the presence of something he had never known before...He thought it to be something of great significance to himself. An ineffable beauty and joy seemed to be hidden within the flickering light. Hyongsik felt a vague new hope and happiness within his heart. The happiness was like that which he had experienced when he sat facing Sonhyon and Sunae and observed the scent of their flesh, the contours of their blouse necklines and sashes, and their voices speaking. A side of life that he had never known before was revealed to him... (*Mujông*, 137)

Yi Kwangsu tried to capture and promulgate the concept of individual identity through his depictions of interiority, like the ones portrayed through Yi or his characters' narrations of

landscapes.⁷³ For Yi, awareness of one's "*chong* (情)," or the discovery of one's interiority, was the key to affirmation of one's individuality and subjectivity.⁷⁴ Characters in literature find their *chong* through talking heart to heart to each other, or by reflecting or narrating their own interiority on others or their surrounding landscapes.⁷⁵ When one discovers their interiority, one's inner-self (*sok saram*) is awakened, and this is the "authentic source of one's identity" and the only way to become a true-self (*ch'am saram*).⁷⁶

In the novel, Sonhyong "has still not received the baptism of fire called life... A person like Sonhyong can become a true person for the first time only after [she] has received the baptism of fire called life and the 'person' inside her has awakened" (94). In his effort to find love, Hyongsik tried to connect with Sonhyong and her inner-self; however, "he did not understand her personality one bit" (332–333).⁷⁷ When faced with overwhelming, unexpected jealousy towards Yongchae, Sonhyong felt that "if she had learned what love and jealousy was by studying life through religion or literature, she would have definitely known what to do in this situation"(339-340). It was an emotional experience, like reading literature, which Yi suggests as the method of finding one's true self.

The promotion of finding individual romantic love through literature coincided with the change of strategies for nationalist movements. After the failure of March First Uprising, the Japanese authority in Korea had to rely on other more subtle methods to control and subjugate its colonial subjects. From the onset of colonial rule, Japan intended to absorb Korea not (merely)

⁷³ Michael Shin, "Interior Landscape and Modern Literature" in *Colonial Modernity*, p. 285.

⁷⁴ Shin, pp. 284–285.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p. 279.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p. 282.

politically or economically but culturally (*doka*).⁷⁸ Especially after the March First Uprising, Japan began the cultural rule (*bunka seiji*) under Saito Makoto (1858–1936), promoting cultural production and loosening coercive political restrictions.⁷⁹ Taking advantage of this opportunity, Korean cultural nationalists initiated cultural movement (*munhwa undong*) with the belief that reconstructing Korean national citizens and national culture would strengthen the nation for ultimate independence. These cultural nationalists rationalized that they could reconstruct their national consciousness through literature and a colonial discourse on romantic love emerged as an attractive facet of culture within the framework of mass production of civilizing senses. Through reconstructing and propagating new civilizing senses, like the notion of romantic love, cultural nationalists wanted to transform not only political, economic, or social systems, but also the very minds of the people.

The Cultural Reform Movement of the 1920s and the increased production of literature that followed enabled cultural gradualists to maintain and strengthen nationalism through the discourses on individuality and subjectivity. There is an inherent problem in expressing and confirming one's individual subjectivity through cultural production since culture, by its innate nature, has the tendency to spread and dominate through universality. However, culture is also useful in raising one's individual consciousness as it could be employed "not in order to break away from the community but to enter into that community by making it one's own through the process of individual acceptance."⁸⁰ The birth of Korean novels and the discovery of interiority

⁷⁸ Robinson, *Korea's Odyssey*, p. 43

⁷⁹ *Ibid* p. 61; Robinson, *Cultural Nationalism in Colonial Korea, 1920–1925*. Seattle, University of Washington Press. 1988.

⁸⁰ Habermas in David A. Kaiser, *Romanticism, Aesthetics, and Nationalism*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 29.

were considered valuable in building a modern subjectivity in citizens.⁸¹ The discovery of individual subjectivity was, in fact, at the core of the discourse on modernity. As was in the case of colonial India, “the project of bourgeois individuality was a strong factor in one’s modernity, the idea of the autonomous individual existing for one’s own ends was something that animated this [modernity].”⁸² The discourse on romantic love was useful in modern nation-building because it helped create an illusion of modern, egalitarian society made up of “autonomous” individuals.

The Influence of Cultural Hegemony

Looking into the ways in which the European bourgeoisie was formed and connected to their national agendas can be helpful in understanding Korea’s colonial situation and the operation of romantic love within the Korean context since both (Japan and later) Korea were influenced by European models. Just as 19th century European societies were dominated by bourgeois ideology, colonial Korea also had a dominant bourgeois class who even defined love and sex on their own terms. In both Europe and Korea, the ways the bourgeoisie defined love and sex—for instance, the ideals of the patriarchal and monogamous family unit—were so effectively normalized and institutionalized that sex outside their defined structure came with heavy social, legal, ethical, political, and even economic costs. The building blocks of one happy family created by one man and one woman—the freedom of one’s emotion, freedom to pursue happiness, and discovery of one’s inner-self (although socially constructed in many ways)—all culminated in the concept of romantic love and were promoted and protected by the bourgeois. And gradually romantic love and all the individual happiness and choice it encompassed even became a trope used for the

⁸¹ Karatani Kojin, “Discovery of Landscape” and “Discovery of Interiority,” in *The Origin of Japanese Literature*, Duke University, 1993.

⁸² Chakrabarty in Cooper and Stoler, *Tensions of empire*, p. 398.

civilizing mission in Europe, and consequently in Japan, which was very much influenced by European ideals.⁸³ And under the influence of rising educated colonial elites, the most valuable assets and commodities in the colony became the knowledge and habits translated from the metropole, and colonial individuals internalized the European bourgeois culture as their own.

Whether in Europe, Japan or Korea, the cultural hegemony of the bourgeoisie, which even defined what was aesthetically pleasing, was a powerful tool for imperialists, especially when it was internalized by their colonial subjects. And as suggested in Althusser's concept of interpellation, colonial Koreans internalized the ideals of the bourgeoisie class through the cultural products created by its bourgeois.⁸⁴ Through interpellative reading, Korean readers were able to internalize modern norms and values that were envisioned and narrated by Korean bourgeois writers. In this way, texts not only described the world, they also created textual and meta-textual reality, and writing and interpreting literature were inevitably implicated as political acts. For that reason, romantic love, and the modern aspirations and ideas it proclaimed, was not only one of the most common themes in literature, it was also closely connected to the larger cultural, national, political, and economic agendas of the time.

⁸³ Stoler also posit that bourgeois sensibilities in the metropole spilled over to the colony and that colonialism was an important bourgeois project (although not a completely secure one). Ann L. Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1995, p. 99; *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002. Stoler discusses the mutual, or competing, influence of the colony and the metropole in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997.

⁸⁴ Althusser defines interpellation as a constitutive process in which individuals recognize themselves as subjects *through* ideology and be complicit in their own domination. He suggests that "ideology 'acts' or 'functions' in such a way that it 'recruits' subjects among the individuals, or 'transforms' the individuals into subjects by that very precise operation which he calls *interpellation* or hailing." He further comments that "the existence of ideology and the hailing or interpellation of individuals as subjects are one and the same thing." For more detailed explanations and examples see Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972. (1971), pp. 173-175.

Before the influence of Western bourgeois ideals and the birth of modern nation-states in East Asia, the notion of love was not based on a romantic relationship between a man and woman. Love described one's devotion towards either God or one's country.⁸⁵ Earlier, the exercise of romantic love, forming a legal union between a man and woman, was often not an individual decision. It usually involved an exchange of dowry from one family to another, facilitated by elder members of respective clans. The tradition still continues, yet, it was especially important that a modern nation and empire be comprised of modern subjects, who could make their own free and voluntary decisions independently of traditional ties or group loyalties.⁸⁶ By privatizing the concept of love and family formation, nation-builders and empire-builders could work towards the formation of a new social group of passionate individuals, able and willing to break away from former bonds, whether bonds of family, religion, or other pre-modern belief systems. Thus, romantic love was a viable mechanism for dismantling and dividing pre-colonial social structures, reducing a cohesive culture to a collection of individuals to be easily conquered and molded into new social and cultural units. This way, the newly formed modern subjects could engage in the discourses of modern egalitarianism by exercising their own free will.

Romantic love, and the self-determination it required, gave a citizen a sense of independence, empowerment and selfhood, while at the same time masking its own efficacy as a modern subject-building apparatus. Nationalism was not the antithesis of imperialism; instead, the two forces were inextricably linked, especially when it came to modern subject formation. This is indicated by the fact that almost all the colonial intellectuals during this period were first exposed to the notions of individuality, modern subjectivity, and modern love during their study abroad in

⁸⁵ Kwon, p. 16.

⁸⁶ Haiyan Lee, p. 92.

Japan (i.e., Korean nationalists learned the tools of identity formation and articulation from their colonizer). Nationalists and imperialists were using the same apparatus for the same immediate purpose but with different long-term goals. Modern subjectivity, which was promoted by the idea of romantic love, was useful in both nation- and empire-building, and the immediate functionalities, representations, and operations of both were inevitably the same.

Imperialists, like nationalists, had to exercise their control over their subjects in the most efficient and effective way. For both nationalists and imperialists, it was never enough to *force* their subjects to obey.

“It is also necessary that, as a ‘*free individual*,’ not as a fearful subject but as a convinced citizen, one perceives the social norms as one’s own. One must internalize them and fuse external compulsion and internal impulses into a new unity until the former is no longer distinguishable from the latter.”⁸⁷

In *Mujông*, “free will” is also considered as an important component of romantic relationship. Before finalizing the engagement, although with a touch of awkward formality and superficiality, Elder Kim and Hyongsik ask Sonhyong whether she is “willing” to marry Hyongsik, the man her father has chosen for her (*Mujông*, 286). Though this engagement was stuck in a preliminary space that was neither fully pre-modern nor modern, asking for one’s willing participation was a meaningful procedure. Sonhyong did not respond with whole-hearted willingness and probably did not recognize the weight of her father’s question at the time. But what mattered was that by this time, one’s “will” was considered an important, more modern and civilized, criteria in deciding one’s romantic partner and marriage.

⁸⁷ Franco Moretti, *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture*. London: Verso, 1987, p. 16.

Teaching Modern Ideals

Another crucial and effective method of modern subject-building was through school education. Modern school education was an indispensable part and the surest way of being a modern man: in the novel, receiving modern school education is an important criterion in becoming an ideal candidate for romantic love. In fact, the more westernized and modernized one's education is, the more attractive one becomes in the eyes of potential spouses. Before meeting Yongchae again after years of separation, Hyongsik hopes that she has attended a girls' school (241), and it is the potential of her getting a Japanese education that makes her attractive in his eyes again. When Hyongsik discovers that Yongchae had neither a modern education nor the virginity that would sanctify their union, he loses interest in her and feels relieved at the thought of losing her.⁸⁸ Indeed, he had "felt as though Yongchae's death had lightened his burden" (241). On the other hand, when he was thinking about marrying well-educated Sonhyong, who was brought up in an affluent, westernized modern household, "he thought himself suddenly ennobled, and elevated in stature" (260).

Throughout the text, Yongchae is always associated with a lack of independence and financial stability,⁸⁹ while Sonhyong is associated with metaphors of comfort, dream, and future potential.⁹⁰ He even muses that the tragedy of Yongchae (who was thinking of committing suicide over losing her virginity) was due to her pre-modern and traditional background. Although it was

⁸⁸ "He imagined her corpse floating down the Taedong River. He did not feel sad, though, but felt a boundless happiness..."(67)

⁸⁹ Yongchae confesses that she went through all the trouble and became a *kisaeng* because she was poor and had no other means (98). Throughout the first half of the novel, Hongsik is worried that Yongchae is a *kisaeng* and how he has no money to free her from her profession.

⁹⁰ It is the union with Songyong that makes it possible for him to go study abroad in the US and become the scholar he wanted to be (259). He pictured himself with Sonhyong living in a "nice house with nice scenery" and "a piano in the house... a violin on the wall" after returning from the US (260).

he who was obsessed with her virginity, he scolds her about her suicide attempt by saying that “you have been a slave of such outdated thought, and have tasted futile suffering. Free yourself from those shackles” (272). Yongchae’s transformation also takes place through modern Japanese education. An opportunity for her to receive Japanese education is treated as the most vital sign of progress, salvation, and rebirth in her life. It is not merely a Western or modern educational process in itself that is appealing, but also the prospect of gaining respect and comfortable modern life style that are considered pleasant.

Sonhyong ..did well at reciting and writing the English alphabet and memorizing it...Sonhyong did so with the thought of going to the United States...They [she] also felt a kind of exhilarating pride because their [her] learning English for the first time seemed to be a sign that their scholarly knowledge had been significantly elevated. Sonhyong imagined herself going to the United States dressed in a nice Western suit and a Western hat with a feather on it. She imagined herself speaking freely in English with young Western women similar to herself. Sonhyong smiled to herself. If she learned English well, it would add to her accomplishments and qualifications, and others would love and respect her even more. After she graduated from an American college in the United States like young American women, and returned home, she was sure someone would accompany her. That someone would be a man, a tall, good-looking man, a graduate of an American college...After she returned to Korea, she would probably start a loving family with that man. They would live in a two-story, brick house, and she would play the piano... (135)

As the above passage demonstrates, Western education implied the opportunity for upward social mobility. And the fantasy of marrying a Western educated partner gave Sonhyong the motivation to study Western language. The passage also shows how the idea of romantic love was closely related to a new type of family, the nuclear family unit. When a person meets a right partner, he or she can start a new family with his or her partner. Also, here the fantasy of home includes modern housing, cooking, dining, and recreation, borrowed from European bourgeois culture—in this picture, modern educated women are portrayed as the centerpiece of this fantasy. Even Hyongsik dreamed of building a home with a modern educated woman, Sonhyong; in his dream, there is a “clean house” filled with the sounds of violin and piano (135).

The climax of the novel is its flood scene, where all three main characters assist the ordinary Korean people on their train, who were threatened by a sudden flood, under the guidance and protection of Japanese policemen. In the midst of all the chaos, Hyongsik proclaims to his potential romantic partners, Yongche and Sonhyong, the lesson he learned from meeting all these ordinary Korean people.

Yes, one pities them. What is the cause of their pitiful situation?' 'It is that they do not know about modern civilization, of course...' 'Then what must we do to save them...to save ourselves?' 'We must give them strength! We must give them modern civilization. We must teach them, guide them?' 'How?' 'Through education, and through actual practice.' (341)

Through the voice of Hyongsik, Yi advocates that modern education is the way to transform Korean individuals into "good people" (196), and that readers should participate in this national project of educating and civilizing the nation (341). In this flood scene, Yi converts Hyongsik's romantic love from a personal desire for happiness and success to a national aspiration and salvation. Through sympathy with the plot of romantic love in the story, readers are invited to internalize political ideals of national reconstruction projects. Yi uses the fictional emotional space of romantic love to convince individual readers to become strong modern citizens (or subjects) of colonial Korea.

Internalizing the Imperial Eyes

Previous studies demonstrate how Japanese colonizers used the desire for modernity to tantalize, captivate, discipline, and control colonial subjects, whether through the cleanness of modern hygiene, spectacles of modern architecture, wonders of modern technology, or appeal of

modern consumerism.⁹¹ One of the most important missions of Japanese colonial authority was to incorporate colonial subjects into the capitalistic economic order restructured by Japanese imperialism (while making sure they never question or upset the colonial structure).⁹² Thus, the lure of modernity was wielded by Japan to integrate Korea into the global capitalist system while making it increasingly dependent on Japan.

Many well-educated colonized individuals adopted the civilizing mission of their masters, and therefore served as the “intermediaries of empire,” a class of interpreters between “the colonizing and the colonized.”⁹³ The colonized elites, taught by their colonial masters, came to believe that a developed individual subjectivity was a means to wealth and power.⁹⁴ Collaborators, as the agents and translators of modernity back and forth between the metropole and the colony, diligently appropriated, replicated, and transculturated the very rhetoric and strategies that were constructed to enable Japanese colonialism. Hence, any acts that mimicked Japanese modernity were validated by the colonized elites’ desires for modernity and the wealth and power it promised, without questioning the underlying teleological claims of the colonialists.⁹⁵

In the eyes of the colonizers, the colonial subjects appeared “at once desired and repugnant,

⁹¹ See Se-mi Oh. “Consuming the Modern: The Everyday in Colonial Seoul, 1915–1937,” Columbia University PhD dissertation, 2009; Kim, Paeg-yōng. *Chibae Wa Konggan: Singminji Tosi Kyōngsōng Kwa Cheguk Ilbon (Domination and Space: Colonial City Kyōngsōng and Imperial Japan)*. Sōul-si: Munhak kwa Chisōngsa, 2009; Todd A. Henry, “Sanitizing Empire: Japanese Articulations of Korean Otherness and the Construction of Early Colonial Seoul, 1905–1919,” *Journal of Asian Studies*, 64:3, August, 2003, pp. 639–675.

⁹² See also Peter Duus. *The Abacus and the Sword: The Japanese Penetration of Korea, 1895–1910*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995.

⁹³ T. B. Macaulay, “Minute on Education,” in William Theodore de Bary, ed., *Sources of Indian Tradition*, vol. II (NY: Columbia University Press), p. 49, quoted from McClintock, p. 63.

⁹⁴ Fanon, *The wretched of the earth*. p. 11. Brook and Fujitani also write about the important role that native informants or “collaborators” had in building empires and nations. See Timothy Brook, *Collaboration: Japanese Agents and Local Elites in Wartime China*, 2005, and Takashi Fujitani, *Race for Empire: Koreans as Japanese and Japanese as Americans During World War II*, 2011, p. 9.

⁹⁵ Oh Se-Mi, *Ibid.*

forbidden, and subservient, cast as *wholly different but also the same*” (Italics mine).⁹⁶ Living and working with the colonized Other required a special technique of marking differences in power. The language of control, the language of marking difference, was constructed and employed by the West and then was adopted by Japan. It was one of the techniques used by the Japanese to convince colonial Korea that the mastery of things that the Japanese described as modern would lead them to the same wealth and power enjoyed by the Japanese. Delineating the difference between the colonized and the colonizing, the superiority of the dominating and the inferiority of the dominated, has been a rhetorical device legitimizing imperial projects throughout human history.

Through the texts of the novels they produced, Korean intellectuals reflected what Japanese imperialists projected—the representation of Japanese cultural supremacy and mastery of modernization (or what was often perceived as westernization).⁹⁷ In the face of their dismal colonial reality, the first reaction of the subjugated was to try mimic and equal the “splendid model” of the colonizer.⁹⁸ In their “fit of passion” to emulate the colonizers, the colonized adopt the gaze of the colonizing and face the harsh dilemma of self-hate, self-deprecation, and self-destruction, and finding themselves “being accustomed to looking at their own people through the eyes of their procurer.”⁹⁹ As Memmi writes, “the colonized fights in the name of the very values of the colonizer,

⁹⁶ Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*, p. 193. This marking of differences in power was perhaps more important for Japan, who were trying to colonize the Koreans, who looked very much like the Japanese. It was the lack of culture, the want of civilizing senses and modern sensibilities that differentiated a Korean from a more civilized Japanese.

⁹⁷ See Yō-sil Kim. *T'usa Hanŭn Cheguk T'uyōng Hanŭn Singminji: 1901-1945-yōn Ŭi Han'guk Yōnghwasa Rŭl Toejipta*. Sōul-si: Samin, 2006.

⁹⁸ Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, pp. 120–129. Homi Bhabha also explores the idea of mimicry as a strategy of the colonized in resisting the colonizer in “Of Mimicry and Man,” *The Location of Culture*.

⁹⁹ Memmi, pp. 121–122.

uses his techniques of thought and his methods of combat. It must be added that this is the only action that the colonizer understands.”¹⁰⁰

Perhaps due to his education in Tokyo, Yi also had internalized the ideology of colonizers, and portrays his colonial motherland with “imperial eyes.”¹⁰¹ Through the voice of Hyongsik, Yi narrates that Korea’s “old-fashioned people are thus often responsible for the tragedy that results from the clash of modern and traditional thought” (252). Moreover, *Mujông* describes Japan (or the West) with words like “modern”, “progress”, and “awaken” as opposed to “pre-modern”, “traditional”, “outdated”, “backward”, and “ignorant” in describing colonial Korea. “Aesthecizing” was a standard imperial trope, a common strategy of imperialists in “defining others as available for and in need of benign or beautifying intervention.”¹⁰² Aesthecizing, even narrating esthetic disappointments or deficiency, was a useful apparatus in justifying the need for a civilizing mission.¹⁰³ In this way, as a collaborator with, or an intermediary of, the empire, Yi and his work fit well into the grand imperial project that accentuated colonial differences and Japanese superiority. Marking the difference between Japan and Korea by portraying their aesthetic differences was how the Japanese could colonize not just the territory but also the national imagination of Korean people. This was how marked racial differences—the difference between culturally superior Japanese and inferior Koreans—became not just descriptive but also normative, performative, and generative. Hence, conscious intentionality (of collaboration with the colonizer) behind this type of differentiation and narration, in a way, is less important than their manifestation and consequence. What mattered was that in his effort to resist colonization, Yi like many other

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, p. 129.

¹⁰¹ M. L. Pratt, *Imperial eyes: travel writing and transculturation*. London: Routledge. 1992.

¹⁰² *Ibid*. p. 205.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*.

Korean cultural nationalists at the time, employed a method of resistance that was, ironically, unwittingly and unavoidably, solidifying their own subjugation.

Conclusion

Popular novels seamlessly became a part of Korean people's everyday life, slowly framing their thoughts and actions. In a way, the discourse on romantic love was the medium of communication for the masses that guided their new relationship with the modern world; and understanding this semantic of love during the 1920s, the era of romantic love, can reveal an important aspect of colonial modernity. Romantic love during the colonial period was the site where the nationalistic endeavors of resistance, like Yi Kwangsu's novels, unknowingly colluded with the grand scheme of colonial control. Romantic love was the embodiment of colonial intellectuals' desire for modernity, seeking to spread the same hopes and dreams for their fellow colonized. However, it was also the medium and the tool that justified and normalized colonial subjugation. Consequently, romantic love involved desires that were nationalistic and modern, but also colonial.

Rapid modernization, strict colonization, and the intense disciplining that followed required powerfully enticing—or distracting—devices of control, and romantic love, as it was constructed as a colonial desire surrounding modernity, seduced Koreans to “willingly” pursue modern progress in the name of personal freedom, choice, and happiness. Cultural transformation during the period was, in fact, intense and dynamic, but also arbitrary and violent in many ways.

Within a few decades, Korea was been restructured politically, economically, and culturally.¹⁰⁴ Through the rhetorical devices that define what constitutes the ideal form of romantic love, Japan, whether actively or passively, was able to make Koreans “unwittingly” accept their “willing” dependence. The appeal of romantic love comes from the fact that it ushers the readers (or believers) into a different world, a romantic space, where exhilarating emotional experiences are heightened, personal emotions are safeguarded, individual decisions are cherished, and hopes for a better future are promised. The charms and aesthetics of romantic love were that it provided comfort and ease to mitigate the stress of what (colonial) modernity brought to the public. With its ultimate end of monogamy and a nuclear family, it promised a refuge, where individuals could identify themselves with an insulated being rather than a ravaged, humiliated culture. Another appeal of romantic love was that it could be applied to any individuals, regardless of one’s nationality, race, age, socio-economic status, or gender. However, one should also understand that discourses surrounding romantic love were never homogenous, but, rather, more dynamic in their receptions. Some openly rejected these discourses, while others adopted them to varying degrees. However, what is important to note is that the power of these colonial discourses on romantic love was more subtle, working on an unconscious level that was hard for people to recognize, let alone consciously reject.

Ironically, *Mujông* can also be a story of unattainability of romantic love. Until the end of the novel, Hyongsik is depicted as an ambivalent and indecisive character, unable to choose his mate. Perhaps this ambivalence was intentional, to show the fragility of romantic emotion itself; however, it could also be due to the equivocation of Yi’s idea of what romantic love or the modern novel (*sinsosol*) would or should look like. One of the well-known criticisms of *Mujông* is its non-

¹⁰⁴ See Shin and Robinson eds., *Colonial Modernity in Korea*. Harvard University Press.1999; and Carter J. Eckert, *Offspring of Empire: The Koch'ang Kims and the Colonial Origins of Korean Capitalism, 1876-1945*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991.

literary, didactic tone, intended to imbue nationalism in its colonized readers.¹⁰⁵ However, one could also notice the ambivalence of Hyongsik, as well as Yi, even in their fervent nationalism. Yi's ambivalent status as a colonial intellectual and a Japanese collaborator may have caused his attitude towards nationalism and imperialism to be ambivalent till the end. Perhaps this ambivalence stemmed from Yi's own precarious identity as a nationalistic but also collaborating colonial subject of the empire. This ambivalence within the texts could also be read as a part of the mimicry, in which the colonized emulated and resisted in their own ways. One could even say that Yi spoke through what Homi Bhaba called the "split tongue."¹⁰⁶ This ambivalence also reflected the reality that colonial Korean intellectuals had to work within the system of colonial discourse, which diminished the very independent identities they were trying to promote. Their mimicry was a double-edged sword; the means of resistance was also the means of reaffirmation of the existing power structure.

Employing romantic love as part of colonial scheme of domination and control—especially through cultural production—became more and more pronounced as the Japanese colonization proceeded to the total war mobilization in the 1930s.¹⁰⁷ Yi's later novel, *Affection* (*Yujong* 有情) (1933), which was a development from *Mujông* (*Mujong*, 無情), became another immediate sensation and even received a prestigious literary award in Japan. Underneath the fantasy of romantic love, there was often the colonial control of sexuality and desire. Till the end, Yi tried to work within the system, to work within diverse paradoxes and schisms, where his national identity

¹⁰⁵ Sō, *Sarang ui munpop (Grammar of Love)*, 2002, p. 33.

¹⁰⁶ Homi Bhaba, p. 178.

¹⁰⁷ Naoki Sakai, "On Romantic Love and Military Violence: Transpacific Imperialism and US.-Japan Complicity" in Shigematsu, Setsu, and Keith L. Camacho. *Militarized Currents: Toward a Decolonized Future in Asia and the Pacific*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010.

was forged and resistance was articulated, even while remaking colonial hierarchal structures. Yi employed the romanticized concept of love to transform the individuals of their colonized nation into self-disciplining modern national subjects; however, in doing so, subtly and skillfully, although incidentally and unwittingly, he thereby colluded with the colonizers' empire-building.

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CONCLUSION

This paper explores how a text incorporates, as well as get incorporated into, reconciling, condoning and embracing the logic of dominant ideologies, capitalism in the case of *Konjiki Yasha* and colonialism in the case of *Mujōng*. Both novels employed the trope of romantic love as an ideological mechanism to convince, seduce, and compel their readers to resist dominant ideologies partially and superficially, only to adopt more willingly and comprehensively in the end. Both of these novels were immensely popular when they were published and their popularity reflects that a substantial portion of the public shared, and was convinced by, the psychological strategies and the logic behind these romantic stories.

Romantic love acted as an enticing bait, alluring the public to buy into the rosy promises their modern world seemed to promise. Aesthetics surrounding the manifestations, sensations, and moral ethics of modern romance, helped people to overcome any resistance one might have over refreshingly new ideas on love. It took more than physical force or the fear of losing one's livelihood to convince the entire population of a nation to follow the new rules of the game, the game called 'modernization.' The formation of modern nation-building and empire-building was greatly aided by the force of cultural hegemony. That is why or how the notion of romantic love was at once cultural and political.

Exposing the operation of cultural, economic, or political hegemony requires more than analyzing official political records. An interesting, personal and deeply emotional aspect of those operations could be hidden only inside the realm of literary texts.¹⁰⁸ As was the case of these two novels, romantic love offers itself as a matter of personal choice, almost as if it transcends, and is independent from, all other economic and political agendas of the society. This individualization

¹⁰⁸ Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, p. 261,

or privatization creates an illusion that any rivalry over romantic love is a problem of individual desire, which can be construed as an entirely subjective and autonomous decision. However, analyzing a novel's ideological operations and emotional strategies reveals that there are much larger economic and political projects--national, imperial or otherwise--working underneath or overarching these personal emotions.

Both of the novels were written by arguably one of the most well-known novelists at the time, in their respective countries. Considering their elite status, one could question whether their work could represent or speak on behalf of their nation's majority of population. However, as their popularity testifies, the influence and the significance of their work was considerable. As Armstrong writes, "novel antedated--was indeed necessarily antecedent to-- the way of life it represented."¹⁰⁹ Also, with the rise of literacy, publication, and the middle-class, the role of the elite in shaping the public culture, including the cultural elements that contributed to nation-building as well as empire-building, was quite noticeable in both countries.

Looking into the lives of characters portrayed in these novels, agonizing or exhilarating over romantic love, one is able to peek into the hidden lives of the ordinary individuals, just as vulnerable and sensitive as the characters in the novels, trying to adapt or cope with the world in transition. I believe it would be a worthwhile project to investigate further on the detailed processes of how these novels reached the lives of ordinary people and what were the concrete political implications of these novels in Meiji Japan and colonial Korea.

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¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, p. 9.